JEREMIAH,

AND HIS LAMENTATIONS;

WITH NOTES,

CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY

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"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I except some man should guide me?"—Acts viii: 30, 31.

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THE PREMILLENNIAL ADVENT OF CHRIST.

This phrase, taken to mean that the second personal advent of Christ is premillennial, represents a system of opinions respecting yet unfulfilled prophecy, and also respecting the nature and design of the present Christian dispensation, which is widely at variance with the views presented in this and the preceding volumes on the Old Testament prophets. The somewhat extensive prevalence of these opinions and the enterprise with which they are advocated seem to demand for them a special discussion.

The following points are supposed to be elementary in this system. (1.) During the millennium [a period of one thousand years] Jesus Christ will reign on this earth visibly present in his glorified body. (2.) His second coming will immediately precede and introduce this millennial age. (3.) Simultaneously with this second coming, all the righteous dead will rise in their glorified and immortal bodies, and will live and reign with Christ on the earth during this millennium. (4.) The wicked living on the earth, at the moment of Christ's second coming, will mostly be destroyed by the fearful judgments which will attend that coming. (5.) The world is held to be already ripe for this coming, so that it may be and ought to be expected at any moment. (6.) Hence there can be no conversion of the world prior to Christ's second coming. (7.) No such conversion was ever contemplated in the plan of God, or indicated in prophecy.

While these general and elementary positions are held (as I suppose) by all who accept the premillennial advent of Christ, there may be indefinite variety in regard to sundry collateral opinions and speculations. It may therefore be quite impossible to state fully or discuss exhaustively every shade of opinion held by the diversify believers in the premillennial advent. Nor is this necessary. Some of these opinions are pure speculation—conjectures, guesses—upon points as to which the Bible has no certain voice. Thus (e. g.) it is of small account to debate the question in celestial geography, whether this earth, purified at the last day, is to be the location of the future eternal heaven. I do not believe the doctrine, for in my view the Scriptures disprove rather than sustain it. Yet some good and learned men have believed it. There are two reasons why I feel no great interest in debating it: (1.)
The question has very little practical value at present.—(2.) It is doubtful whether it will ever (under our present light) be so conclusively settled as to foreclose all future differences of opinion. I propose therefore to pass that and kindred speculations with no waste of time.

But there are some points held in connection with premillennial views that have momentous importance, bearing vitally upon the faith, the prayers, the gospel-labors, the whole Christian life of God's people, not to say also upon the wisdom and benevolence of God as illustrated before both men and angels in the grand scheme of human salvation. Such points call for sober and earnest discussion.—In order to make this proposed discussion definite and satisfactory to candid inquirers after truth, it is of the first importance that the system of opinions with which it takes issue should be before us in a well-defined shape, and, if practicable, in a form generally accredited by the living adherents of the system. On this point I have had real difficulty. Among the advocates of the premillennial doctrines whom I have chanced to meet, almost everyone has claimed to have his own peculiar theory, and hence has maintained his right of dissent, more or less, from every body else. If this were the case generally throughout American and English Christendom, it would be of small avail to undertake a discussion of the premillennial system, for the reason that the system itself would be so Protean, so various or so fluctuating, as to be practically intangible. There are at best some real obstacles of this sort to be encountered. I can only endeavor to meet them with candor, and in love alike to Christian men and to vital truth.

I am not aware that any volume issued in this country has received the official or general indorsement of those who hold premillennial doctrines so that it may be taken as an absolute standard. The works which seem to be most fully and widely accredited, and which therefore come nearest to the position of standards, are the late Dr. George Duffield's "Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to the Second Coming of Christ;" and Dr. David N. Lord's Essays in his Theological and Literary Journal, 1848–56. I shall aim therefore to present the premillennarian system of these authors.

I understand both Drs. Duffield and Lord to hold the following views.—(1.) That the "kingdom of God" [or of "heaven"], as the phrase is used by Daniel (2: 44, and 7: 17), by Christ (e. g., Matt. 4: 17, and Mark 1: 14, 15) and by the apostles (e. g., Acts 20: 25, and Rom. 14: 17) was not the gospel age and dispensation as inaugurated by Jesus and fully opened at his ascension by founding the Christian church, sending the gospel call to every creature, and by both promising and shedding forth the Holy Ghost; but, on the contrary, was nothing more or less than this millennial reign of Christ one thousand years with his risen saints after his second coming.—Hence (2.) they held that the main spiritual work of Christ and also the work of his servants from that day to this, is essentially a heralding dispensation—a John-the-
Baptist work, designed chiefly to call attention to Christ's second coming, to raise expectation and to inspire faith and hope in that august event.

(3.) That Jesus never thought of converting the world by the preaching of gospel truth and the mission of the Spirit; never designed these agencies for so great a work and result; never looked upon the masses of men as a harvest-field, and upon his people as the laborers, with his truth as the instrument and his Spirit as the efficient power to gather this harvest; but prepared these agencies for the twofold purpose (a) of manifesting their inherent inefficiency and thus preparing the way for something better, and (b) of fore-heralding his second coming, reserving the effective power for setting up his kingdom on earth till that perfect dispensation.—

(4.) Consequently, that those who have planned, prayed, and labored for the conversion of the world in the present dispensation, and by means of the agencies and powers already provided of God, have altogether mistaken the mission of God's people, have misconceived the divine plan, and consequently have seriously marred the Lord's work.—

(5.) That at Christ's second coming the greater portion of the wicked will be destroyed from the face of the earth; the smaller portion may be spared. The portion destroyed will certainly include all Romanists—all the European nations that have sustained the Pope and the Romish faith.—

(6.) The raised saints in their immortal bodies will live and reign with Christ over all the surviving populations of the earth, "ruling and not ruled;" and during these one thousand years, they will carry the missionary work of converting the nations to its glorious consummation.—

(7.) At Christ's second coming the Jews will be restored literally to their own land, and converted to Christ; Judaism, with slight modifications, will be reestablished; the land of Palestine will experience some geological changes; Jerusalem will become the center and capital of Messiah's kingdom and the location of his throne, where he will, from time to time, appear in visible manifestations of himself to his favored people.—

There will be two final judgment days; the first, for all the righteous who have lived up to that time, to occur precisely at Christ's second coming, at the beginning of his millennial reign; the second, for all the wicked, at the end of this millennium. The only judgment which the wicked will have at Christ's second coming, is to be national, not individual and personal, and will consist in destroying them from the face of the earth, and not in a public hearing of their case before the universe, and the consequent award of eternal destiny according to their deeds. Such is the system of doctrines taught in the volumes referred to.

Although it will involve some repetition, it may conduce to a more clear and distinct view of the whole subject, if, changing slightly their order, I place over against each other some of the salient points of antagonism between this premillennial system and the Bible; thus:
THE PREMILLENNIAL SYSTEM.

1. At Christ's second coming the righteous only will rise from the dead.

2. There will be two distinct days of final judgment; one for all the righteous; the other for all the wicked—which days are separated by an interval of one thousand years.

3. The "kingdom of heaven," in the New Testament sense, is not the reign of Christ in and during the gospel age; did not begin at or near his ascension; has not begun yet.

4. The present age—the interval between Christ's first advent and his second—is not a working, but is a waiting dispensation, the plan of God being that his people throughout this entire period should (like John the Baptist) proclaim Christ's coming "near at hand," and wait for it in constant faith and expectation as to open the grand era of effective spiritual power for bringing the world into allegiance to Christ.

5. For purposes of spiritual power upon the hearts of men, either to comfort and strengthen his people, or to reprove the world of sin, it was not expedient that Christ should go away (bodily), and send only the Holy Ghost to do personally his spiritual work; therefore his

THE BIBLE.

1. "The hour is coming" [the one hour], "in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." (John 5: 28, 29.)

2. "God hath appointed a day" [one day] "in which he will judge the world in righteousness." (Acts 17: 31.)

3. The New Testament "kingdom of heaven" is the gospel reign of Christ; began fully at his ascension to heaven, and has been in active operation ever since—to be consummated when they shall no more hurt or destroy, because the knowledge of the Lord [Jesus] shall fill all the earth.

4. The present age is designed of God, and therefore ought to be, as to all his people, a working, and not, in the premillennial sense, a waiting dispensation, its work being to preach a Savior crucified and risen; salvation fully made ready; all the nations called of God through his people to embrace it while yet it is an "accepted time."

