

# The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part V. The Apocalyptic Section of the Programme



Continued from [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part IV.](#)

## THE APOCALYPTIC SECTION OF THE PROGRAMME.

We must not close our brief outline of the last, or Christian, section of the Divine programme without any allusion to its most considerable document—the Book of Revelation, the saintly John's contribution towards the end of the first century. This last book of the Bible consists almost entirely of an apocalypse of the future; that is, *of what was future in the days when Domitian was reigning in Rome* (emphasis mine), and John suffering under his cruel tyranny in the lonely island of Patmos.

As in the Old Testament we have first historic books, then didactic and poetic writings, and then the volume of prophecy, containing all the extant works of sixteen different authors, so in the New we have first the four Gospels and the Book of Acts, which are *historic*, then the Epistles, which are didactic, devotional, and hortatory, and lastly a book of prophecy. It is true that, as we have seen, predictions of the first importance, fundamental and far-reaching in character, are scattered through both Gospels and Epistles. But the Apocalypse alone is wholly prophetic, and it thus occupies in the New Testament the place of the major and minor prophets of the Old. It finishes the book with a foreview of the then commencing, but now closing, age, including multitudes of definite particulars, and glancing on more briefly into ages yet to come.

It would, therefore, be a conspicuous omission to leave the Book of Revelation entirely out of account in this last section of our programme. It is a principal part of it; and as it traces beforehand the outline of the main secular and ecclesiastical *events* which were to occur in the sphere of the Roman earth, and as the outline has been most accurately realized in history, it would seem as if this section would serve our evidential argument even better than the previous ones.

And indeed it would do so were we at liberty here to make use of it; but two reasons forbid our doing this. In the first place, the Apocalypse is, we may say, not written in our Bibles in English, but in ancient Eastern

hieroglyphics. It needs therefore *translation* before its statements can be adduced in evidence. Those statements are nevertheless just as precise, and the predictions they embody are consequently just as capable of verification, as if they had been made in plain non-symbolic language. The key by which they are to be translated is found in Scripture itself, and the work presents no real difficulty. *But it takes time.* Exposition of the book must precede any evidential argument based on its prophetic statements, and for this a whole volume, rather the closing pages of one, is requisite. And, secondly, the nature of some of its principal predictions is such as to have caused the book to become a very battlefield of controversy. The Church of Rome is in it so definitely indicated and branded as apostate, that its advocates have been driven to the use of every possible expedient to avoid the application of the predictions to Rome papal, and to refer them either to Rome pagan—that is, to the past—or else to some power still *future*, some antichrist yet to come. This misapplication of the central prediction dislocates the rest of the visions, and introduces *confusion* into a prophecy conspicuous for its *order*. Hence a determination of the *application* as well as of the meaning of the predictions would be needful before any use of their fulfilment, as evidence of inspiration, could be attempted.

It is true that in our last section we have employed its predictions of the apostasy as confirmatory of the plain prophecies of the Apostle Paul. But an angelic interpretation of this special point settles *its* application for all candid minds. The majority of the visions are *not* thus interpreted or applied; and hence before we could demonstrate the *fulfilment* of the prophecies of Patmos *as a whole*, the *meaning* of each and all of its symbols would have to be determined, and their true *application* proved by solid arguments.

For this purpose it is evident that a separate book is required, and such a one we hope, if the Lord permit, to publish ere long, as a sequel to the present volume.

It is already partially prepared, and will be completed as soon as leisure can be secured from more practical engagements. If any of our readers wish to expedite its appearance, they can do so materially by sending financial help to our large Missionary Institute, formed to assist in the evangelization of the world during the brief remainder of this dispensation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See prospectus of East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions.

This work is an extensive and important one, and requires a large income to sustain its efficiency. To secure this demands, naturally, a very considerable share of our time and attention, so that help sent to *it* makes it the easier for us to use the press for the diffusion of Divine truth. We would urge Christian readers who feel the deep importance of this, in these days of doubt and unbelief, *to act with all the liberality they can towards our missionary enterprise.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the meantime we may refer to books already in existence which give, with great fulness, the historic exposition of the Apocalypse, and among these the first is, unquestionably, the learned and elaborate work of the late Rev. E. B. Elliot, in four volumes, or his briefer

book, "The Last Prophecy."

While, therefore, we can make no attempt to demonstrate in this place the fulfilment of the Apocalyptic predictions of the Apostle John, we may state in a few words the nature of the evidence they afford.

The Book of Revelation is an essential and integral part of Scripture, and occupies a place in the volume of prophecy which, if we had it not, would present a blank without any previous parallel. Every event of importance to the people of God and to the history of redemption had, under the old Jewish dispensation, *been predicted before it occurred*, as, for instance, the birth of Isaac, and of Jacob and Esau, the exaltation of Joseph in Egypt, the descent of the Israelites into Egypt, and their exodus from it; the forty years in the wilderness, the entrance to the land, the subjugation of the Canaanites, the building of the temple, the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the Assyrian capture of the ten tribes, and its date, the Babylonish captivity, and its date, the succession of the Persian kings, the reign of Alexander the Great, and the wars of the dynasties of Syria and Egypt, the birth, ministry, and death of Messiah, and the judgments and desolations of Jerusalem and Judea. *All* these events were foretold before they came to pass, as well as many others. Now the prophecies of our Lord and of the apostles as regards the Christian age did not foretell historic events in which the Church would be interested, and by which she would be vitally affected, they did not foretell her fortunes in the world so much as the deep, underlying principles of her existence, the moral character of her surroundings, and the development both of spiritual life in the true Church and gross corruption in the apostate Church, *Events* of an outward political character were not predicted either in the Gospels or Epistles in connection with *Christian* history. The fall of Jerusalem affected, of course, the early Christians, but it was essentially an event of Jewish history—its last episode.

Was it not to be expected that, before the volume of inspiration was closed, a programme of the eighteen Christian centuries of a more outward, definite, event-predicting kind would be given? The saints of this age would *need* such a one even more than the Jews of the preceding age. The wide diffusion of the Church through all lands, the great changes it was to undergo, the strange and subtle temptations it was to experience, the disguised enemies it was to encounter, the cessation of inspired guides and teachers, with John himself, the long ages to elapse before Christ's return,—all would lead us to expect—judging by analogy— that the outline of the *events* to take place in the world in which she was destined to move, *would* be placed in the hands of the Church before the canon of Scripture closed. We should not expect much reference to merely political events as such, however great the world might deem them, but only to those which directly influenced the redeeming work of God in the earth,—in other words, Church history.

The age was to be a long one, faith and hope would be sorely tried, experience would show that the promises of Christ's speedy return were to be understood on the scale of "a thousand years—as one day"; and without some *orderly serial* prophecy to guide the expectation and sustain the faith of the Church, there would be a danger that both might, in the course, and

especially towards the close, of the age, fail. Such predictions had been given in the Jewish age; would they be withheld in the more enlightened Christian dispensation? Every analogy would lead us to expect the reverse.

Yet, on the other hand, Christ had made it perfectly plain that He wished every generation of His people to live in constant watchfulness for His return. To reveal *plainly* from the first either the events or the chronology of the Christian age would entirely have prevented this, and rendered watchfulness impossible, save for the last generation. How was the apparent difficulty to be met? How was a revelation of the future, sufficiently clear to answer all desirable purposes, to be made without being so explicit as prematurely to unfold the facts and foreseen length of this age? The problem was solved by Divine wisdom in this wonderful Apocalypse. It presents a consecutive and continuous outline of the occurrences which would take place in the outward history of the Church from John's day to the second advent, and beyond; *but it presents it in symbolic language, in a form which would veil the true meaning for a time, but would allow it to become progressively clear in the later stages of the dispensation.*

In its chronological statements of periods prior to the second advent, this book employs, in harmony with its general plan, the year-day system of representing the orbital or annual, by the axial or diurnal, revolution of the earth—a day stands for a year. This has been proved, however, only by the lapse of time, and could not have been certainly anticipated at first. As a matter of fact, the writings of the Fathers and of the early Church show us that while the outline of the great eternal future to *follow* the second advent was clearly understood in early times, yet that the prophecies of this present evil age of Satanic power were scarcely comprehended at all. Light as to their meaning dawned on the Church very gradually as the centuries passed away; and not until the apostasy was fully developed was even a partial comprehension of their meaning at all widespread.

With the Reformation came a great illumination as to the scale of the chronology and the scope of the prophecy, and ever since it has been increasingly understood and applied, until a recognition of its relation to, and absolute harmony *with*, other and earlier prophecies is common now among students of Scripture.

This harmony is evident, and lies so on the surface, as well as in the depths of the book, that it may be noted even by cursory readers. The Apocalypse is not isolated from the rest of the prophetic scriptures. It is intimately related to the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and agrees perfectly with the other prophetic teachings of our Lord and His apostles in the New. As to its relation to the former—the Book of Daniel—its *subject* is the same, and its *symbols* are the same.

At the time when John lived, the three earlier empires of Daniel had passed away; but the fourth, or Roman, was in the zenith of its power, and was destined to continue in existence for nearly two thousand years. Daniel had briefly outlined its character and career under the striking symbol of the ten-horned wild beast. John enlarges the Daniel foreview, *employing the same symbols*. Three times over in the pages of the Apocalypse this terrible ten-

horned wild beast is portrayed (chs. xii., xiii, xvii.). Moreover, the most notable feature of this wild beast as represented in Daniel,— its blasphemous, persecuting "*little horn*," whose action draws down the advent of the Ancient of Days in judgment,— reappears in the Apocalypse with fuller detail and in more vivid colouring. Its rise, place, power, pride, tyranny, blasphemy, are the same; its *duration* as assigned in Daniel and the Apocalypse is the same, and the time and manner of its destruction are the same. This identity is indeed the principal key to the Apocalypse.

Secondly, the parables of our Lord are in similar agreement with the Apocalypse. In the parables the king is seen to go into a far country to receive the investiture of his kingdom, and to return for its exercise; in the Apocalypse he is seen in the heavens, and his second advent in manifested glory is symbolized and foretold. In the parables we have the marriage of the king's son; in the Apocalypse "the marriage of the Lamb." In the parables the virgins are awakened by the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him"; in the Apocalypse the advent is represented together with its accompanying events. In the parables the conduct of the faithful and faithless servants is described, and the reward of their respective works; in the Apocalypse we see the two classes and the issues of their acts. The Lord comes, and His reward is with Him, and He gives every man according to his works. The lesson of the parables as to the kingdom which is the everlasting recompense of faithful service is repeated in the Apocalypse, with a fulness of detail and splendour of imagery peculiarly its own.

The same harmony is traceable between the prophetic teachings of the apostles of our Lord and those of this final New Testament prophecy. The oft-repeated warnings and predictions occurring in the Epistles of Paul with reference to the great *apostasy* which was to take place in the Church of Christ—predictions echoed more or less clearly and emphatically by all the apostles—are confirmed by the wonderful Apocalyptic symbolization of that apostasy, especially that part of it which portrays its connection with Rome, and the persecution of Christ's faithful witnesses by the apostate Church. So Jude's prophecy of the advent of Christ in judgment on the ungodly (quoted from Enoch, "the seventh from Adam") is in harmony with the detailed vision of that advent and of that judgment in the Apocalypse; and so also Peter's prophecy of the new heavens and the new earth. The Book of Revelation enlarges this last into the exquisite imagery of its twenty-first and twenty-second chapters, adding a multitude of details, of definite features, entirely omitted in Peter's earlier prediction of the ultimate issue of Divine Providence and of the eternal state of mankind.

The object of this final prophecy of Scripture was not, however, mainly to reveal more of the advent and post-advent events than had been previously revealed, but to unfold those of the interval which was *to precede* the advent. The closing section of the book, from chapter xix. onwards, relates, it is true, to what is still future; but the previous prophetic portion of Revelation, comprising twelve or thirteen chapters, is *fulfilled*, and not unfulfilled, prophecy. It was announced to John as a revelation of "things that must shortly come to pass"; and of some of them it was said "the time is at hand," Accordingly, it has a series of consecutive visions—as we can only

state, without attempting to *prove*, at this time—of the glory and prosperity of the empire of Rome under the Antonines in the second century, of its military and fiscal troubles in the third century, and of the terrible famines and pestilences which followed; of the prolonged pagan persecutions of the early Church, and of the noble army of martyrs under them; of their triumph and patience, and of the great revolution, unparalleled in the Roman earth, when paganism was proscribed and the empire became Christian. It traces then the rapid development of the professing Church, and marks the contrast between it and the true Church, and subsequently it follows out the fortunes of the Roman empire, in which the young Church had to develop. It presents, under the symbols of the four first trumpets, the series of tremendous judgments under which the empire went to pieces in the Gothic, Hunnish, and Vandal invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries; the rise and career of the great Mohammedan power in the Eastern empire,—first, under its Saracenic, and then under its Turkish form; and the coincident rise among the Gothic kingdoms of the West of a revived power of Rome, of a rule ecclesiastic in nature, blasphemous, corrupting, idolatrous, and persecuting in character, connected with the apostate Church of which it is the head.

It recounts by anticipation the existence, during the tyranny of this revived Roman power, of *witnesses for Christ*, who would, throughout its career, protest against its assumptions, and suffer even unto death from its wild-beast-like cruelty; of the sudden resurrection of these slain witnesses at the era of the Reformation, and of the rise of powerful Protestant *nations* soon after that revival of primitive Christianity. Then it goes on to portray the outpouring of judgments of a consuming character on the papal power itself, as was fulfilled in the French revolution and in all the subsequent anti-papal revolutions of this century; also the similar preparatory consumption and decay of the Turkish, or Ottoman, power, even to the verge of extinction; and, lastly, a great final revolution in Europe, ending in the fall of Babylon, or Rome papal, and of Rome itself. At this point the fulfilled glides into the unfulfilled, and *it is a point to which history has almost brought us*. The next events predicted are the second advent of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb.

Thus the special office of the Book of Revelation in the Divine programme of the world's history, is to unfold to the people of God in this dispensation the outline of the history of the Church in the world, *from the beginning of the second century to the end of the age*—the period of Israel's rejection and dispersion—the eighteen Christian centuries. It also describes the great crisis at which this age melts into the next following, or millennial age, much more in detail than any previous prophecy, presenting *in their order* its successive incidents; and it adds some particulars of the later crisis at its close, through which that age passes into the eternal state or new heavens and new earth. From this *last* portion must be learned, rather than from any earlier and less orderly prophecy, the sequence and succession of the closing episodes of the story of human redemption. By its position as the last part of the last section of the programme it has the authority of a *final* statement from Christ of what His Church is to look for, and it closes with the words: "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so,

come, Lord Jesus!"

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To sum up our argument from the New Testament section of the Divine programme:—

A fresh outburst of light from heaven took place in the first century of our era. An entirely new view of the then approaching and commencing future was given to the people of God on earth. The essential facts on which that new future depended were not only foretold, but in the course of that century accomplished. The amount of fresh light imparted at this time may be estimated by contrasting the hopes and expectations of Mary and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna, Zacharias and John the Baptist, at the beginning of the century, with those of Paul the aged, and of the saintly Apostle John, at its close. Israel and her fortunes filled the view of the former; "every creature under heaven"—"all the world"—"all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues"—that of the latter. A human, yet superhuman, Messiah to be born, and to deliver the Jews, was the expectation of the first group; a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour of the world, to come again in power and great glory—of the second. The foretold and fulfilled fact, of Israel's rejection of Christ, had made the great change, and the Christian programme revealed the amazing difference between the results which had been *expected* and those which would actually ensue. It sketched clearly, though in outline only, the fortunes of the Jewish nation, of the Roman world, of the true Church, of the false Church, and of the papal dynasty which would rule it. It gave consequently a most comprehensive and, at the same time, a most definite foreview of the main historic features of the dispensation then beginning and now drawing to a close.

This anticipative outline was entirely new and original in most of its features, though it harmonized with that of Daniel in others. It could not have been sketched from analogy or from memory, for it resembled nothing in the past. It was drawn by Jewish pens, and yet it was diametrically opposed to Jewish anticipations. It could not be imaginative, for it was full of definite, yet most unlikely, predictions, embracing a vast variety of historical episodes affecting millions of mankind for many ages, and history has actually fulfilled them all.

The facts now inscribed in order on the records of the past were noted, and that in the same order, in this programme of the future. The great difference between the two is that the former gives *in detail* what *has* been; the latter, only in outline and principle, what *would* be. As a great philosopher goes behind phenomena in quest of law, and sums up countless facts in one great formula or statement of underlying principle, so the revealing spirit, passing by the multitudinous and often confusing details of history, includes volumes in a verse and ages in an expression, seizing for prediction only the fundamental feature which associates innumerable earthly events.

Thus our Lord, for instance, traced clearly on the chart of the then opening age which He drew two great broadly divergent streams of events as resulting from His own death and resurrection. He no more paused to specify particulars

than a geographer would to mark the trees and bushes on the banks of the great river whose course he indicates by a certain line. The traveller who descends the river estimates the geographer's knowledge of it by the correspondence of *its general direction from its source to the ocean*, not by the unavoidable absence of detail. It would be ten thousand chances to one, as all experience proves, that the true windings of the stream could have been rightly indicated by a stranger to the country. So the omission of minor particulars in no wise invalidates the evidence of inspiration afforded by predictions which are clearly correct when compared with *the general course of events extending over ages*.

What were the two streams laid down thus on the chart of the eighteen Christian centuries by Christ at their very outset?

The first was the turbid and troubled torrent of Jewish history. Its source was pointed out—their rejection of Him self; its course was defined—Titus, Vespasian, Hadrian—myriads of slaughtered and captive Jews—the state of Jerusalem and Judea, the Saracenic conquests, the Ottoman occupation of Palestine, the dispersion of Israel in all lands and their long-continued and great tribulation, “until” a yet future day—all these events are foretold, though summed up in a few sentences.

The other great stream was outlined as plainly in the parables and predictions of Christ. It includes all that is meant by the propagation of the gospel and growth of the early Church, the world-wide diffusion of Christianity, the age of martyrs, the conversion of the Roman empire and of the Gothic nations to Christianity, and the character and course of Christendom.

Were either of these great streams of events *visible* in Christ's day or from His point of view? As well ask are the Tigris and Euphrates visible from London streets to-day! How then came they to be thus clearly predicted? Have not the streams themselves flowed steadily and persistently for ages? What long catalogues of events go to form the waters of the Jewish stream! And as to the other—the Christendom stream — why, Eusebius and Sozomen, Bede and Baronius, Gibbon and Ranke, Mosheim and Milner, Hallam and D'Aubigné, Carlyle and Froude, and a hundred other historians unite their rivulets to make but a small contribution to the flood of its mighty waters! We stand ourselves this day on the banks of the ever-widening and deepening stream. It is flowing precisely in the direction in which the Prophet of Galilee said long since it would flow, and every sign portends that it will merge into the ocean at the time indicated in His last Revelation. *How came He to select these two all-important streams of events, and to anticipate so clearly and correctly the general course of each?*

Again, how came He through His apostles to indicate the future careers and true characters of two great dissimilar *organizations* which should be developed in the midst of Christendom from germs already in existence—a true Church, one in life and one in spirit with Himself, and a false Church, energised by Satan and seated at Rome? Out of all the countless organizations men have formed since the first century, two and *only two* fixed the prophetic eye and claimed anticipative mention—the *true Church*, including every living



Christian of every land and every age, a great *Unity*, though invisible as such, a body of which the risen Christ is the Head; and *the Church of Rome*, a vast worldly ecclesiastical system, whose relations are with the kings of the earth, and which stands opposed to Christ and to His truth. Why were these two thus selected? Have they actually had supreme importance in the world? Can more of the facts of history be proved to have depended on their existence and operation among men, than on any other causes whatsoever? As well inquire whether the light of day depends on the sun, or the waves of ocean on the winds of heaven!

The history of the civilized world for the last eighteen centuries is mainly a record of the conflicting acts and influences of these two all-important unities or organizations. The one has exhibited the working of Christ, the other the working of Satan. The one has evangelized and elevated the nations; the other has intoxicated and corrupted them. The one has proclaimed and spread abroad the truth of God, the other has taught lies in hypocrisy and propagated doctrines of devils; the one Christianized the pagan world, the other paganized afresh the greater part of Christendom.

We speak broadly of contrasted systems in the long run, not of individual exceptions. There have always been members of the true Church entangled in the false. God has always had His children even in Babylon—as He had in Ahab's day seven thousand hidden ones who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But as contrasted bodies, each doing its appropriate work in the world, history portrays these two even as prophecy predicted them—as of super-eminent importance. Taking thus a broad comprehensive view of the course of history as a whole, can there be any question that the hand that drew these outlines was guided by *a mind which beheld beforehand* the events of the eighteen Christian centuries?

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

A review of this programme as a whole suggests a few thoughts with which we must close.

The facts of history have assuredly fulfilled the prophetic outline, and yet what a concatenation of improbabilities it presented! Consider! That a Redeemer should arise from a ruined race, capable, though the woman's seed, of grappling with the mighty foe of God and man; that of the three races of mankind the mightiest should become the meanest and most degraded, and the least conspicuous the most enlarged and influential; that an aged and childless couple should become the parents of many nations, and especially of one great and important people; that a fate terrible as that predicted by Moses for Israel should overtake that special nation, through whom the world was to be blessed; that a Jewish king who lived 3,000 years ago in Palestine should have a Son who should sit on the throne of God in heaven as well as on an earthly throne in Zion, and should be adored by angels and by all nations, though "a reproach of men and despised of the people"; that this great Heir of the throne of Judah should exercise an everlasting and universal sway, though a suffering and dying man; that Messiah the Prince, whose kingdom was to last for ever, should come at a certain predicted time, and, instead of ruling and reigning, be cut off; and, lastly, that our Lord should be

rejected by the Jews, and executed by the Romans, and yet conquer the world, without sword or spear, by the force of truth alone; that He should depart, yet remain with His people to the end of the age; that Christendom should become so corrupt as to oppose Christ, and persecute His people to the death; that Rome pagan, becoming Rome Christian, should prove Rome *anti-Christian*, and be a far worse foe to Christianity than ever paganism had been—all these things seemed, when announced, paradoxical, so unlikely were they ever to occur. Any *one* of them was a great improbability, and the entire succession was simply a *stupendous improbability*!

<sup>1</sup> When Moses recorded the Noahic prediction, the race of Ham was far more prominent than any other; it was, indeed, the only one exercising empire at the time.

In *no single instance* could experience of an analogous character have suggested these predictions. Human sagacity could not have foreseen the facts that fulfilled them, nor could imagination have pictured them. Yet none can question that the course of history broadly regarded *has run precisely on these lines*. Historians, ancient and modern, the inscriptions and monuments of antiquity, the very constitution and customs of the society amid which we live, all attest that facts have fallen out in harmony with the prophetic programme. There can be no reasonable doubt entertained as to the dates of these predictions, nor, consequently, that they preceded their own fulfilment by hundreds and sometimes by thousands of years. Whatever date be assigned to the Pentateuch, it certainly preceded the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, which it minutely predicts; and whatever the date of the Book of Daniel, it must have been in circulation centuries before the Christian era, since it appears in the Greek Septuagint version. Yet it predicts the exact chronology of the First Advent era, and the desolations of the temple and of Judea, which should follow the rejection of Messiah.

Such announcements of future events cannot, therefore, have been mere fortunate guesses. If any one thinks it possible that they may have been such, let him try whether he can describe in advance, in this year 1888, what will happen in Europe for hundreds and even thousands of years to come; let him insert the precise dates at which certain events will take place, and give the chronological measures of the leading episodes of the future history. The attempt might teach the supernatural nature of the task!

Nor can the long correspondence between prediction and fulfilment which we have indicated have been brought about by chance. The law of probabilities forbids the supposition. Chance might account for a few fulfilments out of many failures, but not for uniform fulfilment without exception. Chance? What! In fulfilments as wide as the world and as broad as humanity, and extending over six millenniums? Impossible!

Had Daniel's prophecies been mere guesses at what the order of history would be, is it likely that he should have *chanced* to hit just the right number of the universal Gentile empires—four, and only four? Why should he not have guessed six or seven? Why should he not have made the first the strongest, since Babylon in its might and magnificence was actually before his eyes, instead of making the last so? Could he guess at the iron-like strength and universal dominion of Rome at a time when its first mud wall was the only

fortification of the little cluster of outlaws' huts on the banks of the Tiber? Common sense revolts at the suggestion! The Tiber and the land through which it flows were alike buried beneath the mists of an undreamed-of futurity in Daniel's day! Was it by chance that he predicted a tenfold division of Rome's vast empire? Why did he not make it fivefold or fiftyfold, if he shot at a venture? Why did he foresee a *double* existence for this last of the four empires—a *united* and a *divided*? Why did he not attach this singular feature to Medo-Persia, instead of to Rome? Why did he *not* attribute the swiftness of the he-goat to the Persians, and the heaviness of the bear and the ram to Alexander the Great? How could he by chance assign his emblems with the perfect appropriateness they actually exhibit? Could he *imagine* the strange phenomena with which the lapse of time has familiarized our minds—that the old Roman empire of the sword should pass into the new papal empire of the crozier, and that millions more should submit to the latter than ever submitted to the former rule of Rome? No sane man can suppose that happy imaginations account for this prophet's brief but accurate outline of the events of twenty-five centuries—an outline in which experience itself can detect no flaw!

In the Bible foreview of the history of 6,000 years no single instance can be indicated in which events have falsified the Divine programme. This is a startling fact, and an unquestionable one. It foretells, of course, much that is still future, much that is not yet fulfilled; but as regards the 6,000 years that *have* passed away, its anticipative outline is invariably correct.

Let it be noted, also, that the evidence of Divine inspiration afforded by this prophetic programme is strictly *cumulative*; it grows in strength with each separate fulfilment. Some of these are on a small scale, as the birth of individuals; others on a vast one, as the history of Rome; some are national, others ecclesiastic, and others are political and international. Like all the works of God, they comprise infinite variety. We need both microscope and telescope to study them. They contain minute and astronomically accurate statements of chronology, which it requires some exact erudition to unravel, and they contain announcements so comprehensive that we must glance over all lands and ages to appreciate their truth. Their cumulative testimony is all the more irresistible. From various quarters, and from various epochs, these prophecies bring each its own witness that the mind which inspired it was omniscient—Divine.

They are all, moreover, evidently the fruit of *one* and the same mind, for they unfold *one* plan. The Bible programme is no mass of disconnected and unrelated predictions. There are many petals, but one flower; many cantos, but one grand epic; many chapters, but one book. These prophecies unfold one harmonious scheme for the redemption of the human race; they carry it steadily forward, through patriarchal, Levitical, and gospel economies, to ages to come, when its glorious issue shall be attained. There is no contrariety between one section and another; they form a consecutive series—patriarchal, national, universal.

The *channels* varied at different times, but the water that flowed through them was always one and the same. Abraham and Moses were very unlike Peter and Paul, and the worlds in which they respectively moved were most

dissimilar. But they all unfolded one revelation—the Lamb slain, and the salvation of our race through Him.

Now this is very noteworthy, for, outside the realm of inspiration, *nothing similar can be found*. Can the entire literature of humanity produce a work wielded into one whole by its own contents, by the unity of purpose that runs through it, by the identity of its successive prophecies, and which was yet written by authors some of whom were contemporary with the Pharaohs of the pyramids, others with Cyrus and Darius, and others again with Josephus and Caesar? The lapse of ages alters merely *human* religions and philosophies, as it alters customs, manners, and languages. But the prophetic words of Abraham—"My son, God shall provide Himself a lamb"—find their illustration in the lambs of the Mosaic ritual, their echo in John's "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and their distant reverberation in the Apocalyptic "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" of the heavenly hosts hereafter.

Nor is it only as regards the *First* Advent that we find this absolute agreement in their anticipations between authors who were separated by long ages one from the other. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, announced the Second Advent to judge and punish the ungodly; Daniel does the same, and the apostles quote and confirm both. Moses foretold the present Jewish dispersion; so did Jesus Himself. Isaiah and Jeremiah foretold Jewish restoration, and so did Paul (**Note:** Israel was *already* restored by the time of Christ! Matthew 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of **the house of Israel**.).

Again we say, *literature has no parallel case*. Compare this with the Avestas of Persia, the Vedas of India, the Koran of Mohammed! "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This is the only rational explanation.

Note, again, the singular *definiteness* of this programme. How far removed is it from the elastic, hazy, and purposely ambiguous utterances of the oracles of antiquity, which were vague enough to fit any event! Is this the case with Noah's ethnology? How completely would his predictions have been falsified by history had he assigned Shem's destiny to Japheth, or *vice versa*! Is it the case with David? How natural it would have been for him to foretell the glories of his great Son, and to omit His sufferings and humiliations—to dwell on His throne in Zion, and omit His prior Melchizedek reign in heaven! The angularity, order, and exact chronology of Daniel's predictions again are as far removed from oracular ambiguity as pole from pole! These prophetic foreviews admitted of one fulfilment, and of one only. History must take one certain sharply defined course, or else they would be palpably falsified.

There is nothing general or vague even in the earliest Eden section of our programme, elementary, brief, and enigmatical as it is. Only one great event could fulfil it—the overthrow of moral evil and its author by a suffering Redeemer born of woman. So as to the apostolic outline. It is not content to predict apostasy in a general way, but it defines beforehand the doctrines of the apostate Church, its geographical seat and sphere, and its chronological epoch. This alone is a stamp of truth. No false oracle would risk its reputation by such precision. Our programme does not grope its way doubtfully along, as a blind man might do. It marches boldly forward, planting its feet

firmly on the only stepping-stones amid the rushing waters, as one moving with clear, keen vision and steady tread. Amid ten thousand possibilities it selects *one*, and says, with unhesitating authority at each juncture, although the event be thousands of years ahead, *This is what will happen—this, and nothing else*. Is this the manner of man? or bears it not rather the stamp and seal of Divinity?

The sublime and dignified *moral* character of these prophecies is another proof of their Divine origin. They are worthy of God. How far are they removed from anything transitory or trivial, worldly or wicked! Do they subserve any objects of earthly ambition? Do they foster a selfish greed of gain, or pander to pride and human selfishness? Are they not linked with the promulgation of a holy, just, and good law, and with the proclamation of a gracious gospel? Do they not form an integral part of a great economy, the object of which is avowedly and evidently the moral deliverance of a ruined race, the removal of alienation between the blessed God and His creature man, and the everlasting renovation of the earth and of the human race? The very nature of the plan bespeaks the source whence it emanated! Redemption, as revealed in its gradual development, is and can be the fruit of eternal power and infinite love alone.

IN CONCLUSION THEN, IF THE BIBLE OFFERS AS A PLEDGE OF ITS DIVINE INSPIRATION A COMPLETE PROGRAMME OF FUTURE HISTORY; IF IT HAS RECORDED IN ADVANCE THE EVENTS OF AGES TO COME, AND PLACED THE DOCUMENT CONTAINING THE RECORD IN THE POSSESSION OF MANKIND; IF ALL THE EVENTS OF THE SLOWLY UNFOLDING AGES HAVE ACTUALLY FALLEN OUT ACCORDING TO ITS PROPHETIC FOREVIEW; IF ALL THAT WAS PREDICTED HAS HAPPENED, AND NOTHING HAS OCCURRED CONTRARY TO ITS PROGRAMME: THEN, BEYOND ALL QUESTION, WE ARE BOUND TO HOLD THE BIBLE TO BE FROM GOD, AND PRACTICALLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE ITS DIVINE AUTHORITY.

If we reject it, we do so at our peril. We cannot but recognise that The Infinite Intelligence which created our finite intelligence has, by an intellectual proof of the most conclusive kind, commended to us His revelation of Himself and His purposes. He has given to these last days *the supreme miracle of fulfilled prophecy*.

We may not say, Had we seen the miracles of Christ, had we been convinced by ocular demonstration of His supernatural wisdom and power, we would have believed. Fulfilments of predictions such as we have indicated are every whit as conclusive evidence of supernatural wisdom and power. They are miracles in the realm of *mind*, and higher than any miracles in the realm of matter. They are also, by their very nature, the proper miracles of the closing days of dispensations. The lapse of time is essential to them. The predictions of Christ and of Paul were no miracles *to those that heard them*, but they are the mightiest proofs possible of their Divine inspiration to the generations of the nineteenth century.

Men crave in these days some demonstration from the unseen world. Here is abundance of such evidence! Here is clear proof of an unseen and almighty *intelligence* presiding over human history, and showing us that He does so by describing beforehand the whole course of its events. What need we any further proof? The order of the *visible* world is evidence of the invisible to

him who reads history in the light of prophecy! He beholds the hand of God in human experience, and watches the development of the Divine plan in the progress of the world. He knows, moreover, *what events to expect*, for he discerns his own chronological position in the stream of time; and as nine-tenths of the programme have already been fulfilled, he doubts not that the remaining tenth will be in its predicted and fast-approaching season.

And further, it is clear that if by so many infallible proofs we are convinced that the Bible as a whole is from God, no difficulties as to the mode of its inspiration, no scientific or critical objections, should be suffered to interfere with our hearty and thankful reception of its revelation. If God has spoken, man is responsible to hear, to believe, and to obey.

And lastly, may we say, that to study the Christian evidences, whether of this or of any other kind, is merely to examine the foundations of the house. It is well at times to do this, But it is better to enter and abide in the house! It is infinitely better to avail one's self of its shelter from the stormy blast, to enjoy its rich and spacious accommodation, to dwell in safety and peace under its blessed roof, and to gaze on the widespread prospect from its windows.

There *are* evidences of the truth and Divine origin of the Christian faith, blessed be God!—evidences enough to satisfy any candid inquirer. But, oh, that faith itself— the faith or revelation thus evidenced! What thought can measure its unspeakable preciousness! What tongue can utter, what pen can write, its glorious soul-satisfying, world-transforming nature and effects! Darker than midnight is the problem of existence apart from it,—blank as the grave our prospects, whether as individuals or as a race. Man *without* a revelation from his Maker, like a rudderless and dismasted vessel, driven by mighty winds over raging billows towards a rock-bound coast, drifts helplessly, hopelessly towards destruction. Redeemed man, enlightened by the beamings of the Sun of righteousness, steers steadily and peacefully into the desired haven. The pilot is at the helm, home is in sight, and though the voyage has been dark and dangerous, it is all but over, and its blessed end and eternal issue is the kingdom of righteousness and glory, prepared and promised “from the foundation of the world.”

THE END

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