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**Title:** An Amicable Controversy with a Jewish Rabbi, on The Messiah's Coming

**Author:** John Ranicar Park

**Release Date:** November 3, 2010 [EBook #34201]

**Language:** English

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JEWISH RABBI, ON THE MESSIAH'S COMING \*\*\*

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An  
Amicable Controversy  
With  
A Jewish Rabbi,  
On  
The Messiah's Coming:  
Unfolding  
New Views on Prophecy  
And The  
Nature of the Millenium:  
With an Entirely New  
Exposition of Zechariah,  
On The  
Messiah's Kingdom  
By J. R. Park, M.D. &c.

London:

Smith, Elder, And Co. 65, Cornhill

1832

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## Preface.

What! another Commentary on Zechariah! the reader is ready to exclaim. Have we not a Lowth and a Blayney? What can learning, talent, or research effect, that has not been effected already? In a word, I answer—nothing. But, on the other hand, I ask, what have they effected? With the exception of particular passages, on which light has been thrown, the general scope of the prophecy remains as obscure as ever. Sufficient proof of this appears in the want of consistency in the plan of interpretation, which in one verse looks to future events, and in another to events long past, for explanation; in one part supposes the prophet to offer a connected series of consecutive predictions; in the next supposes him to be carried away by a transport into a digression bordering upon incoherency; varying, moreover, continually in the principle of exposition, which is literal or figurative, political or spiritual by turns. Surely this is not legitimate exposition, but rather bespeaks some latent error, some radical defect in the plan, or principle of investigation.

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To point out that defect, which the writer fancies he has discovered, is the object of the present attempt; whether he be right or wrong, the reader must decide. The traveller who mistakes his road, only goes the farther astray the more he prolongs his journey. So the commentator on prophecy, who labours to force the text to a sense which it was not intended to bear, the more learning and ingenuity he employs, the more he becomes involved in intricacy and obscurity.

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In expounding the prophecies relating to the Jews, commentators have had chiefly in view their temporal and political state; whereas the writer conceives, that their moral and religious, that is, their spiritual condition, is really the main purport of those which relate to the restoration of Israel. Let any one read the description of the New Jerusalem in the 21st chapter of Revelations, and ask himself, if this can possibly apply to a literal city, or political state. It evidently cannot; and yet it must apply to some state of the Jews on earth; for the Messiah's kingdom is always described as a kingdom on earth; and, therefore, if the description does not apply to their temporal, it must to their spiritual condition.

The Messiah's kingdom is allowed to be the chief subject of these prophecies; but if Christ be the Messiah, his kingdom is a spiritual one, and what relates to it must be spiritually understood. We

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marvel at the blindness which prevents the Jews from perceiving in prophecy the numerous intimations of a spiritual Messiah, all of which appear to us to have been distinctly fulfilled in the person of Christ; and yet that very blindness to their spirituality is what prevents ourselves from understanding other prophecies relating to the same subject. Let this be steadily and uniformly kept in view, and most of the difficulties will vanish; and an interpretation will unfold itself, not only historically minute, and chronologically accurate, but which is, moreover, as far as scriptural language admits, literal; for in what relates to spiritual affairs, the spiritual is the most literal interpretation. This, then, is the principle of the following exposition, and when it has been found necessary to correct the translation, it was not for the purpose of finding out more recondite meanings, but to bring back the words of the text to their ordinary and literal signification.

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With regard to the controversial form under which the treatise appears, a word of explanation may be requisite. The writer having framed his views of prophecy on principles most at variance with those of the Jews, and being only a self-taught Hebraist, was anxious to know how far his exposition might be controverted by an acknowledged Hebrew scholar of the Jewish persuasion. Upon inquiry he was referred to his present opponent, as the fittest person for that purpose; and he had the satisfaction to find, that however they might differ in the plan of interpretation, yet his opponent could rarely challenge the accuracy or fidelity of his translation; which he acknowledged to be more in accordance with the Christian principle of exposition, than any he had previously met with.

At the same time he declared the views it unfolded, to contain nothing likely to have any weight with a Jew; and readily pledged himself to answer those views, should the writer ever be disposed to publish them. The views and the answer are now before the reader.

[Transcriber's Note: Single-word Hebrew quotations in the original book are often rendered here in the form "A (or B)", with the same word rendered in "A" and in "B", but with the letters stored in opposite orders. This is to allow the same e-book to render properly in both HTML and PDF. The full-paragraph quotations should appear correct in all formats.]

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## Introduction.

"The testimony of Jesus in the spirit of prophecy."

Few, perhaps, of those who read the Scriptures are fully aware of the extent to which the language of them abounds in metaphor; yet is this knowledge indispensable to the right understanding of both the Old and the New Testament, and especially the prophetic parts of these books.

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Prophecy, though not the largest, is beyond question the most important part of Scripture, affording the only irrefragable proofs of God's moral government of the world, and of Christ's being the promised Messiah. These proofs depend upon no human testimony, but carry their evidence in themselves, not resting on man's credibility. Deposited in the hands of those, whose blindness understands them not, and whose prejudice would gladly pervert their meaning, they have been handed down to us, who are blinded by similar prejudices, and in expounding these prophecies are only a shade more enlightened than the Jews.

This rich mine of miraculous evidence, still remains, almost wholly unexplored, although it is to this testimony especially, that Christ himself appealed. *Search the Scriptures*, said he, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me*. This testimony still remains to Christians of the present day, for the most part, a sealed book; for beyond a partially successful attempt, to point out in it, the prediction of a few leading events, fulfilled near two thousand years ago, and therefore now no longer miraculous evidence to us, but resting on the authenticity of historical records, all the rest is veiled from their sight.

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The subsequent history of the progress of our religion, continued in these prophecies, in one uninterrupted series of predictions up to the present day; detailing the triumphant progress of the Gospel—the downfall of Judaism—the subversion of Paganism—the corruption of Christianity by the Gentiles—the long age of darkness consequent thereto—the rise and successful career of Mahomedism, which has supplanted nominal Christianity over half the globe—the exact boundary line, affixing a limit to the dominion of each of these grand apostacies—their co-existence and simultaneous downfall—and the revival of true Christianity—with other events, clearly foretold, and now fulfilling before our eyes, have all escaped the detection of the most learned commentators whether Jewish or Christian.

[pg 004] The inability to explain these prophecies thus tacitly acknowledged, which has accompanied their transmission to our hands, is in some degree a pledge that they have been faithfully handed down to us; for who would be at the pains to interpolate what none could pretend to explain or apply? At the same time, the cause of their remaining unexplained, and of their appearing inapplicable to passing events, becomes a highly interesting object of inquiry; and will be chiefly found to arise from the circumstance alleged at the outset, namely, the misinterpretation of the figurative language of Scripture and Prophecy.

The leading subject of prophecy is the Messiah's kingdom; a kingdom which the Jews expected to be a temporal one, and in this expectation, rejected Christ as a spiritual prince. Whence arose their error?—From their taking in a literal sense the language, in which the prophets had described that kingdom. The Apostles, and first disciples of our Lord were under a similar illusion; and had Christ at once undeceived them, and banished from their minds all hope of temporal dominion, it is probable they would to a man have deserted him. In fact, they did so desert him at his crucifixion; nor did they fully perceive their error, till after his resurrection, when they received the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and their eyes were at length fully opened to the spiritual nature of his reign.

[pg 005] The Jews still remain under this illusion, continuing still to look for a temporal prince, and the literal fulfilment of prophecy. Thousands also of Christians, who look for the second coming of Christ, expect his personal advent; that is, that he will come in person to reign with the saints on earth for a thousand years. And the title of saints, whether assumed by, or bestowed upon the millenarians, seems to be fondly cherished by them, in anticipation of the share they expect in the glories of that reign now approaching, or, as they suppose, just at hand.

That there be any among these, who would, like the first disciples, desert their Lord, if robbed of this pleasing expectation, it were perhaps invidious to suppose. Whether, like the Jews, they are led into this hope of an earthly kingdom, by their misconception of the prophecies that relate to this period, it were premature as yet to enquire. But certain it is, that they are for the most part zealous advocates for the literal sense of prophecy; and equally adverse with the Jews, to what may be termed the spiritual exposition.

[pg 006] The term spiritual has, however, been so much misunderstood, in regard to the interpretation of prophecy, that it may be well to explain here what is intended by it. No more is meant by this term, than that the prophecies relating to the Messiah's kingdom, which the Christian must allow to be of a spiritual nature, foretel events which regard the moral and religious, and not the political state of the world. In a word, that they foreshow the progress, and final establishment of true christianity on earth; this being the Messiah's kingdom, or his spiritual reign. In this subject, or the progress of our religion, we have a history abounding in events more diversified in their nature, and more interesting in their consequences, because more influential on the happiness of mankind, than any which political history can furnish. Their chronology and geography are in some points peculiar; but, rightly understood, even these admit of being marked with unerring precision, and present some of the most striking proofs of divine foreknowledge.

[pg 007] We have intimated that prophetic language abounds in metaphor; but this remains to be proved, as well as stated; and the nature of these metaphors requires to be pointed out and explained. This can only be done by citations from the prophecies themselves, which shall, however, be made with as much brevity as the subject will admit of. The passages shall all be taken from prophecies relating to the Messiah's kingdom; and while their purport is made manifest, it shall at the same time be shewn that they are uniformly employed in the same sense, when the Messiah's kingdom is the subject treated of, throughout the New as well as the Old Testament. We proceed to show the metaphorical nature of prophetic language.

When Isaiah (Ch. lxi.) uses such phrases as, *trees of righteousness, garments of praise, garments of salvation*, it is manifest that he cannot mean literal trees or literal garments; the figurative and spiritual import expressed by the epithet affixed to each, namely righteousness, salvation and praise, is the only one that can be given to them.

[pg 008] When the same prophet (Ch. lx.) foretelling the glory of the Messiah's reign, by the conversion of the Gentiles, says *The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee*, it is evident that the sea does not mean the literal sea, but figuratively the Gentile nations, as afterwards expressed.

When he styles the Messiah's kingdom, *Zion, the city of the Lord, whose walls shall be called salvation, and whose gates praise*; a spiritual and not a literal city must be intended. When, changing the metaphor, he calls the city *a bride* (Ch. lxii, 5,) or describes it *as a woman in labour, and bringing forth a male child*, (Ch. lxvi. 6. 8.) it is clear that all these expressions must be metaphorical; *the mountain, the city, the bride and the mother*, being alike used to express the same object; and that object, as the context declares, the spiritual glory of the Messiah's reign; splendid in righteousness, abundant in salvation.

[pg 009] Although the spiritual import of these expressions appears self-evident; while the context may satisfy the Christian that these chapters foreshow the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, metaphorically styled by the prophets, *the Zion of God, His holy mountain, the heavenly Jerusalem, &c.*, terms which alone bespeak its spirituality; yet have we moreover the direct sanction and authority of the Apostles Paul and John for thus understanding them.

St. Paul, when comparing the advantages of the two covenants, and contrasting the rigorous severity of the law, with the indulgent mildness of the gospel, borrows these very metaphors from the prophets, calling the former Mount Sinai, and the latter Mount Zion. (Heb. xii. 18.) *For ye are not come, says he, to the mountain that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, &c.*

*But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels.*

*To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, &c.*

Here we see *Mount Sinai*, from which the law was delivered, figuratively used to signify the Old Covenant; and *Mount Zion*, and *the Heavenly Jerusalem* to signify the New Covenant,—called also the *general assembly and church of the first-born*; that is of the regenerate through Christ.

[pg 010] In like manner St. John, when foreshowing the final establishment of true Christianity, uses the same metaphor of a city and a bride, that had been previously used by Isaiah. (Rev. xxi. 2.) *And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband, &c.*

But let it not be erroneously supposed that the figurative character of prophetic language consists merely in the use of these terms to express the Messiah's kingdom; or that the proof of its spirituality is confined to the employment, however frequent, of such phrases as *trees of righteousness, waters of life, wells of salvation, &c.*; the fact is, that every allusion to that kingdom is couched in terms, which admit only of spiritual interpretation: and where any lengthened description occurs, the language assumes the form of continued allegory, in which the moral and religious state of mankind is foreshewn in terms appropriate only to the physical world. As in Ezekiel xxxiv. 26.

[pg 011] *And I will make them, and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.*

*And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord.*

When Jeremiah (xxxv. 12.) in similar language foretels the abundance of blessings promised in this kingdom, even the Rabbi admits that the figurative and not the literal sense is to be taken; and that spiritual, not temporal blessings are here intended by the prophet.

*Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together for the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd, &c.*

But the main point aimed at in the following exposition; and what the writer wishes to be its distinguishing characteristic is, that of making scripture its own interpreter; for in every passage that has been referred to, and perhaps it may be said, in every one that can be referred to, there will be found in the context sufficient intimation of the purport of the figurative expressions employed.

[pg 012] On this plan the boldest metaphors will be found to admit of easy explanation; and passages otherwise inexplicable will find their solution, upon one consistent and uniform principle of interpretation. A few examples will afford illustration of the proposed plan of exposition.

One of the boldest metaphors used by the prophets in reference to the Messiah's kingdom is, that which represents the establishment of this new order of things, promised in his reign, as *a new heaven and a new earth*; in fact as a new creation: a mode of expression, which has no doubt been often understood, by those who are not sufficiently conversant with the nature of prophetic language, as literally foretelling a change in the physical world, that we inhabit.

Nor is this error confined to the unlearned: it appears to have been fallen into by one who may perhaps be justly styled the most learned commentator on prophecy of the present age; and moreover the very writer who has pointed out the true principle of exposition.

[pg 013] The intelligent and profound Dean of Lichfield in his work on the Apocalypse, after pointing out the figurative sense of such passages, yet, strange to say, relinquishes this sense where it seems the most appropriate, and adopts the literal.