5. For both the Christian life of saints and the conversion of sinners, it was expedient that Christ should go away (John 16: 7) bodily, and that the Comforter, who is the Spirit of truth, should come. Therefore Christians should be perfectly satisfied with Christ's own plan,
people should not be satisfied with the present inefficient agencies for the Christian life, and for the conversion of the world, but should continually look forward to Christ's personal re-appearing in bodily form, as being the dispensation of perfect and effective spiritual power for subduing the world to his sway.

6. In the plan of God, the effective agencies for converting the world are not his revealed truth, are not the preaching of this truth by frail, mortal men; are not the attending power of the Holy Ghost: but are the glorified presence of Christ with his risen saints; are the consuming judgments to fall on the wicked at Christ's second advent; are the preaching of the risen saints in their immortal bodies, and in their glorified state.

7. Hence the effective agencies for the conversion of the world, not having been provided at the first advent of Christ, and not to be provided until after his second advent, it was not in God's plan to convert men on any large scale during the present age, nor did the instructions of Christ to his disciples contemplate either this large work or these great results. In yet more explicit terms, the world can never be converted by such agencies as gospel truth, the preaching of mortal men, and the work of the Holy Ghost; and God never designed it should be.

and with his solemn indorsement of it ("I tell you the truth," etc.; John 16: 7), and should, with all confidence and joy, rely upon the very agencies which Jesus gave them for their own Christian life on earth, and for the conversion of the world.

6. The gospel reign in the present age is an empire of truth, having Christ its "King" (John 18: 36, 37); "it hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save men" (1 Cor. 1: 21), the Lord "opening their hearts" by his Spirit and providence; by his Spirit teaching and enforcing gospel truth, and so turning and renewing human hearts from sin to holiness.

7. Jesus did precisely and positively require his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," assuring them of his presence (Matt. 28: 20), and of his most ample power (Matt. 28: 18), and promising to send the Divine Spirit to convict and convert men under their labors. (John 16: 7–11, and Luke 24: 49, and Acts 2: 33.) These very agencies are appointed of God for the purpose of converting the world; they are perfectly adapted to this result; and God has predicted their triumphant success. The Hebrew prophets foresaw and foreshadowed both the nature and the results of the gospel age; they give its working forces, and declare, from the very mouth of God, that these forces will avail to convert the world to Christ.
8. Consequently, those who believe in the conversion of the world before Christ's second coming, and who work for it, are in very great error—so great that it can be accounted for only by assuming a wrong heart. Hence they must surely expect some significant rebuke from the Almighty.

9. Judaism (with only slight changes) is to be re-established at Jerusalem, in the midst of the Jews, literally restored to Palestine.

These points will suffice to show the nature and mainly the extent of the antagonism between the premillennial system and the Bible. It only remains to show (1), that the premillennial authors, above referred to, are fairly represented in this analysis; and (2), that the Bible also has been truly represented on the other side.

I. First in order is the premillennial doctrine, that at Christ's second coming the righteous only will rise from the dead.—Dr. Duffield's views on this point may be seen affirmatively on pages 162, 164, 366; and to the point that the wicked are not raised till the end of the millennium on pages 166, 367. In these passages he is giving in running outline his views of the succession of these great events. Precisely at Christ's second coming "the saints of all ages shall return with Christ to the earth and receive their bodies raised from the dead." But not until the close of the millennium, one thousand years subsequent to the resurrection of the righteous, shall "all the nations of the wicked be raised from the dead." "The promiscuous throng of the wicked dead shall be raised at the end of the thousand years," etc. Dr. Lord propounds the same views; Journal 1: 485, and 2: 659, 697.—Over against this, the Bible doctrine is most explicit. We have testimony from the lips of the great Judge himself, thus: "The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5: 28, 29). The reader will observe that all this is to take place at one well-defined "hour," not at two periods a full
thousand years asunder; that all who are in their graves come forth then, and not the righteous dead only; also that of the masses raised, some rise to life; others, to damnation, showing that both the righteous and the wicked are to be raised at one and the same time. — Again, John declares (Rev. 20: 12, 13), "I saw the dead, small and great," (an expressive phrase for all classes), "stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life" (showing that the righteous are there); and further, that preparatory to this universal judgment scene the sea gave up the dead which were in it (the righteous and the wicked both and alike), "and death and hell" (Hades) "delivered up the dead which were in them" — Death having no longer the power to hold the vast populations of earth, neither the good nor the bad under his dominion. A resurrection in which the sea gives up the dead [bodies] which have been in it, and in which Death resigns his long-held dominion over our common mortality, must be universal, embracing at one and the same time both the righteous and the wicked. — To this agree the words of Paul in his remarkable Confession of Faith before Felix (Acts 24: 15): "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." And finally Daniel speaks of those that "sleep in the dust of the earth" as waking, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." — It would seem that this testimony so explicit and so reiterated ought to be deemed decisive.

The argument, however, is not properly completed without due notice of what is by some regarded as an explicit counter-statement, affirming that the resurrection of the just is "the first resurrection." (Rev. 20: 4-6.) The essential parts of this passage are these: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, . . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." On such the second death hath no power, but "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." — This passage is supposed by some to prove a first resurrection of the righteous only. — To this I reply: (1.) It indicates a doubtful cause to appeal to a single proof-text in a book so eminently symbolic and so highly poetic as the Apocalypse, and array it against numerous plain, explicit, and unsymbolic declarations like those of the same author in his gospel, of Paul also, and of Daniel. — (2.) In this passage, John does not say that he saw the bodies of the saints — much less that he saw them rise from their graves. Indeed, he says very expressly that he saw, not their bodies, but their "souls." This falls very far short of affirming the resurrection of their bodies; indeed, it seems designed to exclude the idea of a bodily resurrection. How should he see their "souls" unless they were disembodied, i.e., souls without bodies, in their separate state?
This view of his meaning is confirmed by his vision of the souls of the martyrs who had been slain (chap. 6: 9-11), where all must admit that those souls were in their disembodied state.—(3.) This vision of the souls of the martyrs is unquestionably coordinate with that recorded (6: 9-11) and seen upon the opening of the fifth seal. In both visions the things seen are human souls; in both they are the souls of martyrs slain for the word of God, and for the testimony borne by them for Jesus. In the first vision they are seen under the altar pouring out their prayer that God would judge and avenge their blood on their persecutors; but in this second vision, the thing is done; their blood has been fearfully avenged; the previously imperiled cause of Jesus is signally triumphant, and they triumph in its glorious victories! This is one of the salient points in this entire book—comfort to the persecuted saints; their faith and patience sustained by visions of the blessed future before them, this blessed future lying not only in their own personal rest in the heavenly world, but in the positive triumph of the very kingdom of Jesus for the sake of which they suffered unto torture and death, but are permitted to see it borne on through conflict to victory—through blood and fire to glorious triumph. This change in their state is strongly put in symbol—souls seen first in the agony of prayers and cries to God from under the altar, but seen last on thrones, living and reigning with Christ, and triumphing in all his joy over Satan chained, all enemies hopelessly fallen, and the world reposing in peace and purity beneath Immanuel’s sway. This change is to them life from the dead; well put in symbol as a very resurrection.—(4.) The same use of the resurrection as a symbol appears in Isaiah (chap. 26: 14, 19), and also in Ezekiel (chap. 37: 1-14)—books with which John was entirely familiar, and from which very many of his symbols and figures were drawn.—(5.) Without assuming to speak positively on a passage in which so little is said and so much is left unsaid, I give my views of the remaining clauses, thus: “They lived, and reigned with Christ;” “lived,” not in the sense of mere existence, but in the sense of real life, the highest blessedness; “reigned,” not necessarily in the sense of exercising regal power, but (as in 1 Cor. 4: 8) in the sense of a most desirable state, the consummation of blessedness. Such was the joy of the martyrs in the day of Messiah’s triumph over Satan and his legions, the human and the infernal. “But the rest of the [righteous] dead” had no such exquisite transcendent life (i.e., joy) until after this thousand years. They will have their time of joy in its season, but this (of the martyrs) comes first in order—the first great baptism of blessedness which may fitly be called in symbol a “resurrection.” To which exposition the manifest doctrine of the whole book of Revelation corresponds, viz., preëminent glory and joy for the Christian martyrs. See also the doctrine of Paul (2 Tim. 2: 12): “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;” and (Rom. 8: 17): “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together;” and of Peter (1 Eps. 4: 13): “Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are par-
takers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”—(6.) But finally, if it be conceded that the passage means a literal resurrection of bodies, it certainly limits this resurrection most explicitly to the Christian martyrs of that age, and does not embrace all the righteous dead at Christ’s second coming. “I saw the souls of whom? Of “them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus;” and beyond all question the same souls whom he saw (6: 9–11) “under the altar.” These lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live in this sense of living till after one thousand years were finished. If it be claimed that “the rest of the dead” are the wicked, in what sense do they, live (i. e., “live and reign with Christ”) after the thousand years are past? Hence, even admitting this resurrection to be that of human bodies, it is restricted to a very few, and classes itself with that stated by Matthew (27: 52, 53) as occurring at the resurrection of Jesus, and by no means amounts to a resurrection of all the righteous dead and those only at Christ’s second coming.——The special difficulties and importance of this passage will (perhaps) justify this extended discussion.

II. This premillennial system sets forth two final judgment days, one for all the righteous at Christ’s second coming; the other for all the wicked, at least a full thousand years later. The Bible doctrine on this point appears in Christ’s own words (Matt. 25: 31–46), a passage which sets forth that “the Son of man comes in his glory” (his second coming); that all the holy angels come with him; that he sits upon the throne of his glory; that all nations (all the human race) are gathered before him; that he separates them one from another, the righteous from the wicked, placing the righteous on his right hand and the wicked on his left; and that he then most solemnly assigns to each class its eternal destiny. It is not easy to see how a more specific and precise statement than this could be framed. Every point made in it assumes one common scene of judgment for all mankind; every point goes to prove the theory of two distinct and remote periods of final judgment untenable and impossible.——Next, let the reader recur to the testimony (given also by Christ) in John 5: 27–29, which declares that the Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment, and then proceeds to define this judgment by saying, “The hour is come” (some one momentous hour) “in which all” (not a part, but all) “that are in their graves shall come forth,” the good to a resurrection of life; the evil, to a resurrection of damnation. One common, universal resurrection, followed by one common, universal judgment, is most manifestly the doctrine of this declaration.——Next, let us note the testimony of Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17: 31): “He (God) hath appointed a day” (one day; not two, not many) “in the which he will judge the world in righteousness [not a fractional part of it one day, and the balance some other day].——We have yet further testimony from Paul, appearing in his Epistle to the Romans
(2: 5-16), where he speaks of some as “treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and of God's revelation of righteous judgment,” for “God will render to every man according to his deeds;” to the well-doing, eternal life, but to those who will not obey the truth, indignation and wrath . . . . “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” This passage introduces many circumstances, sets forth the principles on which the decisions of that day will be awarded to men of every nation, Jew or Gentile, and to men in every stage of religious knowledge, with the written law or without it; but most explicitly represents that the righteous and the wicked alike—all men without discrimination—are to be judged on this one momentous day of final judgment. I hardly need to say that the same doctrine underlies the form of statement which appears in several other passages (e. g., 2 Cor. 5: 10): “For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad.” —Very specific to our present point is the vision of the Re- elator John as given chap. 20: 11-13: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;” “and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God” [all the dead]; “and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.” The reader can not fail to notice that the documents are here for judging both the righteous and the wicked. “Another book, which is the book of life,” is the document for all the righteous; the books other than this are for the wicked. The judgment of both great classes is provided for and transpires in this one and the same august scene. We have already noticed the testimony given here to a universal resurrection, preparatory to this universal judgment. What ground remains for doubt as to the Bible doctrine of one general and final judgment for all of human kind?——But let it be further noted, these passages do not propose to define precisely the duration of this day of final judgment. How long or short soever, it is one great transaction, unique, peculiar, devoted to one grand, solemn purpose, and to no other. The judgment spoken of is the investigation before the Supreme Judge into the heart and life, the deeds and words, of every man who has ever lived on the earth, followed by the final award of eternal destiny according to deeds and character. Yet, Dr. Duffield asserts that there will be two judgment days, the first comprising two entirely distinct forms of judgment, viz., one, awarding to all the righteous, whether then living or previously dead, their final sentence, but not touching the wicked dead at all, and affecting the living wicked only by inflicting upon them such calamities as war, pestilence, earthquakes, i. e., such judgments as God has been sending upon wicked nations ever since the world began. This strange doctrine finds not a hint for its support in the standard passages on this subject
which appear in the divine word. Moreover, the second part of his scheme, viz., that the second judgment day omits the righteous altogether and concerns the wicked only, is utterly unknown to the Bible.

III. The third point lies fully within the domain of practical and most vital truth. It declares, negatively, that "the kingdom of heaven," as this phrase is used in the Scriptures, is not the reign of Christ in and during the gospel age; did not begin at or near the ascension of Christ; and has not begun yet. Affirmatively it holds that this "kingdom of heaven" will begin with Christ's second coming, and is precisely Christ's reign with his risen saints during the millennium—The reader will soon see that this is one of the most vital points of the subject. So Dr. Duffield's book regards it. On the first page of his preface he says: "The great question which forms the nucleus of the whole discussion is one and very simple, viz., Is the kingdom of heaven a new dispensation, to be introduced on earth by the visible, personal coming of Jesus Christ? Or has it been commenced, and is it now in the progress of its expansion through the influence of moral and political causes, and especially the preaching of the gospel, designed, in the providence of God, to overcome human corruption . . . and to restore to the world the dominion of truth, peace, and righteousness, without any accession of miraculous agencies?" Undeniably he means by a "new dispensation"—new compared with the present—something unlike and other than the gospel age, and, moreover, including a vast "accession of miraculous agencies." Thus, again (p. 274), he says: "The New Testament dispensation is but the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to come"—that is, not yet come, but yet to come in that future day when Christ shall appear the second time. (See also Dr. Lord's Journal, I: 483, 485, and II: 659.)

On this great point the Scriptures are in direct issue, for they teach that "the kingdom of heaven" is the gospel reign of Christ; that it was fully inaugurated at his ascension to heaven, and has been in active operation ever since. The testimony of the Scriptures may be conveniently arranged under the following heads:

(1.) The phrases, "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," are taken up in the New Testament from Daniel (2: 44, and 7: 14, etc.) upon which passages the reader will please examine my notes. Daniel's prophetic eye saw the succession of great empires ruling the world, down to the first coming of Christ, and then saw the dominion of the world given to him and to his saints forever. Jesus began his ministry by declaring that he came to fulfill that great vision, and that the time thereof was then at hand. Let this great fact be carefully noted. (2.) Jesus, brought before Pilate (John 18: 37), solemnly declared himself a king; his kingdom, however, being "not of this world"—i.e., not precisely like the kingdoms that are of earth only, but an empire of truth; its power, the power of truth, and its aim, the sway of truth over all human hearts. (3.) John the Baptist, with special intent to
prepare the way for Jesus, preached, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Repentance would change their moral attitude toward this King from rebellion to obedience; hence the pertinence of saying, Repent, for your King is coming; prepare ye the way of your coming Lord. This approaching King was Jesus, then soon to appear before the people, to reveal great truths concerning God and salvation, to call men to turn from their sins and find life and peace in his love and service. According to Paul (Acts 19: 4), “John said to the people that they should believe on him who should come after himself, that is, on Jesus.” (4.) Jesus did appear soon, and forthwith began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4: 17). As if purposely to forestall the capital mistake of the premillennarians, and show that in saying “near at hand” he did not mean eighteen hundred years afterward, he is said, by Mark (1: 14, 15) to have declared, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” [Shall we pause here to marvel at the strange perversion of Scripture which, in the face of such a declaration, can still assert that the time is not fulfilled yet?] (5.) To show yet more fully that this doctrine is vital in the gospel scheme, or, rather, that this phrase was in common use to express the essential idea of the gospel work, the grand purpose and object of Jesus in coming to our world, he made this the central point in his commission to his disciples: “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10: 7). “Say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10: 9). Jesus comes to reign over all hearts. He has pardons for the guilty, be they only penitent and self-humbled before him. Bow to his scepter and be ye saved! This was the grand announcement—the great proclamation of amnesty—the all-comprehensive summons to returning and renewed allegiance to the living God through his incarnate Son. (6.) Jesus illustrated this “kingdom of heaven” by various parables, which assume that this kingdom, considered as coming, is precisely embodied in the gospel age and dispensation; that it calls men to repentance; makes offers of mercy to the penitent; enforces these offers by both love and justice—love in the promise of pardon; justice in retribution upon the incorrigible. See Matt. 22: 2, and 20: 1, and 18: 23, and 13: 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, and Luke 14: 15-24. See also Luke 16: 16, which testifies that since John the Baptist came, “the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” Was not this kingdom the very gospel of salvation—a then present fact—a kingdom whose door of admission was even then already open? How could sinners be pressing into it then, if really it had not come, if its door was not then opened, and is not opened yet? (7.) Jesus declared that some then living should not die till they had “seen the kingdom of God come with power.” (See Mark 9: 1, and Luke 9: 27.) And yet the premillennarians aver that this kingdom of God has not “come with power” yet! (8.) Just before his ascension, among his last words to his disciples, Jesus
declared, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28: 18). What more could he have said to show that his kingdom was already come, and its dispensation already begun? What additional power could be subsequently given him to make him in any higher sense a king? If he was not then in possession of the "kingdom of heaven" (as the phrase is used in the Scriptures), how can he ever be? [His ascension to heaven and public inauguration there, are thought of in this declaration as accomplished facts, only a few moments, it may be, in the future.]
—Let no reader overlook the special object had in view in making this declaration: "Go ye, therefore"—i.e., because I have now opened the kingdom of heaven; because the gospel reign of love and grace is now begun, go ye, therefore—"and disciple all the nations;" or, as Mark has it (16: 15), "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world." Fear nothing: all power in heaven and earth is mine.—Was it possible that those disciples could have understood him to mean that his kingdom of heaven would not open until his second coming, at least eighteen hundred years in the future? Is it credible that they could think of the "kingdom of heaven" as anything other than the gospel age then opened? Did not they see that Jesus was already king in heaven and in earth—made so for the very purpose of calling men to himself under the offers of salvation, and, moreover, that he was made "Lord of all," that he might lack no powers, spiritual or temporal, over mind or over matter, which were needful to sustain his servants, controlling all events and agencies, human, angelic, or divine, for the absolute success of this vast enterprise?—But let us pass on to see how the apostles did in fact understand their Lord. (9.) After the ascension the apostles testify, pointedly and unqualifiedly, that God had already exalted the risen Jesus to become "Lord of all," a Prince as well as a Savior, raised high above all the principalities and powers of the heavenly hierarchy. Thus, in Peter's great pentecostal sermon (Acts 2: 36), the very gist and pith of it, or (to keep nearer the preacher's own figure) the barbed arrow that went to the hearts of three thousand men, was precisely this piercing truth: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ! The man ye have murdered has been made King of the Universe! Bow to his scepter lest ye fall beneath his arm!—Not many days after, Peter preached the same doctrine, in slightly varying phrase, before the Sanhedrim, and with cutting effect: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And when they heard that, they were cut to the heart" (Acts 5: 30-33). Let no reader fail to notice that Jesus is made Prince and Savior, not merely or mainly to destroy his enemies with miraculous judgments, but to give them repentance and forgiveness of sins. In other words, he became a King.
in this now opened kingdom of heaven for the very purposes of gospel salvation, to do the great work of the gospel age—save the souls of guilty men. This is not the premillennial doctrine, but it is the doctrine of the Apostles, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Bible. It would seem that Peter did not know how to preach a gospel sermon without making this the grand and central idea. But let us pass on to note his first sermon to a Gentile audience. Observe how this vital truth drops into its prominent place (Acts 10:34-43): "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)," i.e., supreme Lord, clothed with power than which none can be higher; and yet there is precious gospel in it, for this Jesus is the promised King of salvation ["peace"] to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, Lord of all alike. The testimony of Peter may be closed here by citing his memorable words (1 Pet. 3:22) concerning Jesus raised from the dead: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." Was he not, therefore, as truly the King and Lord of all then as he ever can be? Was not the kingdom of heaven, in the scriptural sense of the phrase, already opened and inaugurated then, all power being given to Christ in heaven and in earth for the ends of human salvation? The logical mind of Paul grasps and states the purpose of this inauguration of Christ as King and Lord (Rom. 14:8-10): "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" [i.e., are bound to own him as our supreme Lord]; "for to this end Christ both died and rose and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (See also Phil. 2:5-11.) I refer to yet one other passage for the precious light it throws on certain points. For the Ephesian brethren (Eph. 1:18-23), Paul prays that they may know the exceeding greatness of God's power in behalf of believers according to that which "he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church." The thoughtful reader will be struck with the exuberant fullness of the idea of Christ's exaltation to supreme dignity and power, and will also note with interest that he receives this exaltation and power that he may become head over all for the sake of his Church—his Church on this earth in its present age, precisely when they need his power in providence, his power in and through the truth, his power by the Divine Spirit—for the great work of human salvation, to save his people from their sin, and to bring the nations of men to become his people. Verily Paul is not waiting for a better gospel dispensation; he has no thought of asking the Church to hold over in the work of converting men to God till Jesus Christ shall have received more power, and so shall be able to provide more effective converting
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and sanctifying agencies, i.e., till Christ shall have truly set up his kingdom of heaven!——The reader should not fail to notice that the Apostles not only preached a risen Jesus, exalted to the throne of the universe, and his reign, therefore, truly begun——his New Testament kingdom of heaven already come——but they make this great fact preeminently prominent. In their preaching it is not only a gospel truth, but a most vital and fundamental one.——It need scarcely be said here that the millennial age is simply this gospel reign of Jesus in its perfected state of development on this earth under its present régime. This is the view given of it by all the prophets. It is both introduced and produced by the preaching of the gospel and the consequent diffusion of gospel truth—the Messiah becoming thus "a light to the Gentiles," and his gospel the power of God unto salvation to the ends of the earth. His people are his servants in this ministry of truth to the nations. The Divine Spirit attending is evermore the energizing power upon the hearts of men.

The several points next in order [4-8] are so closely related to each other, that the premillennial views of them may best be presented by grouping them together.

IV-VIII. According to our premillennial authors the present is a waiting, not a working age; Christ's personal bodily presence will bring both surpassing spiritual power and supreme joy to Zion; his people should therefore hold their hearts in longing, waiting attitude for his second coming; should expect no great results from their spiritual labors under the present régime, but wait for agencies a thousand-fold more effective; for the world can not be converted under the present dispensation, but will be most readily and rapidly under the next, etc.

These doctrines underlie the ideas of Christian duty and the expressions of Christian faith and hope which appear throughout these premillennial writings. Dr. Duffield says: "We wait with ardent expectation for the wondrous scenes of Christ's second coming" (page 365). But "one-half at least of professing Christians being profoundly asleep and totally unprepared, will never awake to the sense of their duty to look and watch for his coming till the wonderful scenes of the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, and the rapture of the living saints, shall overwhelm them with horror and dismay" (page 366).——The leading points in the premillennial system Dr. Duffield presents thus (p. 161-167): "They regard the millennium, not as the expansion and universal diffusion of the gospel in a season of unprecedented religious prosperity—not as the consummation of the present evangelical dispensation; but as a new dispensation, to be miraculously introduced and to possess its own distinct and peculiar attributes. The gospel dispensation which commenced with the ministry of Christ, and was fully introduced on the day of Pentecost, they believe (as Christ and the Apostles styled it) is the dispensation of the good news of the kingdom of heaven drawing nigh; but the millennium, the kingdom itself, commenced " [i.e., is to commence] "with the awful
retributions of divine justice on the enemies of Christ; the one the proclamation or heralding of the kingdom coming; and the other, the kingdom come, introduced by terrible displays of divine vengeance.” "This kingdom” [Dr. Duffield affirms] “is not the Church of God as she now exists in her visible organization, and in which Christians are the subjects, yielding obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ; but it is a new and glorious development of almighty power, grace and justice, in which the saints of all past ages shall return with Christ to the earth to receive their raised bodies, and shall be employed by Christ as his kings and priests, his subordinate agents and officers to administer under him the government then to be established over the nations that yet remain in the flesh. The saints in the millennial state are to “reign with Christ,” to be the “rulers and not the ruled.”——Also at Christ’s second coming, “he will reëstablish the theocracy in Jerusalem in more than its pristine glory, with its temple rebuilt and rites of worship adapted to the dispensation in which Jerusalem and the Jewish nation are to stand preëminent among the nations; that the risen and glorified saints will be his kings and priests for the administration of the political and religious interests of the nation; that the theocracy, with its temple rebuilt, as described by Ezekiel, and established in Jerusalem, shall be the nucleus and center of all political and religious influence, and all the nations of the earth be united to it; that while Christ will indeed dwell on the earth, his presence will be displayed but occasionally at Jerusalem as King, according to rites and at seasons appointed by himself; that his constant and immediate presence will be in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, not built by the hands of men but directly and miraculously by God, in which there shall be no temple, but Christ’s presence constitute its glory and the delight of his risen saints; and that while heaven shall thus descend on earth, the saints will have communication with the nations in the flesh, and the theocracy be made the channel of heavenly influences for the happiness of the world; and that after retributive judgments shall have exterminated the wicked on the face of the whole Roman earth, there shall be found remnants of people on whom the abundant and mighty influences of the Spirit shall be poured out, and nations be born in a day by their conversion and cordial submission to the dominion of heaven by the means of the saints.” So the surviving populations of the world are to be converted. Thus Dr. Duffield.—Dr. Lord seems to hold the same general system, and is particularly explicit as to the genius and purpose of the millennial dispensation. Thus he maintains that “no future events are more clearly revealed than these—that Christ is, within a brief period, to come from heaven in person visibly; raise the sanctified who shall have died; judge and accept those who are living; destroy the civil and ecclesiastical powers which usurp his rights and persecute his people; and, renewing the nations that survive, reign over them with his glorified saints through a long round of ages” (Journal, vol. 1: 485).——Again, he denies
that "Christ's reign on the earth is to be merely spiritual, not literal;" denies that "the nations are to be converted merely by the means now in the hands of the Church, accompanied by larger influences of the Spirit;" denies that "the millennium is to occur under the present dispensation;" denies that "there is to be only one resurrection and one judgment—these to occur at the close of the thousand years;" denies that "the multiplication of the race and the work of redemption are then to reach their end, the earth to be destroyed, and the redeemed transferred to another scene of existence." These views he declares are "in direct contravention of the clear and emphatic representations of the Scriptures."

On the other hand, he affirms that "the prophecies expressly teach that Christ is to reign on the earth" [i.e., not spiritually, but literally and personally]; that "other and far more effective means are then to be employed to teach, impress, and rule the race;" that "Christ's advent is to precede that reign;" that "there are to be two resurrections and two judgments, one of each before and one after the millennium; and that the earth, instead of being destroyed at the last judgment, is to subsist forever and be occupied by the race under his sway." [Vol. 2: 658, 659.]—Moreover, Dr. Lord most earnestly and with pages of attempted argument, denies that "the present is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit" [2: 661-665]; denies also that "the nations are to be converted and the millennium introduced by the labors of Christians according to the present gospel system," saying, "Christ's people will not be introduced into the millennium by their own ordinary" [i.e., non-miraculous] "agency;" also affirming "that those generally who are engaged in the conduct and support of missions and other agencies for the conversion of men are acting on mistaken notions both of God's purposes and of their instrumentality, and will be disappointed. They are proceeding on the persuasion that the world is to be christianized and sanctified through the means which they are now employing, and without any extraordinary divine interposition" [i.e., of miraculous power]. In his view God has predicted that "the apostate powers denoted by the wild beast and the false prophet are to continue till Christ comes; are then to be destroyed by his avenging hand, not won to obedience by the persuasions of men. And God will not contradict these predictions and verify the wishes and hopes of those who misjudge his word and assume to themselves the work which he alone can achieve, but will allow them to accomplish their own refutation."

[Journal, 1: 486, 487]. "These errors of the Church are not slight or uninfluential, but most serious, affecting essentially the conceptions that are formed of the divine government and of duty. It is not a mere error of theory, but, at least in many instances, of the heart also, for it is associated with an indifference to the divine purposes, an unbelief, a prejudice and an alienation that are seen only in connection with false views. It is an indubitable and terrible mark of its character that it is to continue to be held by apostates, and will be among their distinguishing traits at the last
hour” [Journal 1: 485, 486]. [That is, those who are working most zealously for the conversion of the world to-day are to be classed with the scoffers, who say “Where is the promise of his coming?”]—Dr. Lord also maintains strenuously that Christ's second coming will introduce far more effective agencies for the conversion of men than those of the present Christian age. Thus: “It is expressly revealed that Christ is then to assume the sway of the earth in a new relation, and exert a variety of acts that must work a vast revolution in the ideas of men, and be a thousand-fold more effective than any other means that are now employed to enlighten, convert, and impress them” [Journal 2: 667]. “Then there will be a new and extraordinary system of means for the instruction, impression, and sway of the race, immeasurably more august and effective than those which are now used, constituting a far greater change in the administration of the world than took place at the introduction of Christianity, and rendering it in a far higher sense a new and peculiar dispensation” [Journal 2: 668, 673, 674, 676].

In reply to these premillennial dogmas, the three following positions, being fundamental, should be somewhat fully sustained by scriptural authority, viz., that the present age is precisely the dispensation of the Spirit; that Jesus set his apostles to the work of converting the world as a thing to be done, and for which adequate means and forces were provided; and that they found confirmation of their mission, and the inspiration of assured success, in the prophecies of the Old Testament, which gave them both the genius and nature of the Christian dispensation and magnificent views of its results.

1. The present age is peculiarly and precisely the dispensation of the Spirit.—There is no occasion to say that the Spirit was not in the world before the day of Pentecost. I only maintain that he was preeminently manifested then and onward during this age of the world. So the Old Testament prophecies had foreshown, e.g., Joel 2: 28, 29, with Acts 2: 14-21; Ezek. 36: 25-27, and 39: 29, and Isa. 44: 3-5, and 48: 16, and 59: 19-21, and Jer. 31: 31-34, with Heb. 8: 8-12. [The reader is referred to my notes on these several passages.]—So Jesus taught his disciples. Note especially how John interpreted and applied those memorable words of Jesus on that “great day of the feast:” “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me (as the Scripture hath said), out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Upon these words the comment of John is: “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” After Jesus had been glorified by being raised from the dead and exalted at God’s right hand in the heavens, he did indeed send down the Holy Ghost in glorious power.—In the course of his conversations with his disciples on that memorable night of his arrest (John 14-16), he spake more fully than ever before of the work which the Spirit would do, and
renewed his promise to send him as another Comforter than himself, and an abiding Teacher. (See John 14: 15–17, 26, and 15: 26, and 16: 7–15.) These promises were repeated in substance immediately before his ascension. (Luke 24: 49, and Acts 1: 4, 5, 8.) With the day of Pentecost these great promises began to be signally fulfilled. That day fully opened the gospel age. The book which we have been wont to call "The Acts of the Apostles," is throughout one glorious testimony to the fulfillment of this great promise of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the book might more correctly have been styled "The Acts of the Holy Ghost," or "The Acts of Apostolic men when filled with the Holy Ghost." The epistles also honor and recognize the present agency of the Divine Spirit as evermore the effective power by which sinners are regenerated and saints sanctified. It is marvelous that, with our Bible in their hand, men of average intelligence should fail to see this first truth of revelation: The Divine agency of the Spirit of God promised and given as the special characteristic of the New Testament age, to make the Gospel effective to the salvation of men.

2. It would seem too plain to be denied or to need proof that Jesus sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel to all the world, with the full understanding that, as he had given them their message of truth to preach, so had he also promised them all the Divine power requisite to their complete success. Equally clear is it that they embarked in this enterprise as a thing to be done. It was while they were "filled with the Spirit," and because they were thus filled, that they took this view of their responsibilities, of their duties, and of the Divine help promised them, and threw their heart and life into this grand mission. Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"—Jew or Gentile—all the world (Rom. 1: 16). He speaks (Eph. 1: 19) of the "exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe," comparing it to that working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. In all the preaching and all the writings of the apostles, there is not the first hint that they felt oppressed (as the modern premillennial writers seem to) with a sense of inadequacy and ineffectiveness in gospel truth and in the Holy Ghost as agencies and powers for the conversion of men—not a hint that they were looking away into the remote future for another dispensation "of a thousand-fold greater effectiveness for saving men." You may read hour after hour of Paul's preaching at Antioch, and Ephesus, and Berea, and Thessalonica, and Corinth; you may read the letters he wrote to these and other churches, and not detect the first word of despair or even doubt as to any considerable success in preaching the gospel Christ had taught him, to be wrought by the Spirit Christ had given. Every reader will be struck with the contrast between his labors, his expectations, and his spirit on the one hand, and the tone and reasonings of these premillennial authors on the other.

3. The apostles found in the ancient prophets an ample warrant
for giving the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13: 46, 47, and 15: 14-18, and Rom. 11: 25-27, and 15: 8-12, 21). Those prophecies served both to interpret and to confirm their great commission: “Go ye into all the world” (Mark. 16: 15); “Go and teach all nations” (Matt. 28: 19). Those prophecies manifestly assured the apostles that far more than a mere fragment—more than an insignificant portion of the race—would ultimately be brought to Christ. Paul witnesseth that “the fullness” (the mass) “of the Gentiles will come in,” and also that then “all Israel shall be saved,” it having been written, “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11: 25-27, and Isa. 59: 20, and Jer. 31: 31-34). To evade this argument by asserting that these events lie beyond the resurrection, is bold assumption, of which no hint whatever appears in Paul. On the contrary, Paul deems himself held by the high behest of his Lord to essentially the same work which prophecy had assigned to Jesus the Messiah—in both cases the very work of the gospel age. Was it said to Paul, “To the Gentiles I now send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?” (Acts 26: 17, 18.) The same work had long before been assigned to the Messiah and to his servants: “I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes,” etc. (Isa. 42: 6, 7, and 49: 6, and 35: 5, and 61: 1-3). The apostles were not left in uncertainty as to the work they were to do, or the agencies they had to use and rely upon, or as to the purpose of God respecting the actual, ultimate success of this work under such agencies and forces. Their work was to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16: 15); their agencies and powers were in part this very gospel truth, adapted to teach and melt human hearts, yet not to be left to its own inherent power, but to be made mighty through the Spirit of God; for the promise was, “And they shall be all taught of God.” Under the new covenant (the gospel age) the Lord promised, “I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest” (Heb. 8: 10, 11). And lest this great promise should be perversely wrested from this present Christian age and put over into the future state, the writer to the Hebrews most plainly shows that the old covenant (the Mosaic system) was even then just “ready to vanish away,” to give place to this new covenant in its stead.——Moreover, the results of this new covenant [the gospel age with its teaching Spirit] were abundantly indicated by the ancient prophets, especially by Isaiah, who saw the nations of the wide world coming up to Zion to learn God’s law (Isa. 2: 2-4, and 42: 1, 3, 4, and 49: 6-12, 18-23, and 60: etc.); saw also that men should “no more hurt or destroy, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”
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(11: 9); saw that the Messiah, endowed with the Spirit of God, should "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" should "not fail nor be discouraged till he had established judgment" [true piety] "in the earth;" and "the isles should wait for his law" (42: 1–8). [See my notes on this and kindred passages.] Remarkably, some of the richest predictions of success under the present gospel system either assert or assume the efficiency of the working forces of this system. Thus Isa. 55 closes with paradise restored like the primitive Eden: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and this shall be to the Lord for a name"—i.e., to his immortal honor. This prophecy gives the effective agencies that produce these results, thus: "As the rain coming down from heaven and returning not without leaving a blessing; "so shall my word" [of gospel truth] "be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return void," i.e., fruitless of blessings; "but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye [who preach my word] "shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace" [prosperity]; all nature shall give tokens of her sympathetic joy over such blessed results; "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."—While this passage makes the gospel word prominent, and affirms its sure efficiency, other passages (e.g., Isa. 59: 19–21, and 61: 1, and Ezek. 36: —) give special honor to the Divine Spirit. See the passage (Isa. 59: 19–21) with my notes upon it. The myriads of men from the mighty West and from the distant East shall fear the name of the Lord when his cause and truth shall move on like a mighty river within straitened banks, on which the Spirit of the Lord lifts up his victorious banner; for God's covenant is, "My Spirit that is upon thee [my own Zion], and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed . . . from henceforth and forever." If now the reader would see the results of gospel truth in our world when made mighty by the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people under this covenant, let him read what Isaiah saw and said in this immediate connection (chap. 60), and then ask himself if this is not glorious victory! Let him ask if this does not mean triumphant success to the gospel, going forth in the majesty of truth from the mouth of God, and made effective by the Spirit of the Lord abiding with his people. And then let him pass on to the next chapter (61), and note how this Spirit rests first upon the meek and gentle Messiah, who goes forth to bind up the heart-broken; to give men liberty from the bondage of Satan and sin; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort spiritual mourners. Let no one fail to notice also that Jesus, in Capernaum, as if to forestall every endeavor to wrest this promise away from the gospel age and shift it over into some future dispensation (after the day of judgment), anchors it fast to our own gospel times by solemnly declaring, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your
ears" (Luke 4: 18-22).—This list of prophecies which foreshow the grand but simple agencies that do the work of the gospel age, and which assume or affirm their full and triumphant success, might be almost indefinitely extended. But why should it be needful?—Yet let the reader carefully note that these Old Testament prophecies not only give no hint that their fulfillment lies beyond the second advent, beyond the resurrection, in another and far different dispensation, but they preclude the legitimate possibility of such an application. For they commence with the scenes of Christ's first advent; they give us then the great facts of the Christian age—the genius, the objects, the work of this age—the conversion of the Gentiles; the mission and work of the Holy Ghost; and then they tell us (e.g., Isa. 42: 1-6) that the Messiah will press this work forward, neither rashly impetuous, nor timidly weak-hearted, till he shall have enlightened the nations and established true piety and righteousness in all the earth. There is no place for the resurrection from the dead and the final judgment till this work is done. No hint appears of a new system of agencies and powers, unknown to the gospel age. There is not a word breathing the tone of the premillennial writings to the effect that these gospel agencies are inefficient; never have done much; never can be expected to reach the masses; and were never intended of God for such results. Not a tinge of such sentiment appears in Isaiah; not a shade of it in any of the Old Testament prophets.

Having expanded these three main points sufficiently (it is hoped) for the candid reader, I proceed to group together briefly, and with some recapitulation, the points I make in opposition to the premillennial views now under discussion. —1. Christ's first advent (not his second) provided the means and prepared the way by his teachings, his life, and his death, for the conversion of the world. —2. All the truth necessary for this end—truth adapted to man's moral nature—was taught by Jesus; was also developed and illustrated in his life and in his death, leaving nothing more or better to be desired. —3. The spiritual power requisite to make this gospel truth effective to the salvation of sinners was amply provided in the mission of the Holy Ghost—a mission which, in both promise and fact, belongs to the whole Christian age. —4. Jesus not only permitted and authorized, but commanded his disciples, then and onward, to bear this gospel to every creature until the world should be converted, and put them to this work as a thing to be done, for which he had made all the provisions needful. They so understood his commands, and did, in fact, give their lives to this grand enterprise. —5. They found in Old Testament prophecy confirmation for this view of their work, learning there that Christ sent them with their gospel-light to the Gentiles, and actually embraced in his plan the conversion of the world to God. —6. The prophecies do, in fact, give both the nature and the results of the gospel age—as to its nature, revealing the first advent of the Messiah, the great facts of his gospel.
history and his vicarious sacrifice in his death; the coordinate labors of his people and the mission of his Spirit, working in them, with and through them; and its results in these special points; the enlightening of the Gentiles, the triumph of his truth, the enlargement of his Zion to embrace the world.—7. Remarkably the Scriptures distinctly recognize the intrinsic weakness of the human instruments for this stupendous work; but so far from fearing or intimating its ultimate failure on this ground, they seem to infer rather its more glorious success inasmuch as human weakness affords the larger scope for divine strength: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4: 7); "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12: 10).—This is quite unlike the improvement proposed by the premillennial authors before us, viz., to put this work for the greater efficiency into the hands of the risen saints in their glorified bodies, forever divested of all physical frailty, and clothed with immortality.—8. The present age of our world is not merely a day, but the day and the only day of possible mercy and salvation, not one ray of hope appearing anywhere in the Scriptures for the repentance of sinners in any state after this, and all the calls and promises, and the whole mission of the Spirit, being, at least by implication, limited to this life and to the present age of the world, since after death comes the judgment (Heb. 9: 27) and its everlasting issues of retribution (Matt. 25: 46).

The last point in the series of premillennial antagonisms to the Bible (No. 9), viz., that Judaism, with only very slight changes, is to be reestablished in Jerusalem according to the literal construction of Ezek. 40–48 chapters, I must dismiss by referring the reader to my extended discussion of that point in my notes on the passage.

POINTS THAT ARE UTTERLY IMPROBABLE.

There are various things in this premillennial system which may be profitably looked at in the light of their intrinsic and intense improbability.—Thus, that when Christ said: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," he actually meant that it was more than eighteen hundred years in the future, is very improbable. —That John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus, should make it the burden of his message to proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and yet mean by this only his second coming, and not his first, is amazingly improbable.—That for any or even all purposes of Christian life, labor, or joy, it is better for Christians, while in their mortal flesh, to have Christ's bodily presence than to have his presence revealed spiritually by the Blessed Comforter, is far more than merely improbable, especially because we have Christ's own solemn affirmation (John 16: 7) to the contrary!—That in the millennial state there will be such a mixed population as the authors before us affirm, some whole nations in the flesh and in their sins; then some of them converted,
yet still remaining in the flesh, while there will also be myriads of saints risen from the dead and in their immortal bodies, living on this same earth at the same time, and all associating together—is much more like a fancy than a fact—is vastly improbable.

That the immortal saints are to have unprecedented success in preaching the gospel to the wicked nations in the flesh, because they "have this treasure, not in earthly vessels but in heavenly," is entirely in contrast with God's plan under the present dispensation, and is therefore violently improbable. That, in the millennial age, the risen saints are to be "rulers" in such a sense that they are "not ruled" even by Jesus Christ, is unendurably revolting to the Christian heart, and is far more than improbable; it is and ought to be forever impossible.

THAT THE SYSTEM CAN NOT BE TRUE.

There are certain points of view in which it becomes most apparent that this premillennial system can not be true. Thus, if Christ and his apostles had distinctly taught this doctrine, it must inevitably have emasculated the working forces of Christianity; must have quenched their hopes of any considerable success; must have put the Church upon waiting rather than upon working for at least nearly two thousand years! must have made such missionary labors as those of the apostles and primitive Christians an impossibility! Therefore it can not be that they taught this system; therefore it can not be true. That Paul understood the gospel system to hold him by the authority of his risen Lord to a life of waiting and not of working, can not be true. His whole Christian life proves it impossible. That he could have written or could have believed respecting the work of gospel missions what Dr. Lord has written and seems to have believed, is purely absurd—at war with every element of his fervent, untiring missionary life. That Jesus should frown upon those of his servants who give their money, their prayers, their earthly comforts, and even their very life to the work of "preaching the gospel to every creature," can not be true! And the system which culminates ultimately in sentiments so abhorrent to both piety and reason can not be true!—A system that breaks down the confidence of God's people in the working spiritual forces of this Christian age [mainly gospel truth made effective by the Holy Ghost], and which therefore bears with its whole power against faith in God for success in gospel labors, is squarely opposed to the spirit of the apostles and of the primitive church—is fearfully adverse to the grand mission which Jesus indicates to his people in our times by both his providences and his Spirit, and therefore can not be true. Against this system, because legitimately fraught with such results, I must bear my earnest protest. It goes utterly against all the convictions of my moral nature. It is a comfort and a joy to me to know that the Bible bears no responsibility for such a system, has no sympathy with it, and can be suborned to sustain it only by a strange ignoring or misconstruction of its
language. That error must be a sad and fearful one which naturally strikes down the hope and the faith of God's people; palsies the hand of labor, chills the heart of prayer, robs the glorious missionary work of our times of all sustaining assurance of success, and of all the energy which God meant to have this assurance beget and sustain.

GREAT POINTS OF VITAL TRUTH IGNORED.

These premillennial authors seem to me to have utterly failed to apprehend some of the most vital truths.—E. g., They fail to apprehend the inherent adaptation of the great truths of the gospel to the human mind and their consequent power upon the heart and the life when seen in their simplicity and taught impressively by the Holy Ghost.—They strangely fail to discern the relative superiority of manifested love compared with terror and fear as a power for subduing human hearts to penitence, since they perpetually assume that the outburst of terrific judgments at Christ's second coming will be mightier than the tears and blood of Jesus to bring sinners to godly sorrow for their sins.—They most remarkably fail to appreciate and honor the spiritual work of the Holy Ghost in the gospel age. Consequently they write and reason as if they ignored the very idea of Christ's presence revealed to the Christian heart by the Comforter (John 14: 16-18, and 16: 13-15), and as if they had no just conception of the power of the Holy Ghost in presenting truth before the sinner's mind and pressing it upon his conscience and his heart.—They fail to understand the spirit and the work of the apostles when filled with the Holy Ghost. Consequently they fail to see the genius and aim of the Christian dispensation.

To the influence of these very defective views of many vital truths must we ascribe the fact that these premillennial authors so readily acquiesce in the assumed failure of truth and of her great King on the world's moral battle-field during the present age. All must admit that such a conflict is now going on, of truth against error, holiness against sin, Christ against Satan. The marvel is that these authors staunchly maintain that, in this conflict—not thus far only, but down to Christ's second coming, truth and holiness will make but feeble fight; error and sin are sure to conquer. This they hold is the inevitable issue of the struggle as waged under the present order of things. But in the next dispensation, Jesus Christ will bring in the new forces of his awful judgments; and with their aid he will conquer. On the battle-field of fire and thunder and earthquake, and awful convulsions of great Nature's frame, he will come off victorious! That which love and tears, truth and reason, and the Holy Ghost, have failed to achieve, the awful terrors of Christ's second coming and the vials of his consuming wrath upon the guilty nations of the whole Roman earth, will accomplish.—Against this doctrine that the gospel and the cross and the Holy Ghost must and will to the end of time fail of moral, spiritual victory on this great battle-field of
human hearts, I most earnestly protest. The gospel and the cross are never to be thus humiliated; the Holy Ghost will not be thus dishonored! The very thought is abhorrent to every Christian feeling. If this should be the ultimate result, the holy angels would cover their faces in grief and shame, and all hell would shout in a chorus of triumph.—Delay of victory need give us no solicitude, for the forces of truth may be silently but surely gathering strength; but to fail of victory altogether—to be forced to change the essential elements of man's state of probation, and change also the weapons of the conflict so as to put physical agencies fully into the foreground—this is deplorably humiliating, especially after the confident and most sublime predictions of victory which the old prophets made and sung with such thrilling rapture!

And what shall we say of the scheme for another system of probation, to come in after one resurrection and one final judgment—a system very unlike the present, worked by new moral forces, with a kind of gospel preachers unknown either to our present world or to our present Bible, and the whole operated amid new surroundings? By what license is this new moral probation for sinners assumed and affirmed? How do these premillennial authors know the things which they teach on this point? If men may assume one additional probation, unique, peculiar, supplemental to the present, and (as they claim) far more effective than this, why not assume also another and yet another, on and on indefinitely? Why not enlarge the plan so as to include all the wicked dead? How much will it be safe and wise to add in this way to the things written in the book of God?—The reader may remember that Dives proposed essentially this system, precisely this sort of gospel preachers (Luke 16: 30, 31), but Jesus declined the proposal.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Some will consider this essay incomplete without a respectful notice of the main arguments adduced by the authors before us in support of their system. They will expect this the more because these authors have made great account of their respective discussions of the principles of prophetic interpretation which they claim to have elaborated fully and settled on immovable foundations. —The necessary limits of this essay forbid an extended review of those discussions. It must suffice to say, in a word, that their capital defect lies in overlooking the fact that the writers of the sacred Scriptures, both the Old and the New, were Jews, and were for many reasons almost entirely isolated from all other literature but their own. Consequently their language, their poetic conceptions, their symbolic imagery, are to be interpreted, not by the standard of modern literature, nor even of ancient classic literature, but by the literature of their own nation. Hebrew history, Hebrew poetry, Hebrew civil and religious institutions, must supply chiefly the material for determining the sense of the Hebrew prophets, whether of the Old Testament or of the New.
ADVENT OF CHRIST.

These authors base their system very largely upon their construction of the prophecies of Daniel. These prophecies they have in my view egregiously misinterpreted. For the proof of this statement I must be allowed to refer to their writings and to my interpretation of that book.

Appeal is somewhat frequently made to the words of Christ (Matt. 24: 14) as showing that the work of the Christian age is already done, and therefore its end is now very near: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all the nations; and then shall the end come." It is claimed that these words refer to Christ's second coming and to the end of the world in its present form; and also that the gospel has been already preached as a witness to all the nations; therefore, the second coming of Christ is near at hand.

To this I reply—(1.) A preliminary question should first be settled, viz., whether the words refer to the end of the world, or rather to the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state. The chapter treats of both events; of the fall of Jerusalem and its temple primarily, and for the most part in the former portion of the chapter; of the end of the world and of the final judgment in a secondary way as great facts of an analogous character, of which the former were naturally the type and illustration. The context of this verse favors its reference to the fall of Jerusalem. If so, it should not be assumed to apply to the end of the world without some substantial reason. Yet I say this for the truth's sake only, and not at all because I need it for the point I have in hand. I have no fear of its reference to Christ's second coming, but only shown to be legitimate. For (2,) "The gospel of the kingdom, preached for a witness to all nations," implies certainly that its testimony is justly apprehended and fairly understood by the masses of mankind. To reach the true meaning of the phrase, "Preached as a witness," we need to consider that the gospel comes to us as testimony from God to men, certifying, witnessing certain great facts which reveal his matchless love for sinners of our race. Hence, when Jesus sent forth his apostles to "preach the gospel to every creature," he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). And Jesus himself said before Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18: 37). This language of Jesus, therefore, "preached as a witness," is fraught with rich and precious meaning. As to the people to whom the gospel is thus preached, it means far more than a merely casual hearing of the name of Jesus; more than getting a loose, floating sense of something new, such as might be the case with millions who yet might have no adequate conception of what the gospel is. Men who have had a point to carry have toned down the significance of these words till almost nothing is left, and they can easily make out that already, in our own age, "the gospel has been preached as a witness to all the nations." Yet, how can this be reasonably assumed? How can it be sup-
posed that the millions of human beings in China, in Japan, in northern as well as central and southern Asia, and in the great central regions of Africa have had "the gospel preached to them as a witness?" This language cannot fitly be used of one-tenth part, even if it can of the twentieth part of the six hundred millions whom we have numbered as the heathen of our world.—

Taking this passage, then, as a prophetic statement of what must transpire in this world before the end shall come, we have a vast amount of gospel labor yet to be done. And this view of the case accords remarkably with the whole tenor of Old Testament prophecy. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations; it must go as a witness to God's matchless love, and must become intelligently known as such a witness before the end can come.

These premillennial authors rely much on two other passages in the New Testament (Acts 3: 19-21, and 2 Thess. 2: 1-8), claiming that they preclude the possibility of locating the conversion of the nations prior to the second advent of Christ. The former of these gives the words of Peter: "Repent ye, therefore, 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: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Upon this passage I remark: (1.) "Restitution" is one of the pivot words of the passage. It is generally conceded by the best critics to mean, the bringing about again of a state of things existing at some previous time; restoring to some former state. This noun comes from the verb which the disciples used (Acts 1: 6) in the question, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The former state which Peter thinks of as by prophetic promise to come round again, may be either the prosperous reign of David over Israel, considered as the Jewish type of the Messiah's kingdom, or the para-disical state of Eden. Both conceptions appear in the ancient prophets as symbols of the state to be induced upon the earth under the Messiah's reign. (2.) Whatever the precise sense of the word "restitution" may be, it manifestly refers to the great, central, prominent events foretold in Old Testament prophecy—"all the things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the prophets." Now, the point at issue in this discussion with my premillennial brethren (upon this passage) is simply this: Is heaven to receive [and retain] Jesus till this restitution shall begin, or till it shall have ended? Is Christ to come before those prophecies begin to be accomplished, or after their accomplishment shall be complete? The premillenarians assume the former alternative; I maintain the latter. In support of my view, I claim that the one comprehensive theme of those prophecies is the work of the gospel age. Some of this has been long since done; more of it is now going on; all of it pertains, by its very nature, to this age of the world, and therefore necessarily precedes the second
coming of Christ. With most concurrent voice those prophecies foretell the calling and conversion of the Gentiles—long since begun; the enlargement of Zion and the diffusion of gospel light among the nations—both now in progress; and the consequent joy and peace of those who embrace the gospel. These events constitute the staple of those prophecies, things “spoken by all the holy prophets since the world began,” and beyond all question they have been already a long time in progress, yet Christ’s second advent is still in the future. Therefore it cannot possibly precede the commencement of this “restitution,” and hence must either break in during the unfinished progress of these events, or occur at their close. The breaking in during their progress is inadmissible, for it is not the natural sense of the language, and is claimed by none; its location at the close of their fulfillment remains, therefore, the only legitimate construction of the passage.

The second passage is from Paul (2 Thess. 2:1-8). Some of the Thessalonian brethren were unpleasantly affected by the apprehension that Christ’s personal coming was then near at hand.

To correct this misapprehension, Paul wrote to them thus: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” — The meaning of this (as held by the ablest commentators) is that two great events must precede Christ’s coming: a “falling away,” i.e., a somewhat general apostasy; and the appearing of “the man of sin”—some extraordinary Antichrist. Paul describes this “man of sin” somewhat minutely; implies that the elements of evil were already at work which would some day culminate in bringing up this embodiment of intense wickedness, but they knew what now retarded his manifestation. When he should have reached the climax of his manifestation, the Lord would “destroy him with the brightness of his coming.” These are the staple points of this passage. — The premillennarians affirm that “the man of sin” is the Papal power; that this power will stand, therefore, until Christ shall come in the majesty and terror of his second advent to destroy it, and therefore there can possibly be no place for the conversion of the world prior to this second advent.
I reply: (1.) It has never been proved, and never can be, that "the man of sin" is definitely and precisely the Papal power. It can by no means be shown that the Papal power was then in existence, and already working, when Paul wrote; it can not be shown that the description here drawn applies to the Papal power so accurately in all its points as to preclude any other application and necessitate this; it can not be shown that some withholding, counteracting agency was then manifest and known to the Thessalonian brethren; nor can it be shown that a wicked man, a "son of perdition," corresponding to Judas, of whom these very words are said (John 17:12)—a personage most distinctly described as a single individual (actual or ideal), is, in fact, a great ecclesiastical hierarchy or polity, a corrupt church. (2.) It will be exceedingly difficult to show that the Thessalonians could possibly understand Paul to refer to a church which should come up upon the page of history six hundred years after that time, or to the succession of its head men—not to any one man, but to many scores of men, coming into power one after another during a dozen centuries. (3.) I see no valid reason for assuming that the "falling away" [apostasy] was to be the prominent fact of the world's then future history, continuously and without interruption from that day down to Christ's second coming. Paul does not affirm this: by what logic can it be proved that he assumes it? Does he attempt in these eight verses to give an epitome of the religious history of the world during the entire Christian age to the very end thereof? (4.) The main purpose in this passage is obvious, viz., to assure the Thessalonian brethren that Christ's second coming was still remote, and was not, in the sense they had supposed, near at hand. But why Paul adduces precisely these intervening events to prove this rather than any other, who can tell? Why he alludes to the working of the elements of sin rather than to the operations of truth and of grace, as requiring time for their development, who knows? I see no reason for the opinion that he purposely omits any allusion to the preaching and the spread of the gospel because he tacitly assumes that nothing of any importance in this line was to occur during the gospel age. In a prophecy so brief as this, in which so little is said and so much left unsaid, it is sheer folly to assume that things omitted are left out because they do not in fact belong here, or because they are of inconsiderable importance compared with the points that are introduced. Such inferences are simply chimerical, unfounded.—— Holding ourselves to what is in fact said, we shall see that Paul apprises them that there is to be yet more antagonism of sin against holiness, substantially of such sort as they had seen already, and that, at some future time, how far distant he does not say, this antagonism would assume a surpassingly bold, defiant form, and would be most signally overwhelmed amid the brightness of Christ's second coming. More than this as to the date of this coming, or the intervening events of the world's history, he saith not. Why should we essay to put into his mouth what he
never said? (5.) The only allusion elsewhere in prophecy to an apostasy, at once sudden, signal, eventful, astounding, but quenched with appalling majesty and terror in the awful brightness of Christ's second coming, is that given by John (Rev. 20: 7-10). In this prophecy the agency of Satan is made specially prominent. The "man of sin" may be considered as his special embodiment and incarnation. But the reader will observe that this last terrific development of superlative wickedness follows, not precedes, the millennium, and therefore leaves ample scope before its occurrence for the triumphs of the gospel over all the earth.