



The Sword & The Plow

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Seven Problems with Futurist Theology. *An objective measure of 'Biblical' Knowledge*

Christianity cannot take the place of thinking, but it must be founded upon it. Albert Schweitzer.

By
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In endtimes there are, most simply, three competing schemas of prophetic fulfillment, each with variations; firstly the Futurist view, secondly the Partial-Preterist view, and thirdly the Preterist (past) view. Together they teach *all, some and none* respectively.

The Futurist view asserts *all the biblical facts* of the second coming point to our future.

The compromise Partial (part past, part future) view asserts *some facts are past, and some point to our future*. The Preterist view asserts *no biblical prophecy remains to be fulfilled*.

The Issue: objectivity and the measure of a 'biblical' view

A great deal has been written on these three views and a multitude of verses quoted on each

side, but as yet no common measure has arisen upon which a determination can be made. Futurist and Partial-Preterists argue their own conclusions are 'biblical,' so the problem then is one of objectivity: what is the measure of 'biblical?' Is 'biblical' orthodoxy measured by traditional creeds? Is 'biblical' practical measured by usefulness? Is 'biblical' measured by the quantity of verses quoted? Is it the evidence theory of truth: 'known to be true?' Or is 'biblical' the consistency theory of truth: if it is consistent with our beliefs it is true. How to measure *objectively* which explanation is 'biblical?'

The Facts

For simplicity of discussion both *all future* and *some (partially) future* are grouped together, both asserting a future second coming beyond the span of 2,000 years between the bible authors and now.

Q. What are the seven main assertions of Futurist theology?

1. 2,000 year period of time asserted.
2. Jesus' coming Personally' 'Physically' and 'Visibly' asserted.
3. 'Delay' in coming asserted.
4. 'Gaps' between verses and passages asserted
5. Jesus coming asserted to be 'literal.'
6. 'Many comings' asserted by partial school.
7. Asserts Jerusalem temple to be destroyed future to 2008.

Q. What are the seven main assertions of Preterist theology?

1. Things promised and written to that generation fulfilled to them.
- 2.
3. All things to come upon [Jesus'] generation. Mtt 23:36
4. All things fulfilled in [Jesus'] generation. Lk 21:32
5. [Jesus'] generation not to pass away till all fulfilled. Mtt 24:34
6. Jerusalem temple and end of age occur coevally Mtt 24:1-3
7. Jerusalem temple destroyed in AD70. History (Josephus. 'Wars')
8. 2,000 years not a necessary concept

The Rule for Objective Biblical Knowledge

All knowledge is an acquaintance with facts, and all biblical knowledge is an acquaintance with biblical facts. A thing cannot be said to be 'biblical' unless there are biblical statements in the same terms to declare it so. The only objective measure of biblical-reality is this **correspondence between statement with biblical fact in the same terms.** This means that 2000 years can only be 'biblical' if a chronological term equal to 2000 years is observable in the Bible; again, a delay is only 'biblical' if a delay is observable in the Bible. The rule here is correspondence between statement and fact in the same terms. Which of the three explanations is 'biblical' by the measure of a correspondence between assertion and biblical fact in the same terms?

Apply Correspondence Rule to Assertions of Each

Futurism. What occurs when we apply the rule – *does the assertion correspond with bible facts in the same terms* - to the futurist view?

1. No 2,000 year facts are observable in the bible.
2. 'Personally' 'physically' and 'visibly' asserted, but 'personally' 'physically' and 'visibly' nowhere occur in an exhaustive concordance of the scriptures.(Strong's)
3. 'Delay' in coming asserted, but second coming 'delay' asserted by no bible author
4. 'Gaps' between verses and passages asserted, but no 'gaps' stated by bible authors
5. Jesus coming 'literal.' 'Literal' occurs nowhere in the biblical datum.
6. 'Many comings' asserted by partial school. 'Comings' occurs only once in Ezek 43:11 with no observable relation to second coming.
7. No Jerusalem temple exists in 2008 to be destroyed.

#1 In futurism the passing of 2000 years after the first coming is a necessary concept, yet no single biblical fact exists to prove #1. 2000 years because "it is literal" is assumed, yet 2000 years is nowhere observable in the facts.

#2 The terms found in the statements of #2 are nowhere observable in Strong's exhaustive concordance of the KJV bible. I challenge you to do the experiment with Strong's concordance. For example futurism asserts Jesus will return 'Physically.' In Strong's the term 'Physically' should occur alphabetically between 'Phylacteries' and 'Physician,' correct? 'Physically' is not there, because no such term as 'Physically' occurs in the bible! Do the experiment: look it up - 'Phylacteries' in Strong's is followed *immediately* by 'Physician.' It is not there because it is a human invention, and similarly 'Personally' and 'Visibly', yet these three terms lie at the foundation of futurism.

#3 Again the assertion of a 'delay' corresponds to no observable bible fact in the same terms, in fact the bible author of Hebrews asserts precisely the contrary of what is asserted in #3, that there would be *no delay*. Heb 10:37 - *'For yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry' [delay]* Statement #3 of futurism fails on two counts of objectivity: (i) it cannot justify itself on evidence and (ii) it actually denies the bible statement; *'He shall not tarry'* [delay], scarcely a 'biblical' proof to convince the candid

enquirer, but essential to the *'literal and therefore future'* theory.

#4 Here no objective division between passages is made by any biblical author, nor are any divisions suggested by biblical time facts at those places where a future division is supposed to occur. Lacking biblical statements for these claims, they must remain conjectural and merely mental constructs to prop up literalism.

#5 Figurative language is a common literary device of the Hebrew prophets. (eg. Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel). A literal Psalm 23 *'thy rod and thy staff they comfort me'* demands the nonsensical idea that God has a literal rod and staff in heaven, when a metaphorical explanation would answer the import sufficiently. Literalism is not a rule stated in the biblical datum, nor can the notion of *only and always literal* axiom work in practice. To quote the moderate position of Alexander Campbell: *'Now while we agree that there is but one meaning in every passage, we are not prepared to say that meaning is always literal.'* (Campbell 1831, p 431)

#6 Another error is the claim of a plurality of Jesus' *second comings*. The claim corresponds to no relevant statement in biblical observation. *Comings* is only found once in Ezek 43:11, and merely relates to the progress of priests and *their goings out thereof and their comings in therefrom*, a context disconnected entirely from a discussion of the second coming. Further, a plurality of *comings* makes the term a *'second'* coming a meaningless nonsense. *'Many second comings'*; eg. a *'third'* or *'fourth'* *second comings*? It is another fact-less device to prop up a literalism absent from the facts it claims to present.

#7 In AD 70 the holy city of Jerusalem was utterly desolated and never rebuilt. (See Josephus' Antiquities and Wars of the Jews). Futurism places more emphasis on reading the scuttlebutt of modern-doomsayers in daily newspapers than reading the history of Jesus' own generation. What happens when we close the newspaper and look at history?

A sample Preterist synthesis of prophecy and history informs us that Vespasian's Roman army under his son Titus surrounded a Jerusalem besieged by civil war, and a holy temple occupied by: *a generation of villains so mad,*

that had the Romans made a longer delay the city would have been swallowed up by the earth, or destroyed as Sodom... (Josephus. Wars 5:13:566) a national event described by this eyewitness as the *greatest [national] misery since its foundation*, (Wars 6:8:408) *in which the number of those which perished [over 1,100,000] exceeded all the destructions ..ever brought on the world* (Wars 6:9:429), a time when *false prophets abounded*, (Wars 6:5:285) *"the daily sacrifice" failed* (Wars 6:2:94) when *famine* affected the estimated 3,000,000 people in the city, (Wars 5:12) a famine so bad *people searched the sewers for dung*, (Wars 5:13:571) and one *mother ate her own child for food* (Wars 6:3:207) when *a measure of wheat was sold for a talent of money* (Wars 5:13:571) *when men sought by death [by sword over death by starvation], but found it not*, (Wars 5:12:517) a context when *fire and blood mingled together, the blood in the lanes in such quantities that the whole city ran with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood* (Wars 6:8:406ff) *earthquakes* (Wars 1:19:370) and *signs in the heavens*: (Antiquities 17:6:167 Eclipse, comet) a time when *the sounds of trumpets* (Wars 6:1:68) and the *noise of horses* (Wars 3:2:33) were sounds to inspire dread and torment, when the *great plain* in front of Jerusalem (Wars 5:2:67, 5:3:106ff) was leveled even wider by the four legions of the Roman army as *numerous as locusts* to make a greater plain for battle. The entire city was shut up, the national population *captured in a kind of net*. (Wars 6:1:160) The futurist cannot tell us anything of Jesus' generation, but Preterism tells us it was an unsettled world revolved by wars, a world that saw *the Roman government in great internal disorder by the continual changes of its rulers, and understood that every part of the habitable earth under them was in an unsettled and tottering condition..* (Wars 7:4:79)

To this near correspondence between biblical prophecy and fulfilled history futurism attaches no significance at all, revealing that historical ignorance is the true basis for futurism. The need to *re-build* a 1st century temple (so it may be *re-destroyed* in the 21st century) to prop up a theory lacking facts is so silly as to be almost fabulous. It is further evidence of futurism's inferior explanatory power: it cannot explain the deeper significance of bible facts. These seven topics are major tenets of the futurist theory of the second coming.

Preterist. What occurs when we ask for biblical correspondence with the seven Preterist assertions? In this case –

1. Things promised and written to that generation had a first meaning to them.
A standard principle of modern historiography.
2. All things to come upon [Jesus'] generation. Mtt 23:36
Correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms.
3. All things fulfilled in [Jesus'] generation. Lk 21:32
Correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms
4. [Jesus'] generation not to pass away till all fulfilled. Mtt 24:34
Correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms
5. Jerusalem temple and end of age occur coevally Mtt 24:1-3
Correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms
6. Old covenant of Moses located in Jerusalem temple. 1 Kgs 8-9
Correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms
7. Jerusalem temple destroyed in AD70
Josephus. Wars of the Jews
Correspondence between historical statement and biblical fact in nearly the same terms.

In Preterism tragic Jewish prophecy (Revelation) is explained by tragic Jewish history. Preterism has a very simple basis:

#1 *Things promised and written to that generation had a first meaning to them.* In thought the simplest view is always to be preferred. This principle is called *Occam's razor*, where no more complexity is introduced than what the facts allow.

#2 Preterism simply accounts for genuine time facts relative to the time they were written, thus

the generation spoken to is the same generation as 'this generation' to whom the things were promised. This is called 'fact-for-fact' correspondence': it is express. The same also with statements #3 and #4.

#5 Asserts that the Jerusalem temple - which contained the institutions of Moses - also maintained them. This means that because the Mosaic covenant is in the Mosaic temple, the temple supports the Mosaic age. The conclusion is that when you end the temple you end the age. This is correspondence between statement and fact in the same terms.

#6 Explains the reason for #5 - the temple and the age end together – the reason being that the covenant was located in the Jerusalem temple. 1 Kings 8 – 9:1-9.

#7 Asserts that Jesus' divine revelations to His generation may be answered by a correspondence with the historical state of affairs in that generation, (Josephus. Antiquities, Wars) which restores the prophetic credibility futurism steals from Jesus.

Clearly a Preterist (past view) has far more explanatory power of the temple's historical and redemptive significance than futurism, and posses the firmest foundation in fact.

Conclusion of Comparison

Where biblical objectivity is measured by a *correspondence between statement and biblical fact in the same terms*, it must be concluded by all candid observer that the yet future premises are embarrassingly absent in every particular, while first century (Preterist) assertions are, by observation, legitimate statements of biblical authors.

Futurism springs from a rigid literalism which conjures, as if by magic: a *delay* not observable in the datum, *gaps* which correspond to no biblical datum in the same terms, multiple and fictitious *comings* which correspond to no biblical datum in the same terms, and the magical reappearance and re-destruction of a temple destroyed 2000 years ago. The most disturbing particular is that none of this speculation matches observable biblical fact (in-the-same-terms) at any single point, yet its followers claim complete certainty for it. The basis for all this mental machinery is literalism.

Proof of futurism's entire structure is silence: *Jesus hasn't come back yet has He?* The problem here is that the conclusion cannot be falsified or proven, even after 2000 years of failure. For 2000 years futurism has ignored the past and gazed off into the dim future offering; fictions instead of biblical facts, conjecture for proof, unbiblical terms as evidence, novelties like 'comings' as truth, and excuses like Christ was 'delayed' to explain its weakness. The yet future to us view reminds one of a wobbly shack on a loose foundation, propped up by human buttresses and broken beams glued together and taped up, a patchwork of inventions. The real problem of futurism is not the formwork but the foundation of Knowing: it is not founded on any real, solid, biblical fact.

Futurists may believe they are right, but one may *believe* anything. True facts are the only measure of objective Knowledge, and without biblical facts to measure statements there can be no objective Knowledge. I will close with a quote from Karl Popper who wrote about '*knowing*' in the absence of real facts. He said without real

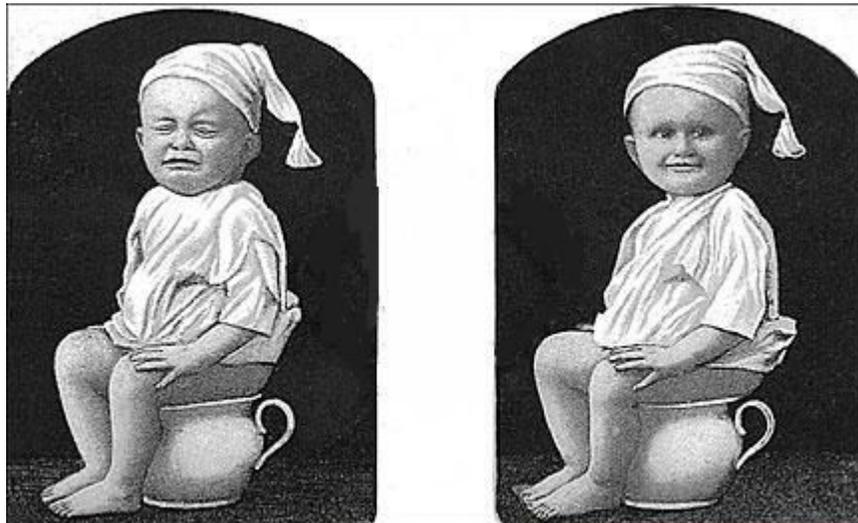
facts there can be no rational defense, but rather in their absence; '*Our 'knowledge' is unmasked as being not only in the nature of belief, but of rationally indefensible belief – of an irrational faith.*' (Popper 1972 p5)

While little known and unfamiliar at present, Preterism possesses the singular merit of objectivity as the basis for a more rational and biblical explanation of the end time facts. I recommend it to the impartial Christian. morry_lee@yahoo.com.au

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Understanding Eschatology Difficult?



Read The Sword & The Plow!

An Exposition of II Corinthian 3

Kurt Simmons

1 - Do we begin to again to commend ourselves to you? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

A breach has occurred between Paul and the Corinthians; much of the present epistle is written to heal the breach and defend Paul's actions and apostleship. The breach appears to have been prompted by his first epistle, in which he faulted them for the man that had his father's wife and perhaps some of the other disorders present in the church. *"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (II Cor. 2:4)*. Because of the epistle, and because he wanted his next visit to be an occasion of joy and happiness, not grievousness and discipline, Paul by-passed Corinth when he went into Macedonia, and did not visit them as he previously indicated he would. *"Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth...But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness." II Cor. 1:23; 2:1; cf. II Cor. 1:15, 16)*

The fact that he did not come to them as he said he would has injured the feelings of the Corinthians, and opened him to charges of behaving with duplicity and insincerity. *"When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be*

yea yea, and nay nay?"(II Cor. 1:17).

The breach has been widened by Paul's adversaries, who have exploited the incident to discredit his ministry and apostleship. Paul's authority and credentials as an apostle have been questioned (II Cor. 11:5); his behavior in not accepting support has been turned as an occasion against him, as if he had somehow slighted them (vv. 6-9); his bodily presence had been characterized as "weak" (II Cor. 10:9), and his speech styled "rude" (unpolished) and contemptible (II Cor. 10:9; 11:6). The detractors are most probably Judaizers (*"are they Hebrews? So am I."* II Cor. 11:22) who are preaching "another Jesus" and "another gospel" (II Cor. 11:4), "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (II Cor. 11:13). Their reception by the Corinthians into the church is probably what prompted Paul's comment about not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (II Cor. 6:14-18).

The comment here rhetorically asking whether he is commending himself or requires letters of commendation to them, reflects the breach that has occurred as if he were now somehow become a stranger to them.

2, 3 – Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God;

not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Paul did not require letters of commendation to or from the Corinthians because his love for them, written upon *his* heart, and their obedience to the gospel, written upon *their* hearts, was its own letter of commendation, testifying to the verity of his ministry and apostleship. “Tables of stone” is an allusion to the Decalogue. The Corinthians’ obedience to the gospel ministered by Paul is compared with the giving of the Old Testament by Moses; the one was engraved upon stone, the other upon the Corinthians’ hearts. The reason Paul introduces the Old Testament here, where we would not normally expect it, likely reflects the fact that Judaizers have gotten among the Corinthians. Paul wants to demonstrate the surpassing glory of the New Testament to the Corinthians, both in its being written inwardly in man’s heart by the Spirit of God, rather than externally upon tables of stone, and by the ministration of the Holy Ghost and the power of God resting upon the apostles, which stood in further commendation of his apostleship.

4, 5 – And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

The Judaizers boasted and were confident in the flesh; they are descendants of Abraham, circumcised the eighth day, and gloried in their accomplishments under the law. Paul, too, boasted these things, and more. The last half of chapter eleven and first half of chapter twelve are devoted to a recital

of things Paul was provoked “foolishly” to boast about: how thrice he was beaten with rods, five times he received forty stripes save one, once he was stoned, thrice suffered shipwrecked, and so forth. Yet, for all that he could boast, Paul chose rather to glory in his infirmities, for God’s strength is made perfect in weakness (II Cor. 12:9). At precisely that point where man cannot save himself, the blood of the Lamb makes him whole. Paul, thus, disclaimed all sufficiency as a minister of Christ, giving glory to God alone; it was God who called him to the ministry, who equipped, who inspired, who enabled, and who sustained. Paul was but an earthen vessel, an instrument in the hand of God to communicate the message of reconciliation to the fallen race of man. Herein is the great distinction between the gospel preached by Paul and that preached by the circumcision party: the Jews rested in the flesh, Paul in the cross of Christ. *“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).*

6 – Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Paul refrains from directly attacking the Judaizers, but is concerned instead to prove the weakness and unprofitableness of the law. The letter of the law can only convict fallen and unregenerate man; the motions of sins in his members bring him into bondage to the law of sin in his flesh (Rom. 7:23), leading him to exclaim, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (v. 24). But, as the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of

gravity, so the law of the Spirit of life in Christ overcomes the law of sin and death. Where sin did abound, grace doth much more abound (Rom. 5:20). The distinction between letter/flesh and grace/spirit is the lesson Paul labored that his students learn and so be reconciled to him and to Christ.

7 – But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,

Herein lays a great Preterist stumbling block and gaff. Paul’s characterization of the law as a “ministration of death” is thought by some to signify that the Mosaic law was the sole condemning force of mankind, and that by its removal man is made just before the tribunal of God. One writer thus states “*the defeat of sin is tied to the annulment of the old aeon of law.*” And “*when the ‘ministration of death written in tables of stone’ was finally destroyed, death was swallowed up in victory.*”¹ Another Preterist has stated “*You cannot see what the Mosaic Law had to do with deliverance from sin-death... Nullification of the Mosaic Law represented what humanity needed most--deliverance from a system of Law that COULD NOT SAVE.*”

Did you catch that? Nullification of the Mosaic law is what man needed most! Man is delivered from sin and death by annulment of the Mosaic law, not the cross of Christ! Serious stuff, indeed!

No. The law of Moses merely *codified* the moral law that was extant from the garden and still exists today; it showed

man his sin that existed without written law. Paul said “for until the law [of Moses] sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). Paul is not saying that God did not impute sin to man from Adam until Moses, for he very plainly did; the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah prove this. No, Paul is saying that *man* did not impute sin to *himself* where there was no written law from God; men required an objective standard of morality; without written law, they supposed they could commit sodomy, fornication, cheat and enslave their fellow man with impunity as if these were morally indifferent and went unnoticed by God. Hence, the law entered to show man his sin and the penalty annexed to it by God.

Every commandment of God carries the penalty of death for its willful violation (sin), whether it be the commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or the commandment not to lust, kill, steal, hate, or commit fornication or adultery. The Mosaic law added nothing to the moral law except the obligation to sacrifice a blood offering. This ceremonial aspect of the law was, in reality, typologically prophetic, in that it foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ, but could not provide atonement itself. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). When Preterists assert that the defeat of sin was tied to annulment of the law, supposing that the cross could not save unless the law was removed, they greatly mistake the case. *The cross triumphed over the law* (Col. 2:14, 15). The law was removed because of its weakness and unprofitableness, not because it trumped the cross or forestalled man’s salvation.

¹ Rather than seem to pick on this individual whom we bear no ill will, we will simply leave him unnamed.

Since the Mosaic law did not create or empower sin and death, its removal could not terminate sin and death. Removal of the law was soteriologically *irrelevant* in terms of man's justification. *Man is saved by the addition of grace, not the removal of law.*

was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

Paul alludes to the time when Moses descended from the mountain and his face shone with the glory and radiance of God, whose presence he had just left (Ex. 34:29-35). He analogizes Moses' veiling his face to the very nature of the law itself, which stood in types and shadows of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The children of Israel could not see distinctly the glory reflected in Moses face; they could not see the thing to which the law pointed or led, but had to avert their eyes as man must turn his eyes away from the sun. The veil Moses donned muted the brightness of God's radiant purpose in Christ, allowing only a veiled glory to shine through. Christ was the end and object of the law; the law was a school master to bring men to Christ (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24); it was not an end in itself. The provisional nature of the law meant that its glory would be done away.

8, 9 – How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

The establishment of the Old Testament was attended by great glory in the plagues visited upon Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the appearance of the Lord upon the mount, the pillar of fire and smoke, and the glory of the Lord that filled the temple at its inauguration. Yet, for all the glory attending the giving of the law, the glory of the gospel is greater still. The birth of the Savior, his cross and resurrection, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the promised of eternal life in glory hereafter all make the New Testament excel in glory all that has been before, and that will ever be.

10, 11 – For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

The moon and stars do not cease to shine during the day. Rather, the brightness and glory of the sun so far excels them that their radiance is completely overwhelmed and submerged, causing them to disappear to the eye of man. In the same way, the Old Testament vanished at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness; the glory of the Old Testament waxed pale and disappeared before the perfect day of the New Testament. The translators use the pluperfect past tense ("has been done away"), but the Greek reads "is being annulled." It is, of course, correct today to say "has been done away," but when Paul wrote the Old Testament had not yet disappeared. The writer of Hebrews thus says, "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

12, 13 – Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

“Plainness of speech” is set over against the veiled face and, therefore, speech of Moses, by which Paul signifies the types and shadows of the law. The brightness radiating from Moses’ face was the *glory of God’s salvation in Christ*. But this was hidden beneath the feasts and rituals of the temple, and not plainly declared. The law stood as a grand object lesson, demonstrating man’s sin and the need for blood sacrifice to make atonement. But as the blood of bulls and goats could not satisfy the law of sin and death, the rituals served merely to point and instruct. However, the veiled nature of the law meant that some fastened their eyes upon the veil, rather than look beyond to the glory muted beneath.

14 – But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

Paul said that his fellow Jews had “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:2, 3). The Jews supposed that the law was an end in itself. Their minds were blinded, because they were unwilling to see that righteousness did not come by meritorious works of the law, but the obedience of faith, and therefore by grace. Had they been true disciples of

Moses, rather than hypocritical and duplicitous play-actors, they would have recognized Christ when he came. The blindness of their pride and love of outward forms and superficiality, rather than true religion written upon the heart, prevented them from seeing the very thing the types and shadows of the law pointed to. The veil upon Moses’ face covered their eyes and hearts, and they went on in stubborn disbelief. “The veil is done away in Christ” means not only that the types and shadows are removed, but *understanding* is imparted and the disciple is able to see that it points to and is fulfilled in Jesus. “*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*” (Lk. 24:44, 45).

15, 16 - But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

The law was regularly and ceremoniously read in the synagogue and assemblies of the Jews. However, the heart of the nation at large was impenetrable. “*For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*” (Matt. 13:15). But when “it” (the heart) turns to the Lord and seeks him in sincerity and truth, the veil of types and

shadows in the Mosaic law is lifted, and the ceremonies are seen to point to Christ as the source and hope of man's salvation.

17 - Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Someone once explained the trinity to me saying, "Jesus was a body (earthen vessel); the life in him was the Spirit; both were from God." This verse certainly tends to validate that explanation. The man Christ Jesus was but an earthen vessel indwelt by the Spirit of God. Where the Spirit is, man is free. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ triumphs over the law of sin and death codified in the law of Moses.

18 - But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The glory of God's salvation in the face of Christ is not veiled. The message is simply and plainly communicated, not concealed beneath types and shadows as the law of Moses had been. "Beholding as in a glass" takes us back to I Cor. 13, where Paul says, men saw the glory of God's redemptive purpose in Christ "through a glass darkly." This period was likened to the infancy of our salvation, and was attended by the prophetic gifts. However, in the manhood of our salvation, the prophetic gifts have ceased, and faith, hope, and love alone sustain the man of God. Moreover, the veil of types and shadows has been taken away, and we see the glory of God's salvation openly, "face to face" in Christ. *"For God, who*

commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

"Glory to glory" refers not to a change from the Old Testament to the New (the Corinthians were never under the law of Moses), but from the glory of adoptive sonship in Christ during our sojourn on earth here below, to the glory of eternal inheritance in heaven above. *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).* Adoption precedes inheritance; we are made adoptive sons by the gospel; we receive the inheritance by resurrection. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead; we are conformed to his image in our resurrection from physical death and so are changed from the glory of saints below to the glory of heaven above. ****

Don't be bullied – Get Informed!



The Sword & The Plow

Bishop John Lightfoot

1602-1675

A SERMON²

PREACHED AT

GUILDHALL,

LONDON,

JAN. 24, 1674

REV. XXI. 2.

*And I, John, saw the holy city,
the new Jerusalem, coming down from
God out of heaven.*

[Editor's note: This sermon shows that the illustrious Bishop, John Lightfoot, understood the new heavens and earth and new Jerusalem as speaking to the church and gospel era, and that the coming of Christ and day of the Lord spoke to the overthrow of Jerusalem and the world of the apostles' time. He also declaims against the traditions of the Romish church, which he deems identical in spirit to the traditions of the Jews that brought their nation into apostasy.]

AND no wonder, if there be a new Jerusalem, when, at the fifth verse of this chapter, God proclaims that he makes 'all things new.' And that 'new Jerusalem' must needs be a 'holy city,' when it is sent down from God, and comes out of heaven. And that holy city, coming down from heaven, could not but be a most lovely prospect to him that saw it, when the old Jerusalem on earth had been once so lovely, that it was the "glory and joy of the whole earth," Psal. Xlviii. Who it was that saw it, he himself tell you, speaking out his name, - 'John;' by which, I suppose, there is none here, but understands the blessed apostle and evangelist of that name; though time hath been, that some have dreamed of another John, but no account could be given, who he was, or whence he came. I shall, therefore, in this matter, which, I believe, needs but little dispute now, only say these three things:-

I. That it is disagreeable to all reason to think, that our Saviour, - when he intended to do some

man so much honour and favour, as to impart such noble and glorious visions and revelations to him, as are recorded in this book, - should pass by and skip over his own apostles and disciples, and should pick out a man, that, we all know, was no apostle,- that no one knows, whether he were a disciple or no. But,

II. It is agreeable to all reason to conceive, that, as the man, to whom God vouchsafed the revelation and discovery of the times and occurrences, that were to intervene betwixt his own times and the fall of Jerusalem, was "Daniel, a man greatly beloved;"- so that the John, to whom Christ would vouchsafe the revelation and discovery of the time and occurrences, that were to intervene betwixt the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world, was John, the disciple "greatly beloved."

I. Of that disciple Christ had intimated³, that "he would, that he should tarry till he came;" that is, till he should come in vengeance against the Jewish nation and that place, and in diverse other places in the New Testament, doth mean in that sense, it were very easy to make evident, should we take that subject to insist upon.

Now, as our Saviour vouchsafed to preserve him alive to see the fall and destruction of that city, - so also, did he vouchsafe to him the sight of a 'new Jerusalem,' instead of the old, when that was ruined, laid in ashes, and come to nothing. He saw it in vision, we see it in the text; and upon that let us fix our eyes and discourse; for we need not speak more of him that saw it.

II. In the verse before, he sees "a new heaven and a new earth;" and in this verse, a "new Jerusalem." Something parallel to which is that in Isa lxv.17; "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." And in the verse next following, "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing." The expressions intimate the great change of affairs, that should be in the world under the gospel, from what had been before. A 'new heaven,' or a change of church and religion, from a Jewish to a Gentile church, and from Mosaic to evangelical religion: - a 'new earth,' or a change in the

² English folio-edition, vol. 2, p. 1196

³ John xxi. 22.

world, as to the management or rule of it, from heathenism to Christianity, and from the rule of the four heathen monarchies⁴, 'to the saints,' or Christians, 'to judge the word⁵;' or being rulers or magistrates in it.

And the 'new Jerusalem' is the emblem and epitome of all these things under this change, as the 'old Jerusalem' had been, before the change came. There is none but knoweth, that 'Jerusalem,' in Scripture-language, is very commonly taken for the whole church then being, as well as it is taken, particularly and literally, for the city itself then standing. That city was the church in little, because there were eminently in it all those things, that do make and constitute a true church,- viz. the administration of the word and divine ordinances, the assemblies of the saints, the worship of the true God by his own appointment, and the presence of God himself in the midst of all. And can any doubt, but that the 'new Jerusalem' meaneth, in the like sense, and upon the like reason, 'the church of God under the gospel,'- this enriched with all those excellencies and privileges, that that was, yea, and much more? There was the doctrine of salvation, but wrapped up in types, and figures, and dark prophecies; but here unfolded to the view of every eye, and Moses's veil taken off his face. There, ordinances of divine worship, but mingled with multitudes of carnal rites; here, pure adoration in spirit and truth: there, an assembly only of one people and nation; here, a general assembly compacted of all nations: there, God present in a cloud upon the ark; here, God present in the communication of his Spirit.

I. Therefore, it is the less wonder, that it is called the 'holy city,' because of these things, - which is the second circumstance considerable in the words, "I saw the new Jerusalem, the holy city." It is observable, that the second old Jerusalem (for so let me call the Jerusalem, that was built and inhabited after the return out of captivity) was called the 'holy city,' when goodness and

holiness were clean banished out of the city, and become a stranger there. When the temple had lost its choicest ornaments and endowments, that contributed so much to the holiness of the place and city,- the ark,- the cloud of glory upon it, - the oracle by Urim and Thummim,- the fire from heaven upon the altar: from the city and nation: yet even the n it is called the 'holy city' in this her nakedness.

Nay, when the temple was become a den of thieves, and Jerusalem no better, if not worse; when she had persecuted the prophets, and stone those, that were sent unto her; when she had turned all religion upside down, and out of doors, and worshipped God only according to inventions of men;- yet even then, and when she is in that case, she is termed the 'holy city,' Matt. Iv. 5, "Then the devil taketh him up into the *holy city*, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple." Nay, when that holy evangelist had given the story of her crucifying the Holy of holies, the Lord of life and glory, even then he called her the 'holy city,' chap. xxvii. 53; "The bodies of many saints, which slept, arose, and came out of their grave after his resurrection, and went into the *holy city*, and appeared to many."

"Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah," might she very well have said then; and so might others says of her; for it might seem very incongruous to call her the 'holy city,' when she was a city so very unholy. She was, indeed, comparatively, 'the holy city,' because there was not a place under heaven besides, which God had chosen to place his name there; and there he had: and that was it, that gave her that name and title. And while she kept the peculiarity of the thing, she kept the name, but at last forfeited both; and then God finds out another city where to place his name, "a new Jerusalem, a holy city," a holier city; her younger sister fairer than she.

I. 'Holy,' under the same notion with the other, because God hath placed his name only there: 'holier' than she, because he hath placed it there in a more heavenly and spiritual manner than in her, as was touched before:- and holier still, because she shall never lose her holiness, as the

⁴ Dan. Vii.

⁵ I cor. Vi.2

other did,- as we shall touch hereafter. And she cannot but be holy, as I said before, when she comes down from heaven, and is sent thence by God.”

And this is the third thing remarkable in the text, “I saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven.” The apostle St. Paul calls her ‘Jerusalem which is above,’ Gal. iv. 26. Our apostle sees her coming down from above; and the prophet Ezekiel, in his fortieth chapter and forward, seeth her pitched here below, when she is come down. She is above, and yet she is beneath:- much as the case was at Mount Sinai; there was a tabernacle above, the heavenly pattern on the top of the mount; and there was a tabernacle beneath, the material building and fabric at the foot.

“Jerusalem, that is above;” intimating, that it is not a material building, but a spiritual,- at the builder is not man, but God: and yet that Jerusalem is “come down,” and is also here below, because it is among men, and consists of men; men, “as lively stone, being built up into a spiritual house and building,” as it is I Pet. ii. 5. Most commonly, in this book of Revelation, she is called by the very name of ‘heaven’ itself; that were you read ‘heaven,’ you must understand the ‘church,’ partly, because she is the only heaven, that is upon earth; partly, because of the presence of God in the midst of her, as in heaven; partly, because of the holy and heavenly things that are in her; and partly, because she is the gate of heaven, and the only passage whereby to come thither. Upon all which accounts together, it is no wonder, that she carries the name of the “heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city,” and the holy city, “that cometh down from God.”

And let this suffice to be spoke concerning the meaning of the ‘new Jerusalem,’ or what it is,- viz. the gospel-church. The great question and dispute is, Where it is? And whereas our apocalyptic saw it coming down from heaven, the great inquiry is, Where it lighted, pitched, and took its station? Where is the house of the Prince, and where is this city of the great King? Where is the true church, this new Jerusalem?

The finding where it is not, will some direction how to seek it, where it is: and let us begin there first.

I. First, therefore, let me say in this case, much like what was said of old by the historian concerning the city Samnium, “You may look for Samnium there, where Samnium stood, and cannot find it.” If you look for the new Jerusalem there, where the old Jerusalem stood, you will not find it there: though the Jew would have you to look no where else, and have it to be found no where else. It is well known, what the conception and expectation of that nation is in this point: how they look for a most stately Jerusalem, to be built where the old one stood,- for a pompous kingdom settled in the land of Canaan, suitable to such a city,- and for a pompous Messiah, riding in the midst of both, with stateliness suitable to both. I shall say no more to this opinion, but, briefly, only this,- for it is not worth speaking much unto,- That this opinion helped forward the murder of the true Messiah, when he came along them. And I much wonder, whether the opinion, that produce so bad an effect then, can come to any good effect at anytime. Because our Saviour, poor Jesus, did not bring so much pomp and gallantry with him, as that opinion expected, he was looked upon by them as a false Messiah; and, under that notion, they made him suffer. And it is more than suspicious, that such an opinion can prove good, solid, and successful never, that proved so very fatal and mischievous then.

It is true, indeed, that the prophet Ezekiel doth delineate his visionary Jerusalem, as seated in the very place, where the old had been: for, indeed, there was then a Jerusalem to be built there, as it was after the return out of captivity. But whosoever shall take measure of the dimensions, that he giveth to his city in space and compass, will find it to come near, if not equal, the space and compass of the whole land of Canaan. And this apocalyptic, the best interpreter of that prophet, measuring his square new Jerusalem, at ver. 16 of this chapter, finds it to be twelve thousand furlongs, or fifteen hundred miles, upon every side of the square, six

thousand miles about; and the wall about it, also, fifteen hundred miles high: the “wall of salvation.”⁶ So that these things considered, a mystical or spiritual sense is enforced here, and for a literal one there is left little or no room at all. And we must look for the ‘new Jerusalem’ somewhere else, than where the old one stood; for there is not room for it. Where, then, shall we seek next, since we cannot find it there? Here,

I. I cannot but remember the story of 2 Kings vi:- The Syrians are seeking Elisha at Dothan, and he strikes them blind; and “This is not the way (says he), this is not the city; but follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek;- and he brought them to Samaria.” We are seeking the ‘new Jerusalem;’ and there are those, that will tell you (but you must let them blindfold you first), that you of London, we of England, are out of the way, if we look for any ‘new Jerusalem,’ any true church, here among us; tut follow them, and they will lead you, where it is, and they will bring you to Rome. A place where I should as little seek for the ‘new Jerusalem,’ as I should have sought for the old Jerusalem in Samaria; or as I should have sought for true worshippers, and the place of true worship, at Sichem, and mount Gerizim. When they pretend to lead you to the new Jerusalem, and bring you to Rome,- they could hardly led you to any place under heaven more unlikely where to find the ‘new Jerusalem,’ than there.

Our divines, in their writings, have evidenced this abundantly, and I shall not trouble you with rehearsing any thing they have spoken. I shall only lay these four scriptural considerations before you, easy to understand and carry away; and even out of them, let any impartial judgment censure and determine in this case. And, first, two concerning the place and city: and then, two concerning the church and religion.

I. Concerning the place and city:-

First, As the new Jerusalem is never mentioned in Scripture, but with an honourable and noble

character,- so Rome, on the contrary, is never spoken of, under any name or title, but with a character as black and dismal. One memoir only excepted (which is, in her story, as Abijah was in the family of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiv. 13,- the only one there, in whom was found any thing that was good): and that is, that there was once a church there, whose “faith was renownedly spoken of through the whole world,” Rom. 1. 8. There was so, indeed, and there could not be an antichristian church there, unless there had been a Christian church there first: since, “There must be a falling away first, that the man of sin might be revealed,” 2 Thess. ii. 3.

The first mention, that you have of Rome in Scripture, is in Num xxiv. 24, under the name of ‘Chittim;’ and there it is branded for the great oppressor and afflicter of nations: and it is finally doomed to ‘perish forever.’

Secondly, You have mention of her armies, Dan. IX. 27; but with this brand upon them, that they are called “The abominable army, that maketh desolate;” there styled, by their Vulgar Latin, as in Matt xxiv, “the abomination of desolation.”

But, thirdly, That which tops up all, is, that she is called ‘Babylon,’ in this book of Revelation, and described there as she is. For that by ‘Babylon,’ is meant ‘Rome,’ - the Romanists themselves will readily grant you, if you will grant them the distinction of Rome pagan and Christian, imperial and pontifical. And the last verse of chap. xvii, puts the matter out of all doubt, where it says, that “the woman, the scarlet whore, which thou sawest, is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Upon which every one, that is acquainted with the Rome-history, must needs conclude, that no city can there be understood like the city Rome.

Now, it is a very improper inquest, to look for the new Jerusalem, in a place that must ‘perish for ever;’ to look for the holy city among the ‘abominable armies;’ and to look for Sion, the city of God in Babylon, that ‘mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.’

⁶ Isa. xxvi. 1.

Secondly, Whereas old Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation, incurred so great a curse and guilt for the murder of the Lord of life, as we all know it did; it requireth very cogent arguments to prove, that Rome, that had a hand as deep in that murder, should obtain so great a blessing and happiness on the contrary, as to be the only church in the world, and the mother of all churches. There is no Christian but knoweth, how deep a hand Jerusalem had in that horrid fact: and he knoweth but little, that knoweth not, that Pontius Pilate was deputy for Rome there,- and how deeply also he was engaged in it, as her deputy.

And so much be spoken concerning the very place, and how unlikely it is to find the new Jerusalem there. How improper it is to imagine, that that should be the city of God, of which God himself, in his word, speaks not one good work, but evil: to imagine, that he should choose that, of all cities, for his dearest spouse, that, of all cities, had the deepest hand in the murder of his dear Son.

II. Concerning their church and religion. If these men, that pretend to lead men to the new Jerusalem, and lead them to Rome, would but speak out, and plain, and tell them, that they will lead them to the old Jerusalem, and so lead them to Rome,- they speak something likely. For what is the church and religion of Rome, but, in a manner, that of old Jerusalem, translated out of Judaic into Roman, and transplanted out of Palestina, into Italy? And there is hardly an easier or a clearer way to discover, that she is not the new Jerusalem, than by comparing her with the old: as God doth most clearly discover the Jerusalem then being, Ezek. xxiii, by comparing her with Samaria and Sodom. Diverse hours would scarce serve, to observe the parallel in all particulars, and punctually to compare the transcript with the original; I shall only and briefly hint two things to you to that purpose. And,

First, Let me begin with that distinction, that the Jews have in their writings cone and gain; of the Mosaic law, and the Judaic law,- or the law of

Moses, and the law of the Jews. And they will tell you, such and such things are transgression of the Mosaic law,- and such and such, are transgressions of the Judaic law. And as they themselves do make the distinction, so they themselves did cause the distinction. What they mean by Mosaic law, we all understand; and by their Judaic law, they mean their 'traditional' law, which they call the 'law unwritten.' While they kept to the law of Moses, for a rule of faith and life, as they did under the first temple,- they did well in point of doctrine, and no heresy and heterodoxy tainted them: but when they received and drank-in traditions, as they did under the second temple, they drank-in their own bane and poison.

There is in Scripture frequent mention of the 'last days,' and the 'last time:' but which is meant, most commonly, the 'last days of old Jerusalem, and of the Jewish economy,' when they were now drawing towards their dissolution. But from what date or time to begin her last days, may be some question. If you date them from the time, she first received and entertained her traditions,- you do but fit the calculation to the nature of the thing calculated. For then did she fall into the consumption and disease, that brought her to her grave: then did she catch that infection and plague that never left her, but grew upon her, till it made her breathe her last in a fatal end. Traditions spoiled her religion, and brought her to "worship God in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men⁷." Traditions spoiled her manners, and trained her up in a "vain conversation, received by tradition from the fathers⁸;" in a word, traditions, as they made the law, so they made the gospel, of no effect; and the doctrine of Christ, the death of Christ, the belief in Christ, to be but needless business, and things to no purpose. Nay, traditions leavened them to hate the gospel, to murder Christ, and to persecute his disciples: for, by the principles of their traditions, they could do no less than all these.

⁷ Matt. Xv. 9.

⁸ 1 Pet. 1.18.

Now, surely, Jerusalem that is above, is above this infection; and the new holy city, certainly brought no such infection from heaven, nor was tainted with this contagion, which was the death of the old: as a priest in Israel could hardly be infected with leprosy. But you may see the tokens upon the church of Rome very thick; traditions upon traditions; some of so like stamp to those of old Jerusalem, that you can hardly know them asunder; but all of the like effect and consequence, that they make the gospel of none effect, as those did the law; and causing men to worship God in vain, while they “taught for doctrines the commandments of men.” How great a part of their religion is nothing else but the commandments of men, and other traditions, and how great a part of their church is built upon nothing else! The very chief corner-stone in all their fabric, is no better substance and solidity, - viz. That St. Peter was bishop there, and there was martyred; - when the Scripture and reason give far fairer probability, that he was apostle to the circumcision in Babylonia, and there ended his days.

Secondly, You would hardly think, that there was a worse brood in the old Jerusalem, than those that we have spoke of; the men so infected with the plague (and with a frenzy with it) of traditions. And yet I can name you a worse, - and that was those, that had forsaken their Judaism, and entertained and embraced the gospel, - but at last apostatized from it, and revolted to their old Judaism again; to their old Mosaic rites, which sometime had been right, but now antiquated, - and to their traditional principles, which had never been right, but now least of all to have been embraced; and to a deadly hatred and persecution of the gospel, that they once professed.

How the apostles speak of, and against, this apostasy, in their Epistles, I need not tell you; he that runs, may read it. But he that stands still, and reads pressly, will find, that they find ‘the antichrist,’ that then was, in that apostasy. I say, ‘the antichrist, that then was.’ Fro the Scripture gives a hint of a twofold antichrist, - one, in the Epistles, - and the other, among the Gentiles,

which should embrace it. And if you will let the unbelieving Jew, to be one part of the antichrist, that then was, - the apostatized Jew was much more. “Many antichrists” in those times, as this our apostle tells us, 1 John ii. 18; but those were they especially, of whom he speaks immediately after; “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” And the like character do these apostles carry in other places in the Epistles, in terms equivalent.

Now, therefore, the nearest way to discover the antichrist, that was to be in after-times among the Gentiles, is by observing his likeness and similitude to the former, - viz. in apostatizing from the pure and sincere profession of the gospel to Judaism, or to Mosaic manner of worship, and Judaic principles and religion.

Which how the church of Rome hath done, it would require a long time to compare in all particulars; but it will require a far longer time for her to clear herself from that just accusation. How near doth she come to Judaism in the doctrine of justification! How near in the doctrine of opus operatum! how near in the doctrine of expiation, by bare confession! How near in the doctrine of the value of traditions! And, one for all, how near in turning all religion into ceremony! Their present year of jubilee, is nit not Mosaic? And were you there at it, and saw the manner of their devotions, their formal services, and ceremonious worship, would you not think you were in the old Jerusalem, among the scribes and Pharisees, rather than in the new, where the ‘true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth?’

So that when we departed from the church of Rome, we did but the same thing, that the apostles, disciples, and other holy coverts of the Jewish nation did; they forsook Judaism, to embrace the purity of the gospel; and so did we: and, “in the way that they call heresy, we worship God.”

If I have trespassed too much upon your patience by so prolix a discourse upon so unpleasing a subject, I must crave your pardon. We, inquiring

after the 'new Jerusalem,' where we might find it, come to the place, where the ways parted; and one went right, and the other wrong. The wrong way, is the broader, pleasanter, and more trodden; and not a few that stand in it, and cry, 'This is the right way, and no other.; It is good to give warning, it is needful to take warning,- that we be not misled, that the men and the way do not deceive us.

And having thus far observed, where the 'new Jerusalem' is not to be found, let us now look where it is.

And, first, we must not expect to find it in any one particular place, as you might have done with old Jerusalem; but it is dispersed here and there abroad in the world. It is the Catholic church, as we are taught in our Creed; and it is not in one only, but in this, and that, and the other, nation. When the new Jerusalem is to be measured, in Zech. ii, an angel bids, "O run after yonder young man, that is to measure it, and tell him, that Jerusalem shall be inhabited as a city without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle that shall be therein." It is a city unlimited, and therefore not to be bounded within this or that compass. We may use the paradox of it,- that it is a fluid, and yet a fixed body; nay, fixed, because fluid: that is, it is moving sometime into one place, sometime into another; and, therefore, it shall never fade or perish.

The Jews accused St. Stephen of heresy and blasphemy, because he said, that the church and religion should not always be pinned to that city and temple, but taken away. In his answer he showeth, that the church and religion is a pilgrim,- one while, in one place,- another while, in another in Mesopotamia, in Charran, in Canaan, in Egypt. And our own observation may tell us, that, when it failed in Egypt, and Israel followed the idols and manners of that land, as Ezek. xx, then God found himself a church in the family of Job and his three friends. The saying of our Saviour may suffice for this, "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a people, that shall bring forth the fruits of it." And this is that, that makes it

fixed, or never-failing; because, when it decayeth in one place, it groweth in another. And that promise of our Saviour will ever maintain it in life and being, "Upon this rock will I build my church *of the gospel*, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it;" as they have done against the church of the Jews.

In Matt. xxiv, when Christ foretells of the desolation of that city, church, and nation, that their "sun, and moon, and stars," religion, and church, and state, "should be darkened, and fall," and come to nothing; and "they should then see the Son of man," whom they would never own, "coming in a thick cloud," and storm of vengeance against them;- it might be questioned, Where, then, will God have a church, when that is gone? He gives an answer, "That the Son of man should send his angels," or ministers, "with the sound of a trumpet," the trumpet of the gospel, "and gather him a church from all corners under heaven." To which may not improperly be applied that, Heb. xii. 22; "Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels." God will never want his church; but, if it be not in one place, it will be in another.

Secondly, There is an invisible church as well as a visible; Paul's Jerusalem, which is above and out of sight, as well as Ezekiel's Jerusalem, pitched here below. There is commonly some invisible church within the visible, as Ezekiel's wheel within a wheel. But there is sometimes an invisible church, where there is none visible, as those seven thousand men in the days of Elias, when he could not discern one. The apostle, speaking of the new Jerusalem, that we are speaking of, in that place of the Epistle to the Hebrews before alleged, among others things, saith, "Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched,"- meaning mount Sinai,- "but ye are come to mount Sion." One would think, when he spake of mount Sinai, he should rather have called it, "the mount that might not be touched;" for God charged, that neither man nor beast should touch it.⁹ But you may see the apostle's meaning,- that the mystical mount Sion is not

⁹ Exod. xix.

such a gross earthly things, as mount Sinai was, that was subject to sense and feeling, to be seen, and felt, and trod upon; but that Sion is a thing more pure, refined, and abstract from such sensibleness, spiritual and heavenly.

And from this undeniable notion of a church invisible, we may easily answer that captious and scornful question, that you know who put upon us,- 'Where was your church and religion before Luther?' Why, it was in the Jerusalem that is above, out of the reach, and above the ken, of man's discerning; it was upon mount Sion, above the sphere of sight and sense. It was in such a place and case, as the church and religion was in, when there were "seven thousand men, that never bowed the knee to Baal," to the golden heifer at Dan or Beth-el: and yet the greatest prophet, then being, could not discern the least sign of any church at all. Now,

Thirdly, The 'new Jerusalem' must be known by her pearls and jewels, upon which it is founded and built up. True religion is that, that must distinguish and discover the true church. And where that is, it is like the wise men's star over the house at Beth-lehem, that points out, and tells, 'Jesus and his church is here.' I must confess, I do not well understand that concession of some of our Protestant divines, that yield, 'That the church of Rome is a corrupt church, indeed, but yet a true church:'- for I do not well understand, how there should be a true church under a false religion. If the church of the Jews, under the great corruption of religion, that was in it, might be called a true church,- that was all it could look for. And it must have that title, rather because there was never a church in the world beside it, than from any claim by religion. But what do you call true religion?

1. First, That, which is only found in the word of God; as the wall of the new Jerusalem, in ver. 14 of this chapter, is founded upon "twelve pearls, engraven with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."
2. That religion, that tends directly to the honouring of God, and saving of souls,

and is adequate to these ends; in short, that religion that can bring to heaven.- For I so little believe, that any man may be saved in any religion, that I believe there is only one religion, in which any man may be saved. And when Moses can bring Israel only to the skirts of the land of promise, I hardly believe that any religion will bring them into it.

Though one should not stick to grant, that a person may be saved in the church of Rome, yet should I question, whether in the faith of Rome. And it is the faith or doctrine of a church more especially, that I am by religion of it. Let a Romanist ride all the stages of his religion, from his uncouth kind of baptism to his extreme unction, through his auricular confessions and absolutions, through his penances and pardons, through his massing and crossings, through all his devotions and austerities;- will all these bring to heaven, if the man fundamentals of faith be faulty and failing? nay, if the main fundamental of belief be clean contrary to the way of God to heaven? A scribe or Pharisee, in old Jerusalem, is as devout in religion, and as strict and sever in outward conversation, as is imaginable, that you would think sanctity itself were there: yet, will all this bring to heaven, when the chief principles of his faith are directly contrary to the way of salvation? While he believes to be justified by his won works, and place all in 'opere operato,' in a little formal and ceremonial service? Like him in the story and on the stage, that cried, 'O! heaven,' and pointed down to the earth; these pretended for heaven in their practical devotions, but pointed downward in their doctrinal principles.

I shall not insist to illustrate those particulars, that I mentioned; I suppose they carry their own proof and evidence with them, that they are most proper touchstones, whereby to try the truth of a church and religion. And it is our comfort, that we can, that we do, that we desire to, bring our

religion to such tests and touchstones,- and refuse not, but most gladly appeal to the impartial judge, the word of God, to give judgment of it. I shall not, therefore, undertake so needless a task, as to go about to prove the truth of our faith and religion, since so many Protestant pens have so clearly and so abundantly done it, far more learned than my tongue: and since I may make such an appeal to you, as the apostle did to king Agrippa, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know, thou believest:”- Fathers and brethren, believe you the truth of our religion? I know, you believe it.- Then I have no more to do but to offer two or three words of humble exhortation and entreaty,- viz. prize it/ cleave to it; beautify it.

I. Prize it: for it is the chiefest jewel in all our cabinet: and the wisest merchant in all your city cannot find out a pearl of greater price. It is the life of our nation at home, and it is the honour of our nation abroad: it is that, that makes our land, a royal street of the new Jerusalem: it is that, that must make your city a holy city.

We see a new London, as our apocalyptic saw a new Jerusalem. The buildings stately and magnificent, the furniture sumptuous and very splendid, the shops rich and bravely furnished, the wealth great and very affluent: but your religion the all-in-all. As it was said in old time, that Athens was the Greece of Greece, and as it may be said at this time, that London is the England of England,- so let your religion be the London of London. It is that by which your city must stand and flourish; by which your prosperity must be watered and maintained; and the ancile, which, kept in safety, will keep us in safety.

II. Keep, therefore, close to your religion, and leaven it not. Dread revolting from the true religion. The apostasy in the apostles’ times was the ‘sin unto death,’ in our apocalyptic’s First Epistle and last chapter.

And there is an apostasy in our time but too common, and to be deplored with tears, to a religion but too like to that, to which they then revolted. I would, therefore, that those, that are temped either by the lightness of their own hearts, or by the missionaries of Rome, to revolt from their religion, would remember that dreadful saying of the apostle¹⁰, “If we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth,- there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.” Which is spoke peculiarly of apostasy; or else it were a passage too terrible for all flesh.

Hannibal’s father took him, at nine years of age, to an altar, and there swore him never to have confederacy and friendship with Rome. If all the world had always been under such a tie, it had been happy for it. I hope our religion, our hearts, our God, will keep us from entering into league and society with that city, that had so deep a hand in the murder of our dear Saviour, and in the blood of his dear saints.

III. Lastly, Let us strive to adorn our religion with a suitable conversation; to beautify our church with the beauty of holiness. We desire to be owned for citizens of the new Jerusalem: and whereas our religion may give us some title to it, it is holiness of conversation, that must naturalize and enfranchise us. The new Jerusalem doth challenge a new conservation: and doth not a new London, new hearts and lives? The city, so stately and sumptuously built up, if such top-stone be laid on, we may comfortably and joyfully cry, “Grace, grace, peace, peace, unto it.”

¹⁰ Heb. x. 26.