In allusion to the first establishment of the Jewish Theocracy, we find in Isaiah (li. 16.) the following figurative language.

*When I have put my words in thy mouth, and covered thee with the palm of my hand, that I may plant the heaven, and lay the foundation of the earth.*

Thus, selecting the Jews to be God's chosen people, and putting his words in the mouth of the prophet, are said to be *planting the heavens* and *laying the foundation of the earth*. And in conformity with this style, when the old Covenant was to be dissolved, and the new one to be established, *new heavens* and *a new earth* are said to be created. (Isa. lxxv. 17.)

*For behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind.*

[pg 014] When St. John, in the Rev. vi. 12. foretels the corruption of Christianity, in a prophecy which appears distinctly applicable to the events that occurred at the beginning of the fourth century; he borrows the same metaphors, and describes the loss or corruption of true religion as the departure of the heavens, and the darkening of the heavenly luminaries. (Rev. vi. 12.)

*And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*

*And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth; even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

*And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, &c.*

The historical view of this period, taken by Dr. Woodhouse, exactly accords with the figurative sense of the prophecy—yet, to the manifest injury of consistent interpretation, it is here that he relinquishes the figurative, and adopts the literal sense, supposing the day of judgment to be here foretold.

While thus compelled to dissent from some particular views of this writer, I cannot pass by this opportunity of expressing the very high estimation in which I otherwise hold his most valuable publication. (Woodhouse on the Apocalypse.)

[pg 015] Other commentators on prophecy, who have for the most part adopted the political in preference to the spiritual view, regard *the heavens*, as symbolizing the civil government or ruling powers in a state; and it is true that these expressions have not been always confined in prophecy to the prediction of spiritual events; but have been also used in foretelling the judgments of God upon political states and kingdoms.

But when the Messiah's kingdom is the acknowledged subject, to look to political events for its fulfilment, is surely to run into the error of the Jews, and to disregard the intimation expressly given by him; who declared that *his kingdom was within us*; or as the prophets had previously foreshewn—*behold, I will put my law in their inward parts; and write it in their hearts.*

[pg 016] One example more shall suffice, for shewing the superiority of the spiritual view, in affording the solution of passages, which upon any other must appear utterly inexplicable. It has been stated that Zion is also represented as a woman, and a mother; of which the most remarkable instance occurs in the following extraordinary passage in Isaiah lxvi. 7, 8.

*Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pains came she was delivered of a man-child.*

*Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children.*

The Christian may perhaps suppose, as some have done, that Christ is the man-child here intended; but that cannot be. For Zion is the mother, and a mountain can never be literally understood to bring forth a man; the mountain is a figurative mother, and the child must be a figurative child.

[pg 017] What does the mother figuratively signify? is then the question most likely to lead us to the nature of the child. We have already seen that this term is constantly applied to Israel, and especially with reference to their spiritual state of regeneration through Christianity. Such we may presume, then, is the meaning of Zion here; and that the regeneration of the Jews through Christianity is the birth and parturition here spoken of.

Upon this view Judaism, or the Jewish Church will be the mother, and the Christian Church or Christianity her child—the man-child, who was ordained to rule all nations. Ps. ii.

The next question is, how the birth can be said to have preceded the labour-pains.

Mr. Lowth, to whom more than any other I feel indebted for much valuable assistance in explaining the Old Testament prophecies, supposes the labour-pains to be “the destruction of the Jewish Polity, making way for the growth of Christianity.” And this seems a plausible explanation, as these troubles of the Jewish Church followed the birth or promulgation of Christianity forty years.

But the solution is only plausible; for the growth is not the birth; or if it be taken as the birth, then it no longer precedes but follows the labour-pains, for whatever effect the destruction of Judaism had in promoting Christianity, this effect was subsequent and not prior to that event; and thus the solution fails in the main point.

[pg 018] Moreover, upon the spiritual plan of exposition, it may justly be objected, that these troubles of the Jewish Church were rather of a political than a spiritual character; and certainly in no way essential to the birth of Christianity, and cannot therefore be considered as the labour-pains, or

even as the after-pains of that birth.

This objection being valid, let a more spiritual view be taken, and the objection will vanish. Let the worldly feelings which prevented the Jews from receiving Christ as their Messiah, and the inward struggle required to overcome these, symbolise the pains of labour, and the connexion will be evident. For this very struggle and victory over worldly feelings constitute the regeneration through Christ; and this therefore is essential to the birth of Christianity, "the new birth unto righteousness."

[pg 019] But with the first Christians this struggle could not precede the birth, for they received Christ, before they were aware of the spiritual nature of his mission; the Apostles did not look for a spiritual Messiah until after the day of Pentecost, and therefore the birth preceded the pains with them; but once aware of the sacrifice required, they cheerfully submitted to every species of persecution, and triumphed over all worldly feelings. And in every individual who receives Christianity, this struggle with worldly feelings must in some measure continue during their whole lives.

With the Jews, the prevalence of these worldly feelings, and the hope of a temporal Messiah, still prevent their receiving Christianity, or obstruct their regeneration. And when the evidence of its truth shall be forced upon them, it is probable that this conviction will precede rather than follow the entire conquest over worldly feelings; so difficult is it to change our habits and feelings at once. And in this we may perceive the sense of the remaining verse, cited above; *Can the earth be made to bring forth at once? Can a nation be born in a day? For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children.*

[pg 020] The *earth* and the *nation* shew that a whole people, or race of men, are here spoken of; and the *man-child* of the former verse, we here find changed into *children*, in the plural number. Such appears to be the solution of the difficulty, on the spiritual plan of exposition.

[pg 021] If an equally satisfactory solution can be offered by reference to political events, this will no doubt be the best defence of that mode of exposition that can be offered. How, then, is the fact? The fact is, that such commentaries are obliged to consider nine-tenths of these prophecies still unaccomplished, although a period of two thousand five hundred years has elapsed since they were uttered; and most of this interval is thus left, to Christians as well as Jews, a perfect blank in this prophetic history of the progress of the Messiah's kingdom; without any proof, during this time, at least as drawn from these prophecies of the Old Testament, of God's foreknowledge of events, of his providence in the government of the world, or of his interposition in the disposal of human affairs. Some eight or ten verses, out of six chapters, are all that appear upon this plan to admit of explanation; whereas, by applying the prophecy to the progress of Christianity, as Christ's spiritual kingdom, and looking to spiritual instead of political events, all the leading occurrences in the history of our religion, from its first promulgation to the present day, already fulfilled, or now in the progress of fulfilment, will be found to be clearly foreshewn in one uninterrupted series of predictions, comprising every verse and every line in these chapters, except a few verses which are still veiled in futurity. Admitting the spiritual interpretation, being in fact equivalent to admitting that Christ is the Messiah, is the main point at issue between the Rabbi and the Author; but as many Christians still reject the figurative and spiritual exposition, it is hoped that to them also the foregoing remarks may be not altogether useless; nor an unsuitable introduction to the following new plan of expounding Zechariah's prophetic view of the progress of the Messiah's kingdom.

[pg 022]

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## Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter IX.

The subject of these chapters appears to be that, which, from its constant repetition by all the Prophets from the earliest to the latest, was evidently esteemed the most important to the interests of mankind; namely, the coming of the Messiah.

[pg 023] This great event, being promised as a blessing to the descendants of Abraham, and particularly to the house of Judah, it was natural that the Jews should expect to obtain by it peculiar advantages; and accordingly, whatever may be their views at this time, we learn from the writings of St. Paul, that their general expectation then was, that to their nation would the benefits of it be confined. The nature of these benefits was moreover expected to consist, chiefly, in the political supremacy to be conferred upon them by a great temporal prince, who should establish their dominion over all the earth.

Such were the expectations of the Jews; whereas the Christians who equally believe the prophecies which contain these promises, have been taught to interpret them in a very different manner. They conceive that these benefits will extend to all mankind; and understand them as having no reference to political power or temporal affairs, but as affording the means of obtaining advantages of a far higher and more permanent nature; even the blessings of eternal life, and eternal happiness. Not that these blessings were by the Messiah's coming to be directly and unconditionally conferred upon mankind; but that the means of obtaining them would thereby be afforded to all such as were disposed to seek after them. These means they conceive to be accomplished through the establishment of a kingdom on earth; a kingdom, however, not of a temporal, but of a spiritual nature; one which consists in the reign of true religion in the heart of man, a real Theocracy; by which man is enabled to overcome the world, that is, to rule and direct his passions and worldly propensities, and by making his future existence a paramount consideration, to render him meet to enjoy it. Such, according to the Christian's view, is the victory to be gained; such the kingdom to be established by the Messiah; and hence the apparent contradiction, that while battles and conflicts are spoken of, it is yet declared to be a peaceful kingdom.

But conceiving the prophecies which announce the coming of the Messiah to have been accomplished in the person of Christ, the Christian supposes this kingdom to be already established, and that Christ does actually reign in the heart of every true believer. That the numbers of such are comparatively small, and by no means to be estimated by the number of those who bear the name of Christian, is a lamentable truth; but it is a truth, which he was fully prepared to look for by the same unerring word of prophecy; which clearly announced, that a long period of darkness and apostacy would intervene between the appearance of the Messiah on earth, and the universal establishment of his kingdom.

It is true that the Christian finds the clearest annunciation of this long period of antichristian darkness, in books which are of no authority in the estimation of the Jew, in those of the New Testament, to wit; but if it can be shewn, as we conceive it can, that the same events are also clearly foretold by the Prophets of the Old Testament, the subject will then prefer an equal claim to the attention of both; to that of the Jew, as calling upon him, impartially to consider the evidence, which seems to prove that his Messiah has already appeared on earth; and to that of the Christian, as calling upon him carefully to examine how far the religion he professes may, both in doctrine and practice, still be tinctured with the corruptions of antichristianity.

This, then, is the point at issue; whether or not, we have in these six chapters of Zechariah, one of those Divine revelations, which displays a prophetic view of the coming of the Messiah; of his being rejected by most of his own nation, but received by the Gentiles; of the consequent abolition of Paganism, (then, except with the Jews, the universal religion of the world), and the substitution of Christianity in its stead; but which at the same time foretels the corruption of this religion by us the Gentiles; and the long reign of antichristian darkness which has since prevailed in the room of it; with all the most notable events attending these extraordinary revolutions in the human mind; events still fulfilling before our eyes, and open to the observation of all who think the subject worthy of their attention. Whether all this be clearly intimated in the chapters before us, and can be made out without violating grammatical construction in the translation of the Hebrew, or legitimate consistency in the interpretation of prophetic language, is the question we propose to consider. Frequent perusal and careful examination have satisfied the mind of the writer, that the subject of them is no other than an epitome of the prophetic history which was afterwards amplified in the Revelations of St. John; where we find, as occurs in other instances in which the predictions are repeated, that the events are unfolded with greater precision and minuteness as the period of their accomplishment draws nigh.

That no such subject distinctly appears, through the medium of the authorised translation contained in our Bibles, is most certain; nor was it to be looked for, that any passages, which admitted of different modes of construction, should be rendered in a way least acceptable to the expositor, in a translation which is almost wholly Jewish, being founded on the Masoretic punctuation. On the contrary, it appears, in not a few instances, that the usual and literal sense has been rejected for one more remote, but more consonant to the views and prejudices, of those who framed the punctuation. That this statement may not rest on the questionable ground of assertion or opinion, the reader will find, in the notes subjoined, a full statement of the reasons for all the changes proposed; and the Hebrew scholar will thus have full opportunity to challenge their validity, if he find occasion. It is the writer's wish that they should be freely canvassed; truth is the only object he has in view; and he asks no other conditions on entering the arena, than that of disclaiming the authority of the Masoretic punctuation. His reasons for this will appear sufficiently obvious. If, without the aid of the points, we obtain a meaning that is simple and satisfactory in many passages, which by them are rendered obscure or unintelligible;—if a connected and unbroken explanation of each verse be attainable without them, while only a few verses detached from the context have been explained by the ablest commentators through their aid; sufficient reason will surely appear for rejecting an authority which, instead of facilitating our progress, only encumbers the subject with unnecessary difficulties.

The reader need not, however, expect that every difficulty will be removed by the proposed alterations; or that even the amended translations will afford such an exposition as to admit of no possible objection. It were absurd to suppose that the strength of the argument can lie all on one side, where two are engaged in the controversy. For the Jew is in this case no man of straw, set



up to be knocked down at pleasure, but a true Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, an advocate as zealous in the cause he defends, as his Christian opponent. Each believes himself in the right; each expects to obtain the victory; and it is not improbable that the reader, who sits as umpire in the contest, may, after all, though unconscious of partiality, give judgment according to the bias of his feelings, whether he be Jew or Christian, rather than according to the abstract merits of the question.

[pg 030] Regarding the subject of the prophecy, as the coming of the Messiah, the introduction, which is comprised in the first eight verses of this chapter, appears to be the most appropriate that can possibly be conceived. It opens with a denunciation against worldly-mindedness, and a declaration of God's purpose to frustrate the schemes, and cut off the hopes of ambition, pride, and avarice, in the judgments pronounced against those cities, which were then the most conspicuous for their riches and power. This is immediately followed, as if by way of contrast, by a view of the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, founded in meekness and humility, and affording benefits of a very different kind, namely, the taking away of sin, and the redemption of mankind from a state of sin and perdition; benefits which were not to be confined to the Jews alone, but to extend to the Gentiles also, and that on terms of equal participation with the Jews.

The denunciations are contained in the first six verses as follow: Zech. ix.

*The heavy burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach and Damascus; his sending down, (that is, the Lord's) for the Lord's is the eye of man, (the eye of the seer who receives the vision,) and all the tribes of Israel (whom it immediately concerns).*

[pg 031] *Hamath also shall have a limit set to her; Tyre and Sidon also, though she be very wise—(worldly-wise). For she hath built herself Tyre, a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold the Lord will cast her out, and smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire. Ashkalon shall see it and fear, Gaza also shall see it and be very sorrowful; and Ekron, for her hope shall be dried up, and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkalon shall not be inhabited, and a stranger shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.*

[pg 032] These denunciations are chiefly directed against the Philistines, the cities enumerated being the most conspicuous of any they possessed, and no doubt, the pride of their nation. Here, then, appears sufficient reason for the Jews to interpret the prophecy, as altogether in their favour, denouncing judgments upon their enemies. But yet it is possible they may have viewed them too partially, and may even have overlooked the express objects of denunciation in the prophecy; which denounces their avarice and ambition, and declares that the *pride* rather than the *cities* of the Philistines shall be cut off. As for the cities themselves, heavy judgments are pronounced against them all. One, it is declared, shall not be inhabited; another, Sidon, is threatened with an overthrow, which it received not long after from Ochus, king of Persia, in precisely the manner here foretold; while Tyre, Gaza, and others, were taken by Alexander the Great; but if we keep to the letter of the prophecy, it is their avarice, ambition, and pride, that are distinctly marked as the objects of Divine displeasure; and even the judgments pronounced against them on this account, are immediately coupled with the succeeding promise of mercy and redemption, through the means of a meek and humble Messiah, who should *take away sin and pollution, and speak peace to the heathen.*

But why, it may be asked, were these offences condemned in the Philistines particularly? Were not the Jews also addicted to pride, avarice, and worldly ambition? No doubt they were so; and the prophecy being addressed to them, it appears that the admonition was expressly intended for their use.

[pg 033] Pride was even less excusable in the Jews, who could find no sanction for it in their religion; while this was the very basis of Pagan morality; the pedestal on which honour was erected; that idol of self-estimation, the highest of Pagan virtues. These vices were therefore more appropriately denounced in the Philistines, as peculiarly belonging to them, though spreading, by contagion, to the Jews; and if punishable in the former, how could they be excusable in the latter?

The mind of the Christian reader will naturally revert to the pride which revolted at the idea of a meek and humble Messiah, and caused the Jews to reject him. But that cannot be the question here; for the Jews are not here pointed out as the objects of Divine displeasure; nor is any intimation hitherto given of their offence; and that of its punishment could not surely precede it. The feeling might indeed be there, and a salutary warning of its being displeasing in the sight of Heaven, and of the fatal consequences about to result from it, seems here intended; but the penalty was not incurred till the overt act was committed, and to foretell the punishment before the offence itself was intimated, would have been a prophetic solecism. As we proceed, we shall find, in its proper place, due notice taken both of the one and the other.

[pg 034] In the next verse we find these denunciations, coupled with promises of mercy and redemption to the remaining Gentiles, verse 7, *But I will take away his blood from out of his mouth; and his pollution from between his teeth; and he that remaineth, even he shall be for our God;* that is, the remaining Gentiles shall have their sins forgiven, their pollution washed away, they shall be redeemed from the darkness of Paganism, and reclaimed to the worship of the true God;

*And he shall be as a chief in Judah, Ekron, as well as the Jebusite;* that is, he (the remaining

Gentile) shall attain thereby to a full participation with the Jew, in all the spiritual blessings promised in the Messiah's kingdom.

The prophecy having now declared the admission of the Gentiles, promises that the Messiah's kingdom, thus established, shall ever enjoy Divine protection and support.

*And I will encamp about mine house, against the army, against him that passeth over, and against him that returneth, and there shall no oppressor pass over them any more, for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

[pg 035] In the following verse, the subject of the prophecy is so distinctly announced as the coming of the Messiah, that Jews as well as Christians concur on this point, though they have not perceived how the preceding verses refer to this kingdom.

*Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King shall come unto thee, just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass.*

[pg 036] The manner of the Messiah's coming being here so plainly foretold, and his character so distinctly described, we wonder how the Jew can deny that this was all fulfilled in the person of Christ. The reason is simply this; he disbelieves the facts. The books in which they are recorded, are of no authority in his estimation; he challenges their testimony on grounds too numerous to be discussed here. To answer his objections, every disagreement between the writers of the New Testament must first be reconciled; a task which appears to him to have hitherto failed with all who have attempted it. But this is not the only objection he has to urge. He charges the Christian with perverting the sense of prophecy; and this verse furnishes him with an instance. Thus, the Hebrew word rendered, "*having salvation*," is really the past participle of the verb "to save," literally "*being saved*;" and that too followed by the emphatical pronoun *himself*, "being saved himself." Surely this point might be safely conceded by the Christian, who admits that Christ "was the first fruits of them that slept;" the first who rose from the dead, to everlasting life; and that through him we become partakers in that resurrection.

The peaceful nature of his kingdom, the participation of the heathen in its blessings, and the boundless extent of its dominion are next declared:

*And he will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from the sea even to the sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.*

The Christian reader will find no difficulty in the interpretation of the verse which follows.

*As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners from the pit wherein is no water.*

[pg 037] The Messiah is spoken of throughout; who then but the Messiah can be apostrophised in the words, "*As for thee?*" Then follows "*by the blood of thy covenant.*" What blood but the blood of Christ? What covenant, but that sealed by his blood, can be alluded to? "*I have sent thy prisoners forth.*" What prisoners, but those who were in the bondage of sin? "*from the pit wherein is no water.*" What pit, but the darkness of idolatry, which had none of the waters of life? Surely this is a most clear and distinct intimation of the sacrifice of the Messiah, and of the benefits thereby conferred upon mankind in the redemption of the heathen world from the darkness of idolatry; thus opening the way to immortality, to the whole human race.

[pg 038] But the Messiah here appears to be promised to the Gentiles, having been previously promised to the Jews; were then these promises retracted? By no means. To the Jews he was promised, and to them he came, exclusively addressing himself to the house of Israel. Nor was it till after the majority of that nation had rejected and crucified him, that the calling of the Gentiles took place. The blessings he offered being refused by the former, appears to have been the immediate cause of their being given to the latter. Accordingly this seems to be the purport of the next verse, which intimates that there was some reason why these blessings could not be directly and unconditionally transferred to the Gentiles.

*Return ye to the strong hold, my prisoners, wait thou unto the day I declare, that I will repay thee double; that is, wait for the day when these blessings will become yours, through the Jews' refusal of them.*

[pg 039] Nor yet was the Messiah rejected by all the Jews; for the apostles were Jews; the disciples were Jews; by Jews was the Gospel preached and propagated; and to the Jews belongs the honour of the first triumph of true religion over Paganism, and what is more, over the passions and worldly propensities of man; and this triumphant progress of the Gospel seems to be the victory intimated in the verse which follows; wherein the reason is at the same time assigned why Christ did not address himself to the Gentiles.

*For I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow Ephraim; and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece; and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

The triumphs of Judas Maccabeus, generally supposed to be here foretold, cannot be the victories alluded to; for Ephraim, or the ten tribes, here declared as bearing a part in them, had already

gone into captivity, and bore no share whatever in these subsequent wars of Judah. The true meaning appears to be that Judah was destined to have the honour of first establishing the Messiah's kingdom, as promised from the beginning.

[pg 040] How then could Ephraim, or the ten tribes, it may be asked, bear a part in the triumphs of the Gospel, having previously gone into captivity? The prophecy does not distinctly say so; if we keep to the letter, it is only said that Ephraim as well as Judah was prepared and marshalled for the spiritual conflict: the triumph is declared to *Zion over Greece*; that is, to true religion over Pagan idolatry; and in this warfare, though not in the wars of Judas Maccabeus, Ephraim did bear a part; for it is not to the apostolic age alone that we must look for the accomplishment of the great scheme of Providence for man's redemption. This was only one act in the great drama; which began under the Old Covenant, and is not yet finally completed under the New. In the former, or the Old Covenant, all the tribes of Israel bore their share, Ephraim as well as Judah; and the warfare not being finally concluded, who shall say but Ephraim may again appear, and bear a further part in it?

Having declared the union of the Gentiles with the Jews, and their joint participation in the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, the prophecy goes on to promise the support and protection of Heaven, in terms alike applicable to both.

[pg 041] *And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go forth with whirlwinds of the south. And the Lord of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour and subdue with sling-stones; and they shall drink as wine, and they shall be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar.* (which were purposely so constructed as to receive the blood of the sacrifices).

That the whole of these expressions require to be taken figuratively and spiritually, no one conversant with scriptural and prophetic language can surely deny; or for a moment suppose that literal drunkenness and bloodshed are here intended.

Should any doubt remain that the Gentiles are included in these promises as well as the Jews, the next verse appears to decide the question.

*And the Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flock of his people.*

If the Jews be called his people, who but the Gentiles can be meant by the other? But this is followed by the direct declaration that all distinction between them is on the eve of its abolition.

*For the wall of separation is tottering over his land.*

[pg 042] A remarkable and striking expression, but strangely perverted in our translation. Why the Jews have laboured to give a different turn to it, by seeking a more figurative and recondite meaning, we need be at no loss to conceive; nor why they apply these verses to themselves alone. See note to the translation of this verse.

But this view, which would limit the bounty of Heaven to a particular race, besides being at variance with the context, seems little calculated to call forth the feelings of adoration and praise with which this chapter concludes.

*For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty. Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

Corn, wine, &c. in prophetic language ever signify the food of spiritual knowledge, to be henceforth freely bestowed on all, Gentiles as well as Jews.

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## Notes To Chapter IX. Hebrew Punctuation.

A Summary of the arguments for and against the antiquity and authority of the Vowel Points, is given at the beginning of the Second Vol. of Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures; from which the following considerations seem most entitled to selection. That the earliest traces of the points are to be found in the tenth century—that many of the oldest manuscripts now extant are without them—that the copies of the Jewish Scriptures now used in the Synagogue and esteemed peculiarly sacred, are without them—that the Samaritan letters which were the same as the Hebrew before the captivity, are without them—and the Samaritan Pentateuch is without them—that there are no traces of them to be found in the shekels (coins) struck by the kings of Israel—that the fathers, particularly Origen and Jerome, who treat of the Hebrew pronunciation,

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make no mention of them—that all the antient various readings of the Jews regard the letters only, not one of them relates to the vowel points—to which may be added, that there are five vowels in the Hebrew alphabet which are quite sufficient for reading the language, though they may not enable us to determine with precision the antient pronunciation. “These considerations,” says Mr. Horne, “have determined the majority of Hebrew scholars in the present day to reject their authority.” Still we may admit their utility in fixing the pronunciation, and perhaps also in facilitating the construction; but the main objection to them is, that by changing the vowels, they frequently alter the sense, as well as the sound, and that in passages where a Jewish interpretation is particularly open to suspicion. Thus in prophecies relating to the Messiah, both their prejudices and their feelings unfit them for becoming guides to a Christian expositor.

Verse 1. משא דבר יהוה בארץ חדרך ודמשק מנחתו כי ליהוה עין אדם וכל שבטי ישראל:

*The heavy burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof; when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be towards the Lord.*

[pg 045]

These are the words of the translation in our Bible; but the sense of them I must acknowledge my inability to unravel. Of what Damascus is to be the rest, or what period is intimated by the adverb of time *when*, I am at a loss to discover. The separation of Hadrach and Damascus by the insertion of a comma between them, evidently owes its origin to the supposed necessity for rendering the word מנחתו (or ותחנתו) *the rest thereof*. But if deriving it from נח (or חנ) or נוח (or חנו) does not afford any intelligible sense, we are naturally led to seek another derivation; and we find one in the verb נחת (or תחת) *to descend or send down*, which without violating grammatical construction affords a meaning not only intelligible, but in perfect unison with the context. The Hemantiv נ prefixed, gives the *thing sent down*, while the suffix ו *his*, evidently refers to *the Lord* who sends the vision or denunciation. The English construction, of course, requires it should be rendered *his sending down*, that is, the Lord's denunciation, *against* Hadrach and Damascus, as well as the other cities which are mentioned afterwards; for ב here rendered *in*, may with more propriety be rendered *against* or *upon*. The verb נחת (or תחת) *to send down*, occurs in Joel iii. 11 and elsewhere: but the writer freely acknowledges that he has no authority for the participial noun with the Hemantiv נ prefixed to signify the thing sent down, or the act of sending down, as the sense seems to require here. He therefore rests this construction solely on the ground of its being grammatically admissible, consonant to analogy, and in accordance with the context, as affording a satisfactory meaning. Let those who are not satisfied with such reasons furnish a better solution of the difficulty. In the next place, there is no necessity for rendering כי (or יכ) *when*, which more frequently signifies *for*; and when so rendered, it will be found to connect together the latter and the former part of the verse. For this, we only require to render the dative ל, as it frequently is rendered in Hebrew, as well as Greek and Latin, to denote *possession*; and the verse will run thus. *For the Lord's is*, or *to the Lord belongs*, *the eye of man*; to wit, the eye of the Seer, who receives the vision, *and all the tribes of Israel*, whom the vision chiefly concerns. Making the tribes a genitive case, by inserting *of* before them, is wholly uncalled for by the text.

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Verse 2. וגם חמת תגבל בה צר וצידון כי חכמה מאד:

*And Hamath also shall border thereby, Tyrus and Sidon though it be very wise.*

תגבל (or לבגת) *to set bounds to*, in the Hiphil, occurs in Exod. xix. 12 & 23.—It here appears to be the Huphal or passive of Hiphil—signifying *to be bounded*, or *to be set bounds to*. It is only necessary to remark, that leaving aside the punctuation, the form of the future tense will be identical in both these voices. The sense as it stands is scarcely intelligible. What is meant by *border thereby*, it is not easy to conceive; but by discarding the points we readily obtain a meaning that is perfectly intelligible. תגבל (or לבגת) may then be rendered in the passive voice, instead of the active, and will signify *to be limited*, or *have bounds set to*; and בה (or ה) *on* or *to her*, which follows, accords with, and seems to demand its being so rendered. *And Hamath also shall have bounds set to her*; that is, her growing greatness shall be checked.

*Tyre, and also Sidon though she be very wise*, חכמה (or המכח), *wise*, no doubt, means here, *worldly wise*, or very subtle.

Verse 5. תרא אשקלון ותירא ועזה ותחיל מאד ועקרונ כי הוביש מבטה:

*Ashkalon shall see and fear, Gaza also, and she shall be very sorrowful, and Ekron for her expectation shall be ashamed.*

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הוביש (or שיבוה) may be derived either from בוש (or שוב) *to be ashamed*, or from יבש (or שבי) *to dry up*, and whither as a plant for want of moisture. The latter seems preferable here, but it is not very material to the sense.

Verse 6. וישב ממזר באשדוד והכרתי גאון פלשתים:

*A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.*

ממזר (or רזמח) may be rendered a *stranger*, as well as a *bastard*, αλλογενεσις in the Septuagint, which renders the sense more obvious.

*And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.* These denunciations appear chiefly directed against the Philistines, in whom pride, avarice, and ambition, are specified as the great offences. The

delivery of Ashdod into the hands of a stranger is the judgment pronounced against them in this verse, as the last means of their humiliation. But here the tone of the prophecy changes, and instead of further punishments, we find repeated promises of blessings and mercy; *he that is left shall be for our God, and as a Governor in Judah*,—and in the verse following—*He* (the Messiah being manifestly meant here) *shall speak peace to the Heathen*.—Whence then this change? We are led to seek, and naturally expect to find, some ground for it. And accordingly the next verse unfolds the reason, and explains the occasion of this change in the counsel of Heaven; a change resting not on their own merits, but on Divine Mercy. For such a construction will this verse bear, quite as well as the one usually put upon it; and this construction is far more in unison with the context, than the received one.

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Verse 7. והסרתי דמיו מפיו ושקציו מבין שניו ונשאר גמ-הוא לאלהינו והיה כאלף ביהודה ועקרן כיבוסי:

*And I will take away his blood from out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth, and he that is left, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a Governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.*

With scarcely any alteration in the translation, the words, even as they stand, admit of a very different acceptation from that in which they are commonly taken; and instead of being a figurative expression, borrowed from the rescuing its prey from the jaws of a lion; in which sense the Jews take it, as a promise to themselves of deliverance from their enemies; the words more literally taken, will convey the promise of mercy and redemption to the remaining Gentiles: whose sin and pollution are to be taken away, who are to be reclaimed to the worship of the true God, and admitted to a full participation in all the blessings, promised to Israel by the coming of the Messiah.

The Gentiles were esteemed polluted by eating things unclean, which were prohibited to the Jews. Certain animals—things strangled—and the blood in particular were among the forbidden food. The new covenant removed this prohibition, thereby taking away the pollution from between his teeth, as it ceased to be a cause of pollution. The command given to St. Peter, Acts x. 14, to kill and eat, where all manner of food was presented to him, was expressly received by him as a command to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, or to admit them into the Messiah's kingdom; and this admission was unaccompanied with any such prohibition, nor was it subsequently given.

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Eating things sacrificed to idols was another cause of pollution which the New Covenant removed, by taking away the cause in the abolition of idolatry. This literal fulfilment of the words of the prophecy may, however, be figuratively understood, to foreshew the remission of sins through Christ, and the admission of the Heathen nations to the hopes of everlasting life founded on the Gospel.

The only change required in the English version is to read *But*, for *And*, which are expressed alike by the Hebrew ו, and to understand שקציו (or ויזקש) *his abominations*, in the sense most appropriate to it, as alluding to the worship of idols, and we have the sense already expressed, which perfectly harmonizes with the context. Whereas, taken in the other sense, what becomes of the antithesis? Who is *he that is left*, that *shall be for our God, and as a chief in Judah*? Surely it cannot be the Jew, who shall be as a Jew. But the next words are decisive, declaring that Ekron and the Jebusite, both Gentiles, are here intended.

*And Ekron as a Jebusite*. This mode of rendering leaves, indeed, the force of these words rather ambiguous; but there can be no intelligible sense put upon the כי (or יכ), but that of *in like manner as, or, as well as*; that is, Ekron as well as the Jebusite, shall both be as Governors in Judah.

Verse 8. וחניתי לביתי מצבה מעבר ומשב ולא יעבר עליהם עוד נגש כי עתה ראיתי בעיני:

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*And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

It is not certain, though probable, from 1 Sam. xxvi. 5-7, that the Jews had entrenched camps; if so, the passage would be clearer by rendering וחניתי (יתינחו or) *I will entrench* instead of *encamp*; though the sense is sufficiently obvious, as meaning to afford protection against the army, &c. The house of God, to which protection is promised, is his Temple, figuratively denoting true religion purified from idolatry; the great spiritual adversary constantly warring with Israel, and, as we learn from Scripture, frequently prevailing; which is probably the warfare here alluded to. But if taken literally, this passage conveys the promise that the Messiah's kingdom should put an end to oppression and injustice. The exact import of the expression, *for now have I seen with mine eyes*, is not very evident; but may imply God's foreseeing the unfitness of the Jews to receive a spiritual Messiah; who, in consequence of their rejection of him, would be given to the Gentiles.

Verse 9. גילי מאד בת ציון הריעי בת-ירושלם הנה מלכך יבוא לך צדיק ונושע הוא עני ורכב על חמור ועל עיר בן אתנות:

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion, shout, oh Daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

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There is no ambiguity in the purport of this verse, which is the coming of the Messiah, as all commentators allow; but I can in no wise agree with Lowth and others, that this verse is a

rhapsodical digression from the subject of the rest of the chapter, in which the Prophet being wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, breaks off from the immediate object of his vision to foretel the coming of the Messiah, and then returns back to his former subject. On the contrary, I can see nothing like digression here, but one connected and consistent object throughout; this verse being the keystone of the arch, which binds together those which precede and those which follow it, forming the whole into one united and compact body. Instead of a digression from the subject, I regard this verse as the clue to guide us through the labyrinth, by fixing and determining the subject of all the rest.

*Behold thy King cometh unto thee:* יבוא (אוּבִי) is really the future tense, literally *shall come*, and changing it to the present, *cometh*, seems unnecessary, if it does not in some degree interfere with the chronological order of the events predicted afterwards.

*Just and having salvation.* This is certainly an ambiguous rendering of נושע (or עשׂוּן) the past participle of the verb ישע (or עשי) to save, which literally signifies *being saved*, and the emphatic הוא (or אוּה) *himself*, following it, more strongly marks the sense, as *having obtained salvation himself*.

*Riding on an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.* The connective ו *and*, should certainly be rendered here by *even*, or, *to wit*, and not by *and*, which makes it appear that the Messiah was to ride upon two asses.

[pg 052] Verse 11. גם את בדם בריתך שלחתי אסיריך מבר אין מים בו:

*As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners, from the pit wherein is no water.*

That the Messiah is apostrophized in these words, cannot, surely, admit of doubt or dispute; and words more forcible, or more pregnant with meaning, upon the Christian's view of them, it is not easy to conceive. יחלש (or שלחתי) *I have sent forth*, is really the perfect tense, though written several centuries before the coming of Christ; but it is not at all unusual in prophetic language to use this tense, which represents as already accomplished, what is determined in the Divine purpose, although the fulfilment be still future.

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The writer is well aware of a formidable objection presented by the Hebrew punctuation, against the application of this verse to the Messiah, as the pronoun "thee" את (or תּא) is by the pointing made to be of the feminine gender. This is one of many instances in which the punctuation tends to embarrass instead of elucidating the subject of the prophecy—instances which have mainly contributed to the determination of the writer to disregard the points. It remains for those who regard them as of paramount authority, to offer a solution of this and other passages equally clear and satisfactory, and equally consistent throughout. If "thee" be meant to apostrophise the daughter of Zion, what blood—what covenant—what prisoners—what pit, are here alluded to? Upon the view here offered, the event foreshewn is the death of the Messiah, an event wholly at variance with the expectations of the Jews, but here distinctly announced, along with the most striking particulars attendant on that event; such as the frustration of the hopes of temporal advantages expected from his coming—the nature of the spiritual blessings which it was really intended to impart; namely, the remission of sins, and the redemption of the Gentile world from idolatry. Along with these is stated the personal character of the Messiah, and the express manner of his coming; not in glory as expected, but in meekness and humility—the peaceful nature of his kingdom—its boundless extent, destined to embrace all nations—yet in apparent contradiction, his death is intimated, but also his resurrection whereby he becomes "*the first fruits of them that slept.*" These are all clearly intimated in this chapter; and of these, how many have former commentators, with or without the aid of points, been able to make out? At most, only three or four verses, as where he is mentioned as riding into Jerusalem on an ass; and here, according to Blaney, the text requires to be altered, to shew that he was a Saviour, נושע (or עשׂוּן) being saved, being altered into משע (or עשׂה) a Saviour; while, according to Lowth, all that here relates to the Messiah is to be regarded as a rhapsodical digression from the subject of the context.

Verse 12. שׁוּבוּ לְבַצְרוֹן אֲסִירֵי הַתְּקוּהָ גַם הַיּוֹם מִגִּיד מִשְׁנֵה אֲשִׁיב לָךְ:

*Return to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope, even today do I declare that I will repay you double.*

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Such is the received translation, nor as it now stands, does the sense appear at all ambiguous, signifying, *Return to your prison-house until the day of your promised liberation arrives*; that is, the day of the Messiah's coming. There can be no doubt who are meant by the prisoners, but the change of number in the personal pronoun, from plural to singular, makes it not improbable that the latter part of this line is addressed to the Messiah, who was apostrophized in the verse preceding. Upon this view the word אסירי (or יריסא) may be rendered, *my prisoners*, instead of *prisoners of hope*, which is rather obscure; and התקוה (or הוּקְתָה) as the imperative hithpael of the verb קוה (or הוּק) to wait. And the sense will then be as given in the text; *Return to the strong hold, my prisoners: wait thou till the day I declare that I will repay thee double.*

Verse 13. כִּי דַרְכְּתִי לִי יְהוּדָה קֶשֶׁת מְלֹאֲתֵי אֲפָרִים וְעַרְרֹתַי בְּנִיךְ צִיּוֹן עַל בְּנִיךְ יוֹן וְשַׁמְתִּיךְ כַּחֲרֵב גְּבוּרָה:

*When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, Oh Zion! against thy sons, Oh Greece! and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

Here כִּי (or יִכ), which signifies *for*, is rendered *when*, thus imposing a future signification on the verbs that follow. This has, no doubt, arisen from a supposed allusion to the subsequent wars of Judas Maccabeus. But Ephraim, or the ten tribes, having no share in those wars, militates against that supposition; and it seems more probable that this verse, instead of designating the *time when* the promised blessing would be conferred upon the Gentiles, here declares the *reason why* the Messiah could not be sent to them directly and unconditionally; namely, because he was previously promised to Israel. *For I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow Ephraim*; that is, I have chosen Israel as my people, and appointed them my instruments for the overthrow of paganism. And, accordingly, to the house of Israel he came, and was by some of them received; nor until the great body of that people declined the office, were the Gentiles called in to fill up the ranks, and carry on the spiritual warfare; a warfare which was thenceforward carried on by both in conjunction, for the first Christians still were Jews, though blindness came in part over Israel.

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Verse 14. יהוה עליהם יראה ויצא כברק חצו ואדני יהוה בשופר יתקע והלך בסערות תימן:

*And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go forth with whirlwinds of the South.*

This and the following verse evidently contain promises of Divine protection, and of triumphant success; but to whom these promises are given may admit of a question. *עליהם* (or *מהילע*) *over them*, may mean the Jews last spoken of, or the Gentiles mentioned before, or it may apply to both. And if the triumph of true religion over Pagan idolatry be the victory here spoken of, as this was obtained by both in conjunction, during the Apostolic age at least, so both must be included in the promises. Nor can any construction, worthy of the subject, or adequate in dignity and importance, be put upon the expression, *the sons of Zion*, and *the sons of Greece*, but that which refers to the religion of each. The triumph of true religion over idolatry was one that affected the whole world, including every country, and extending to every age, and regarding the eternal as well as temporal interests of mankind.

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Verse 15. יהוה צבאות יגן עליהם ואכלו וכבשו אבני קלע ושתו המו כמו יין ומלאו כמזרק כזוית מבחן:

*And the Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*

To take these expressions in the literal sense, as promising to man the grossest of sensual indulgences, would surely be a strange misconstruction of prophetic language; *המו* (or *ומה*) which is rendered, *and make a noise*, is not preceded by the connective *ו* *and*; it may, therefore, be simply the personal pronoun *they*, being the nominative to the verb *drink*; *they shall drink as of wine*, &c. Who is intended by the pronoun *they*, if at all doubtful here, becomes sufficiently clear in the next verse, where it is repeated in a manner that leaves no ambiguity, at least as far as concerns the Gentiles.

Verse 16. והושיעם יהוה אלהיהם ביום ההוא כצאן עמו כי אבני נזר מתנוססות על אדמתו:

*And the Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flock of his people, for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.*

Here the pronoun *them*, in evident contradistinction with *his people*, shews that two nations are spoken of; otherwise the passage might be rendered, *the Lord God, shall save as a flock, his people*. But the antithesis marked by the pronoun *them*, is rendered still more obvious, if possible, in the next line. *For the wall of separation is waving* (or tottering) *over his land*. Such is the literal meaning of the Hebrew, when the words are taken in their primary and ordinary sense. Thus, *אבני* (or *ינבא*) in its usual sense means, *stones*, as the stones of a wall; but in a more remote and figurative sense, *precious stones*: *נזר* (or *רזו*) in the primary sense, signifies, *to separate*, or, *separation*; occurring in this sense ten times at least in Numbers, ch. vi.; but in the secondary or more remote sense, *a diadem*, which separates or distinguishes the prince from the people: *נסס* (or *ססו*) in the primary sense means to wave to and fro, as a flag, or as a wall before it is blown down by the wind; but, in a secondary sense it signifies, as some understand it here, to glitter or sparkle, as a diamond, when waved or moved. Thus we see the pains taken to avoid the plain and obvious sense of the passage; but the Hebrew scholar will judge for himself.

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The concluding verse, in which the prophet breaks forth into expressions of adoration and praise for the goodness of the Lord, well accords with this view of his bounty being unlimited, and extending to all his creatures alike.

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# The Rabbi's Exposition And Reply, Chapter IX.

[pg 059]

As I conclude that the object of the Christian, who thinks he sees in this Prophecy a clear prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ, is to learn in what manner it is expounded by the Jews; it appears to me that the simplest way in which I can reply, will be to lay before him what I conceive to be the proper translation and interpretation. In doing this, it will be unnecessary to offer any further explanation or exposition, beyond what may be given in the form of comment on the translation; while he is at liberty to conclude with regard to those passages, where no comment or explanation is offered, not, assuredly, that I assent to *his* interpretation, but merely that I acquiesce in the reasons he assigns for my dissent; or that his anticipation of my argument has rendered its repetition superfluous, as is the case in verses 9 and 10. The following is my mode of translating this chapter and expounding it:—

## Zechariah, Chapter IX.

Verse 1. *The burden of the word of the Lord on the land of Hadrach, and Damascus, his residence; for to the Lord (will be) the eye of man, and (particularly that) of all the tribes of Israel.*

This prophecy is directed against a king named Hadrach, and against Damascus his residence. According to some who have visited Syria, there is to this day, near the desert, a village bearing the name of that king, whose inhabitants assert that formerly a large district about it, that constituted a powerful kingdom, was called by the same name.

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*For to the Lord, saith the prophet, will be the eye of man, agreeably to what he further declareth, that the extermination of the wicked will precede the turning to God, the eyes of the residue of man.*

Verse 2. *And also (on) Hamath which borders on her; (on) Tyre, and (on) Sidon, though she be very wise. Verse 3. And Tyre did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as dust, and gold as mire of the streets.*

The burden of the Lord is also touching Hamath, which was bordering on the former; also Tyre, and Sidon, which thought herself very wise; yet her wisdom availed her nothing, as was also foretold by Ezekiel, chap. xxvii. ver. 32.

Verse 4. *Behold the Lord will make her poor, and smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire. Verse 5. Ashkelon shall see it and fear; Gaza also, and she shall be very sorrowful. Ekron also, for he (God) has made ashamed her expectation: and the king shall perish from Gaza: and Ashkelon shall not remain. Verse 6. And a foreigner shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut of the pride of the Philistines.*

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All the foregoing is known from history to have been already accomplished, through the conquests of Alexander the Macedonian; who also destroyed the fleet of Tyre, and smote her power on the sea. Among others also, it is said, Ekron shall be very sorrowful, since her hope was blasted; Tyre, on which she solely confided, being destroyed.

Verse 7. *And when I shall have taken away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; then even he shall remain for our God, and he shall be as a chief in Judah, and Ekron like Jebusi.*

Now the prophet continues to predict, what is yet to be accomplished, that after their filth and pollution shall have been taken away, a remnant of them also will be to God; each of whom will not be inferior even to a chief in Judah, and Ekron will be in a manner as holy as Jebusi, which is Jerusalem. See Joshua, chap. xviii. ver. 28.

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This, and all that is connected with it, to the end of the following chapter, may refer to a remoter period, to which the mind of the prophet was suddenly transported; or these events may have been intended, immediately after the overthrow of these nations, to have followed under one of the princes of Judah, who was already joined by a part of Ephraim; and the whole of whom would have been gathered under his banners, were not this delayed on account of their having acted contrary to the will of God. For, that the promises of God are conditional, and sometimes delayed, if those to whom they were made, render themselves undeserving of them, appears in many instances. See Zech. chap. viii. ver. 14-16. Jeremiah, chap. xviii. ver. 9-10. Among other instances, may be cited what took place with our ancestors, who went out of Egypt. The land of Canaan promised to Abraham (Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 16.) was again promised to them, even after their having worshipped the calf—Exodus, chap. xxxiii. ver. 1.—yet, for their frequent rebellions, was the fulfilment of this promise finally delayed to another generation. (Numb. chap. xiv. ver. 23.) Nay, it even appears that it would have been retracted, or at least delayed many



generations, but for the intercession of Moses. (Exod. chap. xxxii. ver. 10.) And, in like manner, may the fulfilment of these promises, and that of others, which follow, respecting the restoration of Israel, be delayed, in consequence of the wickedness of our people, exciting the displeasure of the Lord.

Verse 8. *And I will encamp about my house (to protect) against an army, against one passing and returning, and no oppressor shall pass over them any more: for now have I seen it with my eyes.*

Now have I seen it with mine eyes, means having graciously turned his particular attention to them, as is similarly expressed in Exod. chap. ii. ver. 25.

Ver. 9. *Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, shout, daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King shall come unto thee just, and he being saved, humble and riding upon an ass, the foal of an ass.*

Ver. 10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace unto nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth.*

Verse 11. *Also thou, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent away thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.*

[pg 064] By the blood of the covenant, apparently, is meant that related in Exod. chap. xxiv. ver. 8. A pit without water means a land of captivity.

Verse 12. *Return ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day (I) declare (THAT) I will render double unto thee.*

The prisoners are to return and shelter in this strong hold.

Verse 13. *For I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, Oh Zion! against thy sons, Oh Greece! and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

Judah and Ephraim are represented as warlike instruments in the hand of God, the sword, and the bow which he bends, and fills his hand with; similar to the expression in 2 Kings, chap. ix. ver. 24.

Verse 14. *And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go forth with the whirlwinds of the South.*

Verse 15. *The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue the sling stones; and noisily drink (their blood) as wine; and they shall be filled as a bowl, as the corners of an altar.*

[pg 065] The prophet in derision here compares their enemies to sling-stones, contrasted with which in verse 16 that follows, Israel is compared to precious stones; and of whom it was before said that they were the sword in the hand of the Lord, to be filled with the blood of their relentless persecutors. See also Isaiah, chap. xxxiv. ver. 6.

Verse 16. *And the Lord their God will save them, his people as a flock, for as the stones of a crown shall they be glittering upon his land.*

Verse 17. *For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! The young men he will make as fruitful as corn, and the maids as wine.*

[pg 066] **Remarks On The Rabbi's Exposition.**

[pg 067] Were I candidly to express my sentiments, I might say, perhaps, that the Rabbi's answer had disappointed me, being neither so full nor so forcible as I expected; but if he, as a Jew, be satisfied, it is not for me as a Christian to complain. There are, moreover, certain points of coincidence in our translation, in which the acquiescence of the Rabbi, as a distinguished Hebrew scholar, is truly gratifying; while there are also some points of disagreement, in which I am inclined to relinquish my own in favour of the Rabbi's translation. I propose briefly to advert to each; but there is one circumstance that first deserves to be noticed, and which, however singular it may appear, might yet have been expected. It is this, that wherever I have ventured to differ from Christian commentators, there I am also at issue with the Rabbi. Now, having formerly stated that our received translation is chiefly founded on the Masoretic punctuation, which is Jewish, a coincidence was naturally to be looked for between the Jew's exposition, and that which is in a great measure borrowed from it. And accordingly such is the case, the Jew's exposition differing from that of our own commentators, principally on those points where the latter discover allusions to Christ. These, the Jew, of course, no where finds.

Now, what the Jew no where perceives, and the Christian only here and there, as it were incidentally, I maintain to be wholly and solely the subject of these chapters. This is, at least, a

[pg 068] broad and well marked line of distinction: but here I unfortunately stand alone, having Christian as well as Jew opposed to me. Even the Jew allows that the subject of the latter part of this prophecy is the Messiah and his kingdom; but if Christ be the Messiah, as the Christian must admit, then is Christianity his kingdom, and the subject of the prophecy. So much for the state of the question.

[pg 069] The first point of disagreement between us is unconnected with the punctuation, and is one of little importance to the question, beyond what it may derive from the concurrence of my opponents. The Rabbi and Dr. Blaney agree in regarding Hadrach in the first verse, as the name of a prince, instead of a city or state. The Rabbi gives no authority for his opinion, and Dr. Blaney supports his by the conjecture that Rehob, spoken of in 2 Sam. viii. 3, who is by Josephus named Ἀραός or Ἀραχος, may be the prince alluded to. Now since the avowed reason for resorting to this supposition is the want of a city of this name, I would venture to suggest, that Aradus bears quite as much resemblance to Hadrach as Ἀραός does; and to Aradus was annexed a considerable district of country, which was precisely the first conquered by Alexander, when he invaded Syria, as appears by the following citation from Quintus Curtius, lib. 4. cap. 1. "Aradus quoque insula deditur regi. Maritimam tum oram, pleraque longius à mari residentia, rex ejus insulæ Strato possidebat. Quo in fidem accepto, castra movet ad urbem Marathon." Aradus, like Tyre, was the daughter of Sidon, as stated by Strabo; Ἐκτίσσαν αὐτὴν φουγάδες, ὡς φασιν, ἐκ Σιδόνης. These then, are circumstances which add weight to the supposition that Aradus may be here intended; but still it is no more than conjecture, and as such, *quod valet, valeat*.

In the same verse, the Rabbi's rendering of מוֹתוֹ (or מוֹתוֹהוּ) *his residence*, must, of course, stand or fall with the previous question, Whether Hadrach be the name of a man or a city? If it be that of a prince, whose residence was Damascus, I have only to observe, that no such person appears to have resided there at the time the prophet wrote, and this is the only time that can accord with the Rabbi's translation.

[pg 070] With regard to the last line of this verse, which the Rabbi renders nearly in the same manner as our commentators, *for to the Lord will be the eye of man*, &c. I can only say, that he does not appear to me to have thrown any new light upon the passage, the sense remaining as vague and obscure as before. But let the reader judge for himself.

In verse 2nd, the Rabbi agreeing with Lowth, renders תְּגַבֵּל (or לְבַגֵּל) as an active verb, "*which borders on her*," while Blaney, with me, makes it passive. If, by Hadrach, be intended the district of country extending inland from the town of Aradus, this would lead us directly to Epiphania, which was the lesser Hamath; and this expression might be meant to distinguish it from the greater Hamath, the modern Antioch; but the Rabbi does not acquiesce in this meaning of Hadrach; and, upon the whole, I see no sufficient reason to relinquish my own mode of rendering.

[pg 071] In verse 4th, the Rabbi's translation, "*Behold the Lord will make her poor*," I certainly prefer to that of our version, namely, "*shall cast her out*," but his explanation of the remainder of this verse, "*and smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire*," appears less satisfactory than that of Dr. Blaney, which I have adopted from him. The Rabbi explains the accomplishment of this passage by Alexander's defeating the fleet of the Tyrians, and burning their city; but such an interpretation is hardly borne out by history; a few occasional skirmishes by sea, and a partial conflagration, after the city was taken, being the utmost that took place. And accordingly this verse has been otherwise explained by Lowth, who understands the "*smiting her power in the sea*," as referring to the insular situation of new Tyre; but Dr. Blaney, by a mode of rendering fully warranted by the Hebrew text, applies these words to Sidon, where they received their accomplishment in a manner strikingly peculiar. The difference of translation consists in reading—"For she (Sidon) has built Tyre, a fortress for herself," instead of "*For Tyre has built a fortress for herself*;" thus applying the expressions which follow to Sidon, instead of Tyre; which, however, is not thereby excluded from a full participation in the burden of the prophecy, evidently denounced against both. In regard to Sidon, the fulfilment was as follows:—When

[pg 072] besieged by Artaxerxes Ochus, some years earlier than the siege of Tyre by Alexander, the Sidonians, lest individuals might be tempted to seek their personal safety by flight, and abandon the defence of the city, burned all their shipping in the first instance; and, when, by the cowardly treachery of their king, the enemy was admitted within their walls; they then set fire to their houses, and consumed their city, their families, their wealth, and themselves; no less than forty thousand perishing in the flames, according to Diod. Sic.: φασὶ δὲ τοὺς ὑπο τοῦ πυρὸς διαφθαρεντας, συν τοῖς οἰκετικοῖς σώμασι, γεγονέναι πλείους τῶν τετρακισμυρίων. Lib. 16. cap. 45.

In verse 5. The fate of Gaza and its governor, who was dragged round the city by Alexander, in imitation of Achilles, though noticed by Lowth, is disregarded by Blaney, for what reason I know not, since this seems as well intitled to notice as any other literal fulfilment of prophecy.

[pg 073] In verse 7th, the Rabbi's acquiescence in the meaning of the words, "*when I have taken away his blood out of his mouth and his pollution from between his teeth*," as signifying, literally, the taking away of sin and pollution, is highly important to the Christian exposition, for it intimates the first and greatest benefit we derive from the coming of the Messiah. That the Rabbi does not so understand it, as alluding to the remission of sins through Christ, is not to be wondered at; but it does seem singular that Lowth and Blaney should have disregarded or misunderstood so remarkable a passage, in the sense of which even the Jew acquiesces, though not in the application. יְרוּסָה (or יְרוּסָה), according to the Rabbi, means Jerusalem, that is, "*Ekron shall be as*

*Jerusalem.*" Now the Jebusites were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, it is true; but why the prophet should here use the word Jebusi for Jerusalem, and here only, is rather unaccountable, and I cannot but prefer the translation I have given.

In verses 8, 9, 10, there is no material disagreement between us either in the translation or the interpretation. Here Jew and Christian agree in applying these verses to the coming of the Messiah. The only question between us is, whether Christ be the Messiah, which the Rabbi, of course, denies.

[pg 074] Verse 11. In the words, "*By the blood of thy covenant,*" &c. it was not to be expected that the Rabbi would see any intimation of a covenant for the redemption of mankind, sealed with the blood of Christ; though we might have looked for it in Dr. Blaney. The application of this and the two preceding verses to Christianity, was so clearly perceived, and so ably expounded by Lowth, that we only wonder he should have confined that view to these three verses, considering them as a digression, when by extending the same principle of interpretation to other parts of the prophecy, he might have found a clue to the solution of many difficulties. The want of this clue obliges Dr. Blaney to come to the same conclusion as the Rabbi, that the remaining part of the prophecy is still unaccomplished; a conclusion which I am compelled most strenuously to oppose.

[pg 075] To the Jew, the suspension of the fulfilment of this prophecy would be almost equivalent to that of all others; for the Messiah's kingdom is alike the subject of all, and if this one be unaccomplished, then must they all be so. To the Jew then, I would say—Is this consonant with the previous ordinations of God in the government of the world, to leave an interval of more than two thousand years, without the fulfilment of prophecy, which is to mankind, the most convincing of all proofs of his Divine superintendance and control over human affairs? To Dr. Blaney, on the other hand, who conceives that "since our Saviour's appearance on earth, nothing has happened to the Jewish nation in any degree answerable to what is here predicted; no return from captivity, no victories, no successes," &c.; to him I would say, why may not "*the children of the promise*" be here included as well as "*the children of the flesh*?" The first Christians were Jews, the apostles and disciples were Jews, while the converted Gentiles were no less styled, "*Israelites by adoption*;" and so they are continually called in prophetic language. If then the terms, "*Sons of Zion*" and "*Israel of God*," be *not less* applicable to those who received Christ for their Messiah, than to those who rejected him; we cannot surely say with Dr. Blaney, that there have been no return from captivity, no victories, no successes, since the coming of Christ; for it will hardly be

[pg 076] maintained that redemption from the bondage of sin is no return from captivity; that the triumph of Christianity over paganism is no victory, and the rapid propagation of the Gospel no success.

In verse 12, "*The strong hold*," which is evidently the same as the prison-house, called in the preceding verse, "*the pit without water*," and which the Rabbi allows to be a state of captivity, is here, somewhat abruptly, transformed into a place of shelter and protection.

Verse 15. The Rabbi's idea, that the prophet here uses the term "*sling-stones*," in derision, as an appellative for the enemies of Israel, while he applies to themselves, in the next verse, the term "*precious stones*," appears to me, I must acknowledge, somewhat novel; and as I dispute that translation of the next verse altogether, so I cannot acquiesce in such an explanation of this. With regard to the rendering of  $\eta\eta$  (or  $\eta\eta$ ) in the same verse, which I have considered as the personal pronoun, "*they*," instead of the verb "*to make a noise*"—I believe the Rabbi's, upon re-considering the passage, to be the more correct translation.

[pg 077] But these verbal differences, however they may interest the Hebrew scholar, are of trivial importance, as regarding the grand question between us, namely, whether the accomplishment of the predictions contained in this chapter, ceases before we arrive at verse 9, which is admitted to announce the coming of the Messiah. Upon this point, then, I plead the general issue. If I succeed in shewing that every part of the prophecy in the following chapters, as well as the present, has been clearly accomplished in the leading events of the history of Christianity, I gain my cause. If I fail to do so, let the verdict go for the Jew.

[pg 078]

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## Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter X.

Two points appeared to be established in the last chapter; one, that the Messiah's kingdom is the subject of this part of the prophecy, and the other, that that kingdom is a spiritual one; or these points, if not proved, were, at least, shewn to be in perfect accordance with every verse, and every line contained in that chapter.

[pg 079] That the Messiah's kingdom is the subject, appeared from the express declaration of the 9th verse, "*Behold, thy King cometh,*" &c., and from the exact accordance of every other with this view.

The circumstances that intimated the spiritual nature of that kingdom, and shewed that the prophecy refers to Christianity, were the following:—the denunciations against worldly-mindedness, wherewith the subject is prefaced and introduced; these being immediately followed by, and contrasted with the promise of spiritual blessings from the Messiah's coming; which were declared to be the remission of sins, and the redemption of the Gentile world from the darkness of idolatry;—next, the personal character of the Messiah, and the express manner of his coming, namely, in meekness and humility;—the peaceful nature of his reign;—the shedding of his blood for the redemption of mankind from the bondage of sin;—the joint instrumentality of Israel in the accomplishment of the great scheme of redemption, but the admission of the Gentiles to a full participation in the blessings which result from it, and the removal of the partition wall, mentioned by St. Paul, (Ephes. ii. 14,) by which they had been previously excluded from them.

[pg 080] These are the circumstances that declare the spirituality of the Messiah's kingdom, and these are clearly intimated in the last chapter.

The present will be found to contain somewhat less variety of incident, with more of exhortations and promises than the preceding. These are more particularly addressed to the house of Judah, but their subsequent extension to "*them of Ephraim*" also, is a circumstance that calls for some explanation, without which it would be difficult to shew the chronological order of the events foretold.

Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had gone into captivity long before the time when the prophecy was uttered, which was that of the building of the second temple; nor have these tribes since returned, (what is become of them, or whether they be now in existence, being wholly unknown,) yet is their return from captivity here distinctly foretold. What, then, are we to understand by this return, or who is intended by "*them of Ephraim,*" is the question?

[pg 081] On the spiritual view, the captivity means the bondage of sin, and especially of idolatry, into which Ephraim had fallen by their apostacy; and their return will mean their return to true religion, whereby they obtain the remission of their sins, and the gift of eternal life. But what is meant by "*them of Ephraim*"? Are we to understand thereby the original ten tribes who revolted with Jeroboam, and whose descendants are not known to be now in existence? or the remnant of those tribes who returned to Jerusalem, (2 Chron. xi. 16,) and who having joined the tribe of Judah have since become mixed and identified with them?

[pg 082] On this latter view the prophecy may already in part have received its fulfilment, as some of this remnant, mixed with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, in the apostolic age, were probably among the number of our Lord's disciples, and were thus redeemed from the bondage of sin, and have already shared in the triumphs and blessings of the Gospel. On the former view, supposing, what is not impossible, that these tribes are still in existence, we must look chiefly to the future, as regards them, for the accomplishment of this part of the prophecy. But whichever view we embrace, as to those who constitute now the ten tribes, we must still look to the future, (and this is the point to be attended to,) for the full and perfect fulfilment of the prophecy; for so long as any of the house of Israel remain unredeemed, so long must they be regarded, in the spiritual view, which is the view we embrace, as still remaining in the bondage of sin, and not yet returned from captivity.

This then is the essential point as regards the prophetic chronology, that where events are spoken of, which, like the restoration of Israel, are continuous from age to age, or destined to occupy many centuries in their fulfilment, there the prophetic view must needs accord with the nature of the events, comprising at one glance the commencement, the continuance, and the completion of what is foretold; consequently these events not being limited to particular periods like the ordinary occurrences of history, like the fate of a battle or the fall of a monarchy, cannot be dated with chronological precision, except it be from the time of their commencement. And precisely of this nature are the events which form the subject of the chapter before us.

[pg 083] The first of these in order, as well as importance, is the progress of the Gospel of Christ, or the triumph of Judah, which began with the apostolic age, and has since continued progressive, though with a fluctuating career, and unequal success, up to the present time, when it extends over a large portion of the habitable world; but still without having attained to any thing like the universality announced in prophecy. This then is an event, which being still progressive, is not limitable to a particular period, nor capable of being dated with precision except from its commencement.

[pg 084] Next to this, or to the triumph of Judah, is the promised restoration of Israel, which cannot be deemed complete, while so many of the house of Israel, dispersed over the nations of Christendom, still rest their hopes on the covenant of the Law; a covenant which we as Christians believe to have been annulled at the promulgation of the Gospel; but which from the first offered only temporal rewards, and unlike the covenant of grace, gave no distinct promises of eternal life. That the remaining Israelites will ultimately awaken to a sense of these advantages, we may confidently expect from this promise of restoration, and from the predicted universality of the Messiah's kingdom. This then is also an event yet imperfectly accomplished, or still in a state of progression, and therefore yet incapable of being dated with precision.

The abolition of Paganism is another, which though nominally effected at the beginning of the fourth century, is yet so far from being complete, that Paganism still prevails over the largest portion of the globe; and consequently this, like the former, is an event which can be dated only from its commencement. Bearing then in mind the nature of these events, and the impossibility of limiting the date of them to definite periods, we may now proceed with the interpretation of the prophecy.

[pg 085] As the last chapter opened with denunciations of divine wrath against worldly-mindedness, which were followed by, and contrasted with the unfolding of the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, so the present chapter opens with exhortations to seek for spiritual blessings, and with the promise of their abundant bestowal on those who ask for them.

*Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord causing lightning, shall bring heavy showers, and give to every one grass in the field.*

[pg 086] This language is metaphorical, it is true, and so is invariably that which is employed in describing the plenteousness of the Messiah's kingdom, abounding in corn, wine, and oil, natural plenty signifying abundance in spiritual blessings. Were any one disposed to take such expressions in a strictly literal sense, he would soon find it impossible, for, most of them are mixed metaphors, such as *waters of life, trees of righteousness, garments of salvation*, of which part at least must be figurative; and the spiritual sense is in fact the most literal of any that can possibly be affixed to them. *Ask ye of the Lord rain*, signifies seek the blessings of righteousness, and they shall be freely given to you. When viewed in this light, we shall readily perceive the connection between this and the next verse, which contrasts the value of true, with the worthlessness and deceitfulness of false religion.

*For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; and told false dreams; they comfort in vain.*

That is, the heathen priests and oracles promise blessings which they have no power to bestow, but delude their votaries with false hopes, leading them astray, and leaving them to wander as a flock without a shepherd.

*Therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd.*

[pg 087] A religion like Paganism, which allowed the unrestrained indulgence of the passions, of pride, avarice, and ambition, was well calculated to seduce; and the Jews, in spite of the continual exhortations of their prophets, in spite of the many signal miracles displayed to them, and wrought in their behalf, had frequently relapsed into idolatry. Nor can it be supposed that the outward worship of idols was alone displeasing to God, and that the indulgence of the passions, which was the soul and spirit of idolatry, was disregarded. The spirit was at least as likely as the form of Paganism to be offensive to Heaven; and accordingly it was continually denounced by the prophets, and had been frequently punished by signal acts of judgment. And in this did the Jewish priests and rulers still offend, by their avarice and worldly-mindedness, and thus incur the displeasure of Heaven, as already intimated, and here repeated.

*Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goats.*

The shepherds are the guardians, the goats the leaders of the flock; but the Jewish shepherds and leaders misled their flock, and as their forefathers, under Jeroboam, had embraced idolatry, and were therefore allowed to be carried away into captivity, so their posterity, seduced by similar passions, rejected the blessings of the Gospel, and were suffered to remain in the bondage of sin. But the house of Judah having remained faithful, to them was the Messiah promised; and given to those who were willing to receive him.

*But the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and made them as his goodly horse in battle. Out of him shall come the corner-stone; out of him, the nail; out of him, the battle bow; out of him every ruler together.*

[pg 088] Triumphant career and success are herein promised to Judah, but the Messiah's kingdom having been already declared to be a peaceful one, we cannot suppose literal warfare to be here intended. The triumph of true religion over Paganism is no doubt the warfare to be understood.

*And they shall be as mighty men who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in battle; and they shall fight because the Lord is with them, and they shall confound the riders on horses.*

And while this triumph is promised to Judah, mercy and forgiveness are declared to Israel also, and their return from captivity is foretold.

*And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them, for I have mercy upon them, and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine, yea their children shall see it and be glad, their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.*

[pg 089] The complete fulfilment of this part of the prophecy must still be future, whether we consider it

as referring to the Jews now dispersed over different countries, or to the ten tribes who went into captivity.

In most countries of Europe and probably of Asia also, the usual mode of call to a person just within hearing is a shrill kind of hiss, which is the more readily noticed because differing from all other sounds. This expression is accordingly used in the prophecy to express the recal of Israel, whether spiritual or otherwise.

*I will hiss for them, and gather them, for I have redeemed them, and they shall increase as they have increased.*

[pg 090]

The next verse speaks of sowing them again among the people, which appears at first as if again declaring their dispersion; but on the spiritual view there is no reason to suppose that such is the meaning. Sowing them among the people, on this view will signify the blending together of Jews and Gentiles, by their embracing one common faith; whereby they at length become one race, and all distinction is lost under the common denomination of Christians. This also explains the rapid increase of their numbers here foretold, as well as their return from captivity, and their living again. The increase of numbers arising from the accession of converts; their return from captivity, signifying redemption from the bondage of sin; and their living, the resurrection to eternal life through Christ.

*And I will sow them among the people, and they shall remember me in far countries, and they shall live with their children, and turn again.*

The spirituality of this return and gathering becomes still clearer as we proceed, signifying the flowing together of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, into the house of the Lord.

*And I will bring them again out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.*

[pg 091]

This extraordinary increase of numbers, which is to overflow all countries, strongly favours the spiritual view, for the actual number of the Hebrew nation is avowedly diminishing, and becoming less and less likely to perform the wonderful changes next intimated. The sea and the isles were common expressions for the Gentile nations, (Gen. x. 5,) while the land signifies always the Jews, from Palestine or the Holy Land—see note. Rivers denote in prophetic language, the people residing on their borders. (Isaiah viii. 7.) *The river*, in particular, signifies the Euphrates and the Eastern nations bordering upon it. This will serve as a key to the meaning of the next verse, which announces the subversion of Paganism in these different countries. Thus, *afflicting the sea and smiting the waves*, denote its extinction in the West; *drying up the depths of the river*, signify its extinction in the East; *and bringing down the pride of Assyria*, and *the departing of the sceptre from Egypt* bespeak its further abolition.

*And he shall cause affliction to pass over the sea, and shall smite the waves of the sea: and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down; and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.*

[pg 092]

Surely these expressions announce some greater changes than would result from the mere emigration from these countries of a race, poor, afflicted, and despised, as the Jews long have been. And small indeed is the likelihood that the literal subjugation of all these countries by that race, can be here intended. The following verse points out a far more probable and consistent solution of the problem, in the overthrow of their idolatry, and the turning of all these nations to the worship of the one true God.

*And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.*

[pg 093]

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## Notes To Chapter IX.

Verse 1. יהוה עשה חזיזים ומטר גשם:

*So the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.*

The Hebrew here may be rendered (see Lowth and Parkhurst) *lightning* instead of *bright clouds*, and the connexion with rain will then be much more obvious; especially with *heavy* rain, as the Hebrew word literally signifies, which usually follow lightning. The construction will then be as proposed in the text.

*So the Lord causing lightning, shall bring heavy rain, &c.*

Verse 3. על הרעים חרה אפי ועל העתודים אפקוד כי פקד יהוה:

*Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats, for the Lord, &c.*

[pg 094]

The apparently indiscriminate use of the past and future tenses, in scriptural and prophetic language, has perplexed the best Hebrew scholars. On the conversive power of the ו, Granville Sharpe's is perhaps the best treatise. In the present case, unless the ו retain that power when disjoined from the verb, there is no reason for rendering the future אפקוד (or דוקפא) as a perfect, or, *I punished*, instead of *I will punish*. And, as Mr. Lowth observes, the כי (or יכ) which follows would be more properly rendered *But than For*, and it will then be—*mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goats; But the Lord of Hosts, &c.* The shepherds and the goats both signify leaders of the flock.

Verse 4. ממנו פנה ממנו יתד ממנו קשת מלחמה ממנו יצא כל נוגש יחדו:

*Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.*

The words *corner, nail, and oppressor*, must be rather perplexing to the English reader, nor can the Hebrew scholar be certain of the precise meaning of each, though their general import is obvious enough. Thus פנה (or הנופ) *corner*, signifies in the root to *turn*, and as the *corner stone* is a guide to the builder in laying the others, it comes to signify a guide or leader. So יתד (or דתי), a *nail*, signifies one on whom others depend. And נוגש (or שגוש), an *oppressor*, like the Greek τυραννος, signifies generally, a *prince*, as well as a *tyrant*. Thus these terms are each of them equivalent to a *chief or leader*.

[pg 095]

The verb יצא (or אצי), which follows, may be either past or future, but the latter accords best with the context, as in the proposed translation. *Out of him shall come forth the corner-stone, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every leader together.*

Verse 8. אשרקה להם.—*I will hiss for them.*

The word *hiss*, does not to the English reader convey the correct meaning here. In many parts of Europe, and, probably, in some of Asia, the common mode of call is by a shrill sound, very different from either a hiss or a whistle. In some countries it is effected by pressing the tongue against the teeth with the lips open, and sounding the letters—tsz. In others, it is usual to begin with the lips compressed, and without closing the teeth, thus making the sound of the letters psh—but in both, the sibilant sound predominates, and is heard to a considerable distance, while its peculiarity instantly attracts attention from all that are within hearing; and this is no doubt the sense of the term, as here used. The Hebrew closely resembles, and probably gives the etymology of the English word, *shriek*. (See Parkhurst.)

Verse 11. ועבר בים צרה והכה בים גלים:

*And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves of the sea.*

This mode of rendering gives a turn to the sense of the passage, which is wholly uncalled for, if not unwarranted by the original: which would be more literally translated: *And affliction shall come over the sea, &c.* But the Jew's mode of rendering is equally correct, and better accords with the context, thus: *He shall cause trouble to pass in the sea, and shall smite the waves of the sea.* The latter expression amplifying and explaining the former.

[pg 096]

What is meant by the expressions, the sea, the isles, and the land, is a point of no small importance. In prophetic language, the sea and the isles always signify the western Gentiles, or European nations; while the land signifies Palestine, or the Jewish nation. The Hebrew word ים (or די) means either the sea or the west. As the sea extends along the whole western coast of Syria, sea and west came to be used synonymously. And as the European nations lay beyond the sea they obtained the name of the isles, or the isles of the Gentiles, as they are called in Gen. x. 5. Mr. Lowth observes, on Isa. xi. 11. "The islands, in the prophetic style, seem particularly to denote the western parts of the world, or the European nations; the west being often called the sea in the Scripture language."

Thus, "*causing affliction, or trouble, to come over the sea,*" and "*smiting the waves of it,*" signify, as the Jew rightly explains, to cause confusion and dismay among the Gentile nations of the west.

Verse 11. והבישו כל מצולות יאור:

*And all the deeps of the river shall dry up.*

That rivers are meant, in prophetic language, to represent the people residing on their borders, appears in various passages. See Isa, viii. 7. "*Now, therefore, behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory.*" In like manner, the drying up of the Euphrates, is spoken of under the sixth vial in the Revelations, in allusion to the nations bordering upon that river.

## The Rabbi's Reply, And The Author's Remarks Upon It. Chapter X.

Contending, as the Jew does, that no part of the prophecy relating to the Messiah's kingdom, has yet been accomplished, he cannot reasonably be expected to offer a particular interpretation of what, according to his view, is still unfulfilled. And, accordingly, his remarks on this chapter are restricted to an occasional correction of the received translation, and a few short explanatory notes; while his reply to my exposition, if reply it can be called, may be comprised in one short sentence, namely, that he considers the whole unaccomplished, and rejects altogether the spiritual exposition, admitting none but the literal.

In answer to this, I have to observe, that the literal acceptation, has already, in some instances, been shewn to be impossible; and will, hereafter, be so in many more; while the figurative exposition offered, is in perfect accordance with the style and language of prophecy in general, and is uniform and consistent throughout.

As I fully acquiesce in the Rabbi's corrections, and in the only instance where we differ, have adopted his view in preference to my own, it is wholly unnecessary to offer his translation at length; but an objection which he makes to my exposition of verses 3rd and 4th of the last chapter, I feel called upon to notice.

In those verses, I adopted the view of Dr. Blayney, that the destruction *by fire*, there denounced, applies to Sidon rather than to Tyre.

The common version, "*For Tyre has built herself a fortress,*" being rendered by him, "*For she (Sidon) has built herself a fortress, Tyre;*" the Sidonians being thus made the immediate object of denunciation, who are allowed to have been the builders of Tyre, which was thence called the daughter of Sidon.

Now the Jew's objection is founded upon collateral prophecies, in which the burden cannot, as here, be shifted from Tyre to Sidon, the former being distinctly named in these; and in some, the precise mode of destruction specified, namely, by fire: Thus, in Amos i. 10, "*I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof;*" see also Isa. xxiii., in which the whole burden is expressly on Tyre; and again, Ezek. xxvii. 32, "*and in their wailing, they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?*"

These, and similar passages, would, no doubt, be fatal to the exposition of Dr. Blayney, could they be shewn to foretel one and the same event; but against this, there are, what appear to me, conclusive objections. Two of these prophets not only wrote long before the time of Zechariah, but before the destruction of Old Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, which was therefore most likely to be the object of their predictions, and not New Tyre, which, at that time was not in existence, being built after Old Tyre was demolished; this then appears conclusive against the objection drawn from what occurs in Amos and Isaiah. With regard to Ezekiel, the case is somewhat different, and the answer must rest on other grounds.

Ezekiel did write much nearer to the time in question, and commentators appear undecided whether some of his predictions refer to the destruction of Old or New Tyre, or to both; for if he uttered this prophecy before the siege of Old Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, which can hardly admit of doubt, when he says, chap. xxvi. 7, "*Behold I will bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon;*" still the expression of "*the destroyed in the midst of the sea,*" does seem peculiarly applicable to the insular situation of New Tyre. But if it be granted that the siege of this latter, by Alexander, be intimated in that remarkable expression; yet Ezekiel no where, that I can find, specifies *fire* as the peculiar agent of destruction; therefore, it cannot be inferred from any thing he says, that in Zechariah's prophecy, which appears to be directed against both Tyre and Sidon, this particular mode of destruction may not apply to Sidon, as the text certainly warrants that interpretation. Thus I see no reason to relinquish Dr. Blayney's view, which I should give up with the more reluctance, as I have so rarely been able to go along with that learned commentator; while this exposition appeared to me a very happy solution of a difficulty presented by the received translation.



# Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter XI.

[pg 103] It was before stated, that we should find in its proper place, due notice taken of the pride and worldly-mindedness which led the Jews to reject the Messiah, as he offered no temporal advantages; and of their forfeiting thereby all claim to the blessings which his kingdom was calculated to afford. We are now come to that place. The introduction to this chapter announces the frustration of their hopes of worldly greatness built upon the promised Messiah; and distinctly states what portion of their nation would be blinded by such motives, and what portion would be exempt from them. The rulers, the rich, and the great are declared to be those who would mislead the flock; while the poor and the humble are stated to be those who would recognise the hand of God in his works, and perceive that this was the word of the Lord.

At the time of Christ's coming, it is unquestionable, that a very general expectation prevailed among the Jews, that the period for their Messiah's appearance was arrived; but so remote was the character of Jesus from what they expected in their prince, and so different were the advantages he offered from what they had hoped to obtain, that the majority of the people willingly yielded to the persuasion of their interested rulers, that he was not the promised Messiah; and thus the misguided flock for the most part entered into the views of their priests and rulers, and rejected Christ.

[pg 104] The motives for this rejection are manifest even to this day, in the backwardness of Israel to relinquish the hopes of a temporal Messiah, and in their blindness to the benefits offered them by a spiritual one; although the consequence has hitherto been to them the loss of even the temporal advantages they previously enjoyed, instead of the attainment of others which they expected. Small, however, in the Christian's estimation, are these, in comparison with their loss, in a spiritual point of view, or their loss of the especial favour of Heaven; which from that time has not only withheld from them any further revelations, but, as we conceive, has even blinded them to the true spiritual import of those previously vouchsafed. Thus, in whatever light we view it, whether spiritually or politically, the humiliation of Israel from that time to the present, has been abundantly manifest; as declared in the prophecy, under the metaphor of the fall of the loftiest trees, the pride of the forest.

*Open thy doors, O Lebanon! that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen, because the mighty is spoiled. Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory is spoiled. A voice of the roaring of young lions, for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.*

[pg 105] This language is highly figurative, no doubt; yet is it interspersed with expressions, which almost preclude the possibility of its misapplication; for *the cedars of Lebanon*, and *the oaks of Bashan*, are next, by a change of metaphor, called, *the shepherds of the flock*; and soon after, dropping the metaphor entirely, it appears that they are the rich and the great, who sacrifice their flock to avarice and ambition. Their hopes, however, were frustrated, in the appearance of a spiritual, instead of a temporal prince, and an exultation over their disappointed ambition forms the exordium to this chapter, which may be explained as follows:—

[pg 106] Literally, the shepherds are supposed to howl for the loss of their rich pastures on mount Carmel, the forest of the vintage; and the lions to roar for the loss of their covert, the thickets on the banks of Jordan, the pride of the river, which, with other trees, are doomed to destruction; but the figurative meaning is, that the priests and rulers of Israel should be disappointed of their hopes of worldly greatness at the Messiah's coming, and be deprived, under the new dispensation, of their power and influence.

The lamentation over their frustrated hopes, is next coupled with expressions of compassion for their misguided flock, whom they had doomed to the slaughter; that is, by depriving them of *the life which is in Christ*. This flock, the prophet is commanded to feed.

*Thus saith the Lord my God. Feed the flock of the slaughter, whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty. And they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord for I am rich. And their own shepherds pity them not.*

Avarice is thus foreshewn to be the vice which would lead the priests to reject Christ; the sending of whom is next declared to be the last act of Divine interposition in behalf of Israel; those who reject him being thenceforward left to themselves.

*For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord, but, lo! I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his shepherd, and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.*

[pg 107] But while further interposition is thus denied to those who reject Christ, being the rich and the great; spiritual food is expressly promised to those who receive him, who were the poor and the meek.

*But I will feed the flock of the slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock.*

The food here promised to those who are willing to receive it, cannot be any other than spiritual food; that is, the knowledge to discern truth from falsehood, and the grace to make a proper election between right and wrong. To the poor, this was given, of whom Christ declared that "*Theirs was the kingdom of Heaven:*" to the rich it was not given, of whom he declared, "*That it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle,*" than for them to enter his kingdom.

[pg 108] We now come to the events to which this introductory matter is intended to lead us; and to render the prophetic annunciation the more impressive, it is typically represented by actions, as well as expressed by words. This is the most important part of the prophecy; that on which it may be said that the whole interpretation hinges. And yet it is here that the Christian is at fault, and that the Jew expects a certain triumph: nor without reason, when our ablest commentators disagree, or even acknowledge the difficulties to be insurmountable. Whether they are removed by the proposed exposition, the reader must decide; and to enable him to do so, we shall state them as briefly as possible.

The events alluded to will, with the Christian, scarcely admit of doubt, for the passage before us is cited in the Gospel of Matthew, though by some error, it is there ascribed to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. But were the citation in question even supposed to be a marginal note, which had found its way into the text in transcribing, still the purport of the prophecy would be not the less manifest, for the connection of this with the context, and the unity of the whole, sufficiently declare the subject.

[pg 109] The events foreshewn, are the death of Christ; the dissolution of the old, and the founding of the new covenant; the rejection of this latter by the great body of the Jewish nation, and their immediate forfeiture of the benefits it affords; with other circumstances attending these events, such as the betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver; the employment of this money in the purchase of the potter's field; the separation of the Jews, who rejected Christ, from those who received him; and the evils entailed upon those who, having rejected the true, followed after false Messiahs. These are the circumstances shadowed forth in the prophecy; but to give a consistent explanation of every part of it, and to shew the exact adaptation of the events to the prediction, constitute the difficulty.

[pg 110] The typical actions of the prophet, consist in his taking two staves, or crooks; first affixing to each of them a significant denomination, and then breaking them in succession; accompanying this action with explanations, declaratory of the purport of his doing so. Yet is the whole highly mystical, and in parts so obscure, that Dr. Blayney acknowledges he cannot solve these difficulties; an avowal that would have been rendered unnecessary, had his predecessor Lowth been more successful. Their failure seems chiefly to have arisen from their misconceiving, in the first place, whom the prophet here personates in the character of the shepherd; and, in the next, what the staves are intended to represent; for the general purport of the whole, is rightly understood by both to be an allusion to the death of Christ, and the completion of his mission. Accordingly, Lowth supposes the shepherd to personate the Messiah, as the shepherd of his flock. But the Messiah is throughout the person spoken of, rather than the speaker, as will presently appear. Blayney also considers the prophet as a type of the Messiah; but supposes him sometimes to speak in his own name, as being himself the shepherd. Not to dwell on the want of consistency in this change of character, its avowed inadequacy to furnish the solution required, is alone a sufficient refutation of it.

That the prophet is the actual speaker is clear, but he speaks in the name of the Almighty, as is distinctly declared three times at least in the present chapter. The great Shepherd is then no other than God himself; and all mankind are his flock. Who are the staves, or crooks, we have next to inquire.

[pg 111] The staff, or crook, is the shepherd's implement, with which he tends his flock, protecting them on the one hand, or correcting them on the other. Hence the two names adapted to the two-fold office, which might be rendered Pleasure and Pain, instead of Beauty and Bands; but there is no occasion to alter the translation, which is equally literal, and equally appropriate as it stands. It is, perhaps, worthy of note, that two staves were once in use for these different purposes. What are these staves then intended to represent? In a word, God being the Shepherd, and all mankind his flock, the staves appear to be typical of *Christ* and *Israel*; these being the agents employed, the great instruments in the hands of God, in accomplishing the work of man's redemption, from the darkness of idolatry to the light of true religion. One staff being *Israel*, with whom was founded the Old Covenant, the express object of which was the abolition of idolatry; a covenant which is continually called the "*bondage of the law;*" and the other staff, *Christ*, the founder of the New Covenant, called "*the beauty of holiness*" who declared that his yoke was easy, or pleasant; thus the name will be equally appropriate, whichever translation is adopted.

[pg 112] *And I took unto me two staves, the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands, and I fed the flock.*

The parallelism between these two staves strikingly appears in the circumstance that the most remarkable prophecies, as the liiid. chapter of Isaiah, which the Christian conceives to be exactly fulfilled in the person and character of Christ, the Jew imagines to accord as perfectly with the circumstances and condition of the house of Israel. May we not suppose them to be designedly

applicable to both? instrumental alike to the same great purpose, man's redemption from idolatry.

One of the earliest acts of Christ, who, however, did every thing in the name of the Father, was his exposing the unfitness of the Jewish leaders, who were the priests, the scribes, and the elders, to be the spiritual guides of the flock. Their selfishness and hypocrisy he unsparingly denounced, as rendering them unfit for such an office; of which they were consequently deprived under the new dispensation. Such appears to be the purport of the following verse, as ably expounded by Lowth.

[pg 113] *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month, and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.*

*One month*, is an indefinite expression for a short time, as if the prophet had said, *at once*. When the people had been duly warned against these treacherous guides; those who chose to disregard that warning, had no reason to complain, if it pleased Heaven to leave them to their fate, as is next declared.

*Then said I, I will not feed you; that that dieth, let it die, and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.*

The prophet next foreshews, by typical actions, accompanied by explanations declaratory of their purport, the death of Christ, and the dissolution of the Old Covenant.

*And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder; that I might break my Covenant, which I made with all the people.*

[pg 114] The Covenant with Moses promised protection against all nations, while Israel remained obedient. Israel disobeyed and the Covenant was broken. The Covenant with Abraham promised blessing to all nations through his seed. The Gospel of Christ was that blessing; refused by the Jews, and consequently given to the Gentiles; for a remnant only of Israel received the Gospel, and those were the poor of the flock.

*And it was broken in that day, and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the Lord.*

"The poor had the Gospel preached unto them," and received it with gratitude; but the ingratitude of their leaders towards the Great Shepherd, for the care he had so long taken of them; and the small estimation in which they held a spiritual Messiah, are aptly foreshewn by the prophet, in the name of the Great Shepherd, claiming his reward at their hands, and their offering the precise sum which was given for Christ, thirty pieces of silver.

*And I said, If ye think good give me my wages, and if not, forbear; so they weighed me for my reward, thirty pieces of silver.*

The way in which this money was actually bestowed, is next foreshewn, by the Shepherd's rejecting it scornfully, and desiring it may be given to the potter.

[pg 115] *And the Lord said unto me, cast it to the potter; a goodly price that I was valued at by them: so I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

The price they actually gave for Christ, aptly denotes the value they put upon God's goodness in sending him, the Great Shepherd's proffered remuneration. The house of the Lord, or the temple, is the supposed scene of action, shewing the spiritual import of the transaction. The money being given to the potter, foreshews how it would be actually employed, to wit, in the purchase of the potter's field; in fact, it was given to the potter. If it be asked what the potter had to do in the temple? the answer is, he went there, as others did, to pray. His being there does not, as some suppose, imply that he was at work there.

Those who rejected and crucified Christ, are thenceforward rejected from being God's chosen people. As Christ was cut off from natural life, so Israel was cut off from *the life in Christ* as next intimated.

[pg 116] *Then I cut asunder my other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*

The house of Jacob was from this time divided into Christians and Jews, who appear to be distinguished in the prophecy under the types of Judah and Israel; the former denoting those who received, and the latter those who rejected Christ. This distinction appears to be maintained till their promised re-union in the New Jerusalem.

The spiritual evils entailed on those who reject the true Messiah, to follow after false teachers, are next foreshewn.

*And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd, for I will raise up a Shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut of, neither shall seek the young, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still, but he shall eat the flesh of*

*the fat, and tear their hoofs asunder.*

Israel is thus left to the mercy of these false shepherds, while spiritual blindness, infatuation, and utter helplessness, are the awful judgments denounced against the selfish and worldly-minded priesthood, who thus mislead and sacrifice their flock.

[pg 117] *Woe to the idol shepherd, that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.*

The spiritual blindness which has since darkened the mental vision of Israel, appears to the Christian to be here distinctly foretold.

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## Notes To Chapter XI.

Ver. 1. פתח לבנון דלתך—*Open thy doors, O Lebanon, &c.*

That Jewish writers have understood "*the forest*," as metaphorically representing Jerusalem with her stately buildings, and "*Lebanon*," as the temple itself, appears from the following note of Mr. Lowth, on this passage.

"By Lebanon, most interpreters understand the temple, whose stately buildings resemble the tall cedars of that forest. Thus the word is commonly understood," Hab. ii. 17.

There is a remarkable story mentioned in the Jewish writers to this purpose. Some time before the destruction of the temple, the doors of it opened of their own accord; a circumstance mentioned by Josephus, Bell. Jud. 1. 7. c. 12. Then R. Johanan, a disciple of R. Hillel, directing his speech to the temple said, *I know thy destruction is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, Open thy doors, O Lebanon, &c.*

[pg 119] The passage in Josephus in my edition is, lib. 6, cap. 5, and a very remarkable one it is, containing many other portents preceding the destruction of the temple, besides the spontaneous opening of these massive doors, which were so ponderous as to require twenty men to open and shut them.

Ver. 2. כי ירד יער הבצור—*For the forest of the vintage is come down.*

By the forest of the vintage, is understood Mount Carmel, which was partly covered with vineyards and rich pastures, for the loss of which the shepherds are said to howl, in the following verse. The shepherds metaphorically designate the leaders of the people; the different trees of the forest denoting the different classes and orders of men.

Ver. 3. כי שדד גאון הירדן—*For the pride of Jordan is spoiled.*

By the pride of Jordan is to be understood, as Dr. Blayney observes, the woods and thickets on the banks of that river. These served as covert for lions, which often infested the country when driven from them by the rising of the river. These trees being along with others doomed to destruction, the lions roar for the loss of their shelter, as the shepherds howl for the loss of their rich pastures. The lions denote metaphorically the great and powerful among the people. Their disposition to prey upon and devour the flock, well accords with the character afterwards given to the shepherds also, and shews the consistency of the metaphorical language.

Ver. 6. כי לא אחמול עוד על ישיבי הארץ—*For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, &c.*

[pg 120] The distinction between *the sea* and *the land*, has been already pointed out in the note to ver. 11, of the last chapter, and is here too manifest to admit of doubt. Lebanon, Bashan, Carmel, and Jordan, clearly shew what land is here spoken of, which can be no other than Palestine.

Ver. 10. להפיר את בריתי—*That I might break my covenant, &c.*

It might be supposed here that the two staves were typical of the two covenants; the Old and the New. But how is the parallelism then to be supported? If the breaking of one staff denotes the dissolving of the Old Covenant; what then is denoted by the breaking of the other staff? for the New Covenant was not also dissolved. By the proposed solution, the parallelism is maintained; Christ and Israel so exactly accord, that the prophecies seem, in many points, alike applicable to either. Both were instrumental to the great work of redeeming mankind from idolatry, and both were cut of; Christ from natural life; Israel from the life which is *in Christ*. To understand clearly the cutting of the staves, the most intricate subject perhaps in the whole prophecy, the reader

has to keep in view two distinct points of consideration, the confounding of which will involve him in no little perplexity; these are, first the symbolical meaning, or the event foreshewn by the act of cutting; and secondly, the end or purport of the cutting; for along with the act, the prophet also declares the motive for the act, which must not be confounded with the act itself, being the effect or consequence that followed that act. Thus he says—*And I took my staff Beauty and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant, which I had made with all the people.*

[pg 121] Now the cutting of the first staff, Beauty, signifies or foreshews the death of Christ, or the cutting off of the Messiah. This is the symbolical meaning of the act. But the end or consequence of that act, was the cessation of the covenant of protection to Israel. "The covenant," as it may be rendered, "concerning all the people." From that time, the Jews ceased to be under the especial care and protection of Heaven; no more interpositions were manifested in their behalf; no prophet from that time appeared in Israel; these blessings being confined to the Jews who received Christ, or transferred to the Gentiles.

Next follows the cutting asunder of the second staff, Bands; and this in fact appears to be precisely the end or consequence of the cutting of the first staff; for the cutting of this staff symbolically foreshews the rejection of Israel, or the cessation of the Covenant of protection. Such appears to be the event symbolized by cutting the staff, Bands. But the effect or consequence of that event, or of the rejection of Israel, was as declared in the prophecy, a breach in the brotherhood, between Judah and Israel, or between the Jews who received and those who rejected Christ; in short, between Christian and Jew, who are here supposed to be symbolised by Judah and Israel. This division or breach was not the event foreshewn by the cutting of the staff, but the end or consequence of that act; and this distinction requires to be kept clearly in view.

[pg 122] It seems immaterial whether the symbolical meaning of cutting asunder the second staff, Bands, be expressed by the rejection of Israel, the breaking of the covenant of protection, or the abrogation of the law of Moses; for all these events are so closely connected, or so nearly identical, as scarcely to admit of their being disjoined or distinguished.

Ver. 12. הָבוּ שְׂכָרִי—*Give me my price.*

From the failure of former commentators, in shewing how this can apply to the betrayal of Christ, when the word שְׂכָרִי (יֶרֶכֶשׁ אוֹ) is rendered, as it should be, *wages* or *reward*, instead of *price*, the Jew seems to have been so confident of victory on this point, that on referring to his exposition which follows, it will appear that he must have written it without having read mine, to which it is any thing but an answer, as I have expounded the passage precisely upon his own mode of rendering. The correctness of this translation was acquiesced in by Dr. Blaney, who admitted the difficulty it involved, and candidly acknowledged his inability to solve it; nor while Christ is considered the speaker, as he and Lowth suppose, does the removal of it appear practicable. But when God himself is understood to be the Shepherd, and Christ, the staff Beauty, it appears no longer insurmountable.

Ver. 13. וְאַקַח שְׁלִשִׁים הַכֶּסֶף וְאַשְׁלִיךְ אֹתוֹ בֵּית יְהוָה אֶל הַיּוֹצֵר:

*And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

[pg 123] The word יוֹצֵר (רְצוּי אוֹ), is by the Jew changed into אוֹצֵר (רְצוּא אוֹ) the alteration of a letter being all that is required to substitute *the treasury*, in the room of *the potter*. But he cannot deny, that the word means potter in the original, and the Christian will find no occasion to alter it, to make sense of the passage. The objection, that the potter could not be at work in the temple, which was urged by the Jew, has been answered in the exposition.

Ver. 17. הֲיִי רֵעִי הָאִילָל—*Woe to the idol shepherd.*

The *idol* might be rendered, as Mr. Lowth observes, *worthless*, or of no value, as it is, Job xiii. 4, and so the Jew renders it. Though a shepherd, in the singular number, is here spoken of, yet a succession of such shepherds is clearly to be understood; and it is probable that the chiefs and rulers of Israel are intended here, as well as the false Messiahs who have from time to time arisen, and partially misled the people, being alike false guides, who have contributed to the destruction of the flock. A history of the false Messiahs, amounting to not less than twenty, who have at different times made their appearance; with an account of the numbers and destruction of their infatuated followers, being too long for insertion here, may be found by the reader in Dr. Jortin's Remarks on Eccles. Hist.; presenting a lamentable picture of the blindness and infatuation of this wretched people.

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1. Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.
2. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled; howl, ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.
3. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory is spoiled; a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.
4. Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter.
5. Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty, and they that sell them, say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich; