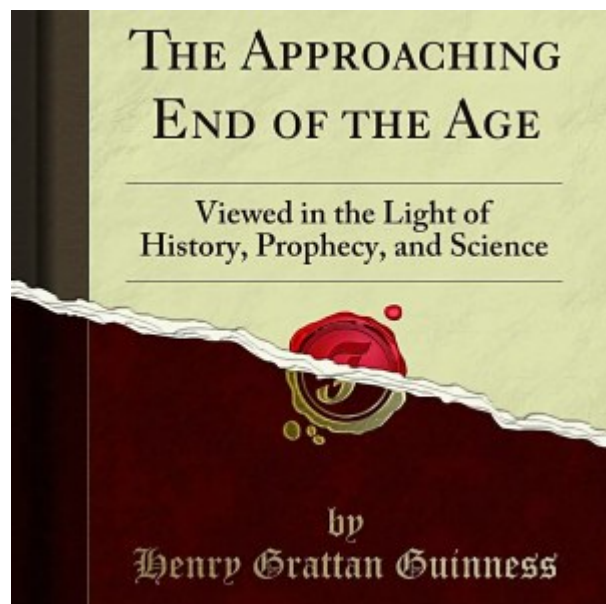


The Approaching End of the Age by H. Grattan Guinness – Introduction



THE APPROACHING END OF THE AGE

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF
HISTORY, PROPHECY, AND SCIENCE.

BY

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS, F.R.G.S.

NINTH EDITION, COMPLETING FIFTEENTH THOUSAND.

Henry Grattan Guinness (1835-1910) was an Irish Protestant preacher, evangelist and author who started Harley College East London Missionary Training School which trained and sent hundreds of “faith missionaries” all over the world.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE volume now presented to the Christian public, consists as will be observed, of four parts: the first is commended to the candid consideration of those who have not yet received the truth of *the premillennial advent of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the second and third take that truth as proved and granted, and address themselves especially to those who, holding premillennial views, are still looking for the manifestation of Antichrist, prior to the visible advent of Christ, those who adopt a literal interpretation of the Apocalyptic prophecies, including their chronological features—in other words, to the *futurist* school of prophetic interpreters.

The fourth and last part, which consists of *an investigation into the system of times and seasons presented in the word and works of God*, contains not a few original observations and discoveries, which, if the author mistakes not, throw fresh light on the whole subject of Scripture prophecy, and which he thinks will be found of interest to all students of the prophetic word, as well as, he trusts, to all lovers of the Bible. Perhaps, he cannot better introduce the book to the reader, than by giving a brief outline of its history.

Imbued by education with the ordinary view, that a gradual improvement in the present state of things was to be expected till all the world should be converted, and a spiritual kingdom of God be universally established on earth, and that no return of Christ was to be looked for till the day of judgment at the end of the world,—the author no sooner began to study the Scriptures independently than he perceived, that this view obliged him to interpret in a forced and non-natural manner, a vast variety of apparently clear and simple passages, both in the Old and New Testaments. Unable to rest satisfied with doing this, he was led to read a variety of works, both for and against premillennial views, especially that most able treatise ever penned against them, entitled “Christ’s Second Coming, will it be Premillennial?” by Dr. David Brown, of Aberdeen.

Unable to reach any decision satisfactory to himself by this study of prophetic works, the author nearly twenty years ago laid them all aside, and very carefully and critically read through the entire Bible, marking, studying and considering every passage bearing on the subject, with a view to collect the full testimony of the Word of God respecting it. This plan he would earnestly commend to those who may be in doubt as to the truth on this fundamental point. It completely set his own mind at rest, and his views have never been shaken since. That a premillennial advent of Christ is clearly predicted in the Word of God, the writer never afterwards doubted, or hesitated to preach; but the pressing claims of incessant evangelistic labours for many years, forbade his looking further into prophetic subjects.

A fuller acquaintance, acquired by personal observation, with the condition of the Greek and other professing Christian Churches of Syria, Egypt, and Turkey, and of the effects of Mohammedan rule in the East, and also with the Papal system as developed in France and Spain, and with the Continental infidelity to which it has given rise, subsequently led the author to a careful study of the history of the Mohammedan and Papal powers, and of the prophecies of Scripture believed by many to relate to them. This resulted in a deep conviction that THOSE POWERS OCCUPY IN THE WORD OF GOD, AS PROMINENT A PLACE AS THEY HAVE ACTUALLY HELD IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

The remarkable events of the years 1866-70, especially the outbreak of the Franco-German war, which put a stop to evangelistic efforts which the author had been for some time making in Paris, led him not only still further to consider the question of modern, fulfilment of prophecy, but to prepare a work on the subject, which he intended to have published under the title of “Foretold and Fulfilled.” This work advocated the Protestant or historic system of interpreting the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, and in doing so had necessarily to consider the question which lies at the

base of the different views of unfulfilled prophecy taken by Christians – *the true meaning of the chronological statements contained in symbolic prophecy*, i.e., whether they are *literal* or whether they are *figurative*, In studying the masterly and exhaustive treatise of the Rev. T. R. Birks on this subject,* the author was deeply interested in a statement made on the authority of a Swiss astronomer, M. De Cheseaux, that the leading prophetic periods of Scripture are demonstrably *celestial cycles*; that is, periods as *definitely marked off as such* by celestial revolutions, as are our ordinary years or days. This led him to examine the nature of these cycles, and to investigate the connection between astronomic facts and Scripture chronology, and thus to the discovery that the *epacts* (epact: a period added to harmonize the lunar with the solar calendar) of the prophetic periods of Scripture form a remarkable septiform (sevenfold) series.

* "First Elements of Sacred Prophecy, including an examination of several recent Expositions, and of the Year-day Theory," by the Rev. T. R. Birks, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Practical duties of a pressing nature connected with the foundation of the author's EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS,* prevented the completion of the intended volume, and the papers connected with *the astronomic measures of the prophetic times* lay by for some years in the hands of the Rev. T. R. Birks of Cambridge.

* See Appendix C.

But in 1876-7, when the long impending Eastern question came once more to the front, and attention was, by the tragic and eventful scenes transpiring in European Turkey, again directed to evident coterminous fulfilments of prophecy, the author was strongly impressed with the duty of giving to his brethren without further delay, any light which God might have given him on this sacred and deeply interesting theme; of adding his contribution, however small, towards the understanding of the prophetic word, and in spite of many difficulties he has made leisure, during the last eighteen months, to complete his researches into the subject, and prepare the present volume for the press.

In order to secure correctness in his astronomic statements, the author submitted a considerable portion of the fourth part of this work to the criticisms of Professor Adams of Cambridge, whose discovery of the planet Neptune by pure mathematical calculation, has long given him a position of the very highest eminence as an authority in astronomic science. Professor Adams was kind enough to allow the author to read to him many (though not quite all) of his statements on "the connection of Times and Seasons natural and revealed," and he also verified some of M. De Cheseaux's calculations with reference to the cyclical character of the prophetic Times. Finding M. De Cheseaux's work in the British Museum, the author had it carefully copied for his own use, and subsequently sent it to Professor Adams that he might examine a point about which he had expressed some doubt, relative to the times of the equinoxes and of the summer solstice in the year of Daniel's vision 552 B.C.

The following letter from Professor Adams shows M. De Cheseaux to have been slightly in error on this point,—error easily accounted for by the want, in his day, of such accurate data as more modern science supplies—but which does not in the least affect his conclusions as to the cyclical character of the prophetic Times:—

OBSERVATORY, CAMBRIDGE, March 18, 1878.
MY DEAR SIR,

I received the copy of De Cheseaux safely, and I ought ere this to have sent you the result of my examination into the correctness of his statements. Pray pardon the delay, which has been caused by my having been so busy. I have calculated very approximately the times of the equinoxes and solstices for the year B.C. 552, which is that given by De Cheseaux as the year of Daniel's vision, and I find the following results, expressed in mean time at Jerusalem, reckoned from midnight.

				d.	h.	m.
Vernal equinox	...	March	...	27	8	2
Summer solstice	...	June	...	29	11	39
Autumnal equinox	...	Sept.	...	29	11	51
Winter solstice	...	Dec.	...	27	0	17

Hence the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox take place not far from noon at Jerusalem, but the vernal equinox takes place about four hours before noon, De Cheseaux's error appears to arise chiefly from his having supposed that the excentricity of the earth's orbit was the same in the time of Daniel as in his own time, whereas it was very sensibly greater. I have added the time of the winter solstice also, though it is not required for your purpose, The fact is that the change of excentricity and place of the apse of the orbit of any planet, is a compound phenomenon, due to the combined action of all the other planets, and therefore the final result is got by compounding together several variable quantities, which have quite different and indeed incommensurable periods. I will return your copy of De Cheseaux, which is quite beautifully done, immediately, either by post or railway, as I have done with it.

I remain, dear sir,
Yours very truly,
J.C. Adams.

As his letter did not reach the author in time to allow of his adding Professor Adams's correction to M. De Cheseaux's statement quoted on p. 404 of this work, he inserts it here.*

* The statement referred to has been omitted in this edition.

The modern solar and lunar tables employed by Professor Adams, also showed some slight errors in M. De Cheseaux's calculations, amounting to about an hour in the period of 1040 years (referred to on p. 403) but in nowise

invalidating the claim of that period to be considered a *cycle harmonizing the lunar month with the solar year*, or the cyclical character of the associated prophetic periods of 1260 and 2300 years, of which it is the difference.

The author has also to acknowledge his indebtedness to the kind and valued criticisms of his friends, the Rev. Henry Brooke of Dovercourt, and Philip Henry Gosse, Esq., F.R.S., of Torquay, who saw portions of the prophetic parts of this work while it was passing through the press. Their accurate acquaintance with the prophetic Scriptures, and deep reverence for the Word of God, gave the suggestions they made a special value in this principal branch of the subject dealt with.

There remains to the author the grateful task of acknowledging the very *considerable help* he has had in writing and revising this volume from the practised pen of his beloved wife, for many years the sharer of his toils in various efforts to spread in different lands the knowledge of saving or of sanctifying Truth, The part which—in spite of much wearying labour by day and often by night, as Honorary Secretary of the EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS—she has cheerfully taken in the task of preparing this work—however others may regard the result—will endear it to him while memory endures.

And now the author commends this work to the candour of the Christian Reader, and above all to the blessing of God! He alone knows how earnestly and incessantly the enlightenings of his own Holy Spirit have been sought, in the course of its preparation, how often the heartfelt prayer, “O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me,” has gone up amid the studies of which it is the result. The Bible has been the main field explored, in the conviction, “in thy light we shall see light;” and in giving to the Church of Christ, the light on this high and holy subject, which has, he humbly believes, been granted in response to much prayer, he desires to ascribe to the only wise God, the giver of understanding, all glory, and honour, and praise. Of all his good gifts, knowledge, true knowledge of Him, of his works, of his word, and of his ways, is one of the best; and we are commanded to grow in such knowledge.

If this work lead his brethren in the ministry to an increased study of the Prophetic Scriptures, the author will feel richly rewarded, whether his own conclusions be received or not. He is conscious that his researches into the Divine system of times and seasons *have gone but a little way into the subject*, but his hope is that they may serve to indicate to abler minds and pens, a vein of ore which will richly repay working.

To one feature of the investigation he begs to call special attention, IT DEALS NOT WITH THEORIES BUT WITH FACTS: it consists not of *speculations* about the future, which are altogether foreign to it, and in which the writer has not the least inclination to indulge; it consists in a collection of facts, and of inferences drawn from those facts. The author has endeavoured to deal with the question, What are the facts of the world’s history and chronology? What are the *facts* as to the nature, the objects, and the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy? What are the ascertained *facts* as to the plan of

Providence? What are the *facts* as to the system of Times and Seasons in Nature—the periodicity of vital phenomena, and the majestic revolutions of the worlds whose movements control the entire progress of terrestrial time? What are the links of connection between these facts? What are the laws which control them? What is the chronological system to which these chronological elements belong?

The answers to these questions have been sought with care, and patient reflection, The inductive method has been followed throughout; the *facts* of revelation and the *facts* of nature, have been collected and compared; a broad basis has been thus constructed; and the conclusions reached have been limited, as far as possible, to *legitimate inferences from the facts considered*. The author claims that a candid consideration of the fourth part of this volume should prevent its ever being confounded with a class of writings which properly fail to command the attention of sober-minded Christian students. A wide distinction exists and should be recognised between *students and expositors of the Word and Works of God*, who humbly, soberly, and reverently searching into the facts of Nature and Scripture, of providence and of prophecy, reach conclusions which sanctified common sense can approve,—and *speculators*, who running away with isolated and mysterious expressions, indulge in imaginations of their own, and become prophets, instead of students of Divine prophecy. No employment of human intelligence is nobler, than an adoring investigation of the revealed purposes of God, “which things the angels desire to look into,” while few are so puerile, as a presumptuous pretence of predicting the future, apart from such cautious and careful study of Divine revelation.

In conclusion, the author would strongly deprecate the false and foolish popular notion, that all study of prophecy is impractical—a notion too often propagated by passing, but mischievously-influential allusions to the subject, from pulpit, platform, and press, made by those who know little either of it, or of its effects. It ought to be a sufficient rebuke to the levity that hazards such an assertion, or admits such an idea, to recall the facts, that one-third of the Bible consists of prophecy; and that our Lord and Master said, “Search the Scriptures,” not a portion of them. The apostle Peter expressly tells us that we *do well to take heed* to the “more sure word of prophecy,” as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise. Is it impractical to make use of a good lantern on a pitch-dark night, in traversing a dangerous road? or is it not rather impractical and unreasonable to attempt to dispense with it? And further, a special and emphatic blessing is attached to this study in the closing book of the Bible: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein, for the time is at hand.”

It is a reflection of the gravest kind on the wisdom of God, to suppose that the study of a branch of truth to which He has in his word accorded singular prominence, should have an injurious tendency, or be devoid of a directly sanctifying effect: and moreover it is a conclusion completely at variance with all the facts of history and experience. Enoch was a student of prophecy, and of prophecy that is to this day unfulfilled, and Enoch was the

saintliest of men, an eminently holy and practical preacher, who walked with God three hundred years, and was not, for God took him, and before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Noah was a student of unfulfilled prophecy, and Scripture presents no more practical preacher of righteousness than he was. All the holy prophets were students, and diligent students, too, of their own and of each other's predictions, and *especially of their chronological predictions*. "The prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow" (I Pet. i. 10, 11).

Daniel was a student of unfulfilled prophecy, yet he was not only a practical statesman, but a man of singular holiness, classed with Noah and Job as one of the most righteous of men.

There is everything in the nature of the study to make those who pursue it both practical and holy. It imbues the mind with the counsels and judgment of God about the affairs and events of earth; it reveals what *shall be*, and thereby lessens the inordinate power of that which *is now*, bringing the spirit under the influence of things unseen and eternal, and thereby weakening that of things seen and temporal. It affords to hope much needed food, lacking which we must languish and grow feeble; and to faith and love peculiar stimulus and enjoyment. Without an intelligent acquaintance with the teaching of the prophetic word, no man of God is or can be thoroughly furnished to all good works, for it is part of the "all Scripture" given by inspiration, and profitable for the purpose of rendering him so.

Perhaps one reason for the prevailing neglect of prophetic expositions and preaching will be found on reflection, to lie, *not* in the fact that it is *unpractical*, but rather in the fact that it is so *peculiarly practical*, that few have the boldness and courage to face the ridicule, opposition, and contempt it is sure to incur in the world. Jeremiah lived on the eve and in the crisis of a day of judgment on the apostate professing people of God. He was commissioned to deliver prophetic discourses full of denunciations of coming judgment, and of *chronological statements of its proximity and duration*. We know what Jeremiah's lot was, and few are prepared to play *his* sad and thankless role in society!

So far from the study and exposition of the prophetic word being profitless and vain, we believe it is impossible to estimate the loss sustained by the Church, or the injury done to the world, by the very general and unjustifiable neglect of it. Is it not so that where one prophetic discourse is delivered, ten thousand doctrinal and practical sermons are preached? *By what authority do we thus shelve a line of truth to which divine wisdom has given such prominence in Scripture? Is it not our duty to declare "the whole counsel of God"?* Those who have carefully looked into this subject, solemnly and with good ground believe, that the "word" we are commanded to "preach" is full of evidence that the long predicted and long delayed judgments on the Papal and Mohammedan powers, which are not only already begun, but are fast accomplishing before our eyes, are to issue, and that speedily, in such a

burning of "Babylon the Great," as will light up all Christendom with its lurid glow,—the immediate precursor, if it be not the accompaniment, of the glorious advent of the King of kings, With all earnestness and sobriety of mind they assure their brethren that it is their deep conviction that *this is the testimony of sacred Scripture*; yet multitudes of Christian teachers, without even taking the trouble of examining into the subject, still preach the contrary, or imply it in their preaching; not from well-grounded conviction of its truth, but from educational prejudice, or mere force of habit. Is this right? Ought not every minister of the Word to study for himself the teachings of Scripture, until he is satisfied that he has attained the truth on this momentous theme?

For if we are right—if there be unequivocal proof in the inspired volume, proof that no previous generation of Christians was in a position to appreciate as we are, that the day of Christ is at hand—that the time for evangelising the nations, and gathering in the church of the first-born is speedily to expire—that the long day of grace to the Gentiles is all but over, and that apostate Christendom, so long spared by the goodness of God, is soon to be cut off by his righteous severity—that the mystery of God is all but finished, and his manifested rule about to be inaugurated—that the great closing Armageddon conflict is at hand, and the complete overthrow of the confederated hosts of evil—if we be right in believing that scarcely a single prophecy in the whole Bible, relating to events prior to the second advent of Christ remains unfulfilled —*if we be right*,—then surely every pulpit in England should be ringing with timely testimony to these truths,—surely these solemn and most momentous facts ought not, in the preaching of any of God's faithful witnesses throughout the world, to be passed by in silence. And who that has not *studied* the subject can be in a position to say that we are *not* right— that these things are not so?

May such a spirit as the Bereans had of old, be granted to the Christians of this generation, that they may diligently search the "more sure word of prophecy," and draw directly from that sacred fountain *the Truth as to the fast approaching future*, which God has graciously revealed; and may this volume, through his blessing, prove in such researches, helpful to not a few.

EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR
HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS,
HARTEY HOUSE, BOW, E.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author has been glad to see, by the sale of the first edition of two thousand copies of this work within eight months of its publication, that the important subject of which it treats is increasingly attracting the attention of students of Scripture. In preparing the book for a second edition, he has spared no pains in order to render it as accurate and as reliable as possible.

The present edition has been carefully corrected throughout, and all the astronomic calculations have been verified by a professional mathematician employed in one of the government astronomical offices.

A considerable amount of astronomic detail, which is of interest only to students, has been thrown into an appendix, in order to relieve and simplify the latter part of the work, and to adapt it for general readers.

Much additional matter, of a chronologic and historic character, has been introduced, and several fresh discoveries, of no small importance to the whole subject, are embodied in this edition. As the result of further research, the truth as to the Divine system of times and seasons has become more clear to the author's own mind, and it is, he trusts, more clearly presented now than previously.

There is added in an appendix a complete CALENDAR OF THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES, showing, in unbroken sequence, the main events from the beginning of the Babylonian monarchy (B.C. 747) to the present day. This calendar gives the names of the various monarchs of different dynasties, who have succeeded each other in the headship of the four great empires symbolised by the fourfold image of Daniel, together with their B.C. and A.D. dates, and the leading events of the history. It commences, as will be observed, with the era of Nabonassar, or date of the accession of the first king of Babylon. This date is determined with certainty and exactitude by a series of astronomic observations recorded by Ptolemy, and is therefore one of the best ascertained dates of remote antiquity.

Prophetic students have long been divided in opinion as to the point from which the great "seven times" of prophecy should be dated. All agree that the *terminus a quo* (first point in time) must lie somewhere in the rise of the Babylonian monarchy, but there is difference of judgment as to the exact point. This calendar shows the remarkable fact—never, we believe, observed before—that from the *day of the accession of Nabonassar, the first king of Babylon, to the day of the fall of Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor of Rome, there elapsed an interval of precisely 1260 lunar years*. That the entire duration of the four great Pagan Gentile empires (prior to the tenfold division of the last) should thus measure, *precisely "time, times and a half,"* seems to indicate that the era of Nabonassar should be regarded as, at any rate, an initial starting-point for the "Times of the Gentiles," though the overthrow of the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar is undoubtedly the full and final commencement of this great dispensational period. This remarkable fact indicates also that the *lunar* measurement of time must not be overlooked in researches as to the fulfilment of chronologic prophecy. Hence the distance of each event from the starting-point is, in the calendar, given not only in solar but also in lunar years.

Like the great "week," whose chronicle it presents, this calendar is divided into two parts. The first gives the history of the 1260 years just mentioned, from the beginning of the Babylonian to the end of the Roman empire; and the second traces that of the 1260 years which have elapsed between the era of the rise and that of the fall of the Papal and Mohammedan powers. The latter not only gives the chronologic distance of each event from the era of Nabonassar—the commencement of the whole "seven times"—but also from the rise of the apostasies—the commencement of their second half. The Papal chronology is given in solar, and the Mohammedan in lunar years, the Mohammedan calendar being lunar.

The chronology followed in the earlier part of the calendar is that of the Canon of Ptolemy, as verified by astronomical researches, and elaborately set forth in Clinton's "Fasti Hellenici." The chronology of the Roman empire, as far as the reign of Heraclius, is drawn from Clinton's "Fasti Romani"; intermediate and subsequent dates are taken from Blair's Chronological Tables, and its useful rearrangement in Rosse's Dictionary of Dates, compared with various chronological works, ancient and modern. The chronology of recent European history is given from Haydn's Dictionary of Dates, while that of the most recent and current events is taken from the annual register of the *Times* newspaper.

There is also added in an appendix a careful investigation into the subject of the "seventy weeks" of Dan. ix., a chronological prophecy of the first importance, as being the only one in Scripture indicating the period of the first advent of Christ, and one whose fulfilment is an unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity.

The author sends forth this second edition with a deeper conviction than ever that there is ample and satisfactory evidence that we are indeed living in the closing years of this dispensation—the time of the end; and with a stronger desire than ever that this solemn fact may be more widely perceived and acknowledged by the Church of God, in order to the increase of practical holiness, of joyful hope, and of earnest activity in the work of the Lord.

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

IN sending forth a fifth edition of this work within two years of its first publication, we thankfully record the fact, of which we have abundant evidence, that it has found acceptance with a large number of earnest Christians, of students of God's word, of ministers of the Gospel, of saints who love the hope of their Lord's appearing. From Christians of various denominations and ranks in society, and of different nationalities, letters have been received expressing substantial and hearty agreement with the views it unfolds, and stating that spiritual blessing has been experienced in its perusal. For this, then, we give thanks to God, the alone Giver of every good and perfect gift, and rejoice that our labour has not been expended upon it in vain, I say we, for I associate with myself in this my beloved wife, my fellow-labourer in the Gospel, whose valuable aid rendered in the preparation of this book made it our joint work, and constitutes its success our joint reward.

Very little alteration has been made in this edition; a few slight errors found in the fourth edition have been corrected, and a footnote has been added on page 78, containing Dean Alford's striking and valuable testimony to the correct interpretation of Revelation xx., as establishing the literality of the first resurrection, and the premillennial character of the Second Advent.

May grace be given to all who look for the speedy coming of our Lord to prove they do so by their spirit, their labours, and their lives! "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" How should we reflect upon a dark world the glow of the coming sunrise! How should we

abound in our labours for the Lord, and that "*so much the more*" as we more clearly "see the day" "approaching"?

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.

"The natural and moral constitution and government of the world are so connected, as to make up together but one scheme: and it is highly probable, that the first is formed and carried on merely in subserviency to the latter; as the vegetable world is for the animal, and organized bodies for minds, But the thing intended here, is, without inquiring how far the administration of the natural world is subordinate to that of the moral, only to observe the credibility, that one should be analogous or similar to the other; that therefore every act of Divine justice and goodness, may be supposed to look much beyond itself, and its immediate object; may have some reference to other parts of God's moral administration, and to a general moral plan: and that every circumstance of this his moral government, may be adjusted beforehand with a view to the whole of it, Thus for example: the determined length of time, and the degrees and ways, in which virtue is to remain in a state of warfare and discipline, and in which wickedness is permitted to have its progress; the times appointed for the execution of justice; the appointed instruments of it; the kind of rewards and punishments, and the manners of their distribution; all particular instances of Divine justice and goodness, and every circumstance of them, may have such respects to each other, as to make up all together, a whole, connected and related in all its parts: a scheme or system, which is as properly one as the natural world is, and of the like kind."

Bp. Burter.

Continued in [Part I. Progressive Revelation Chapter I.](#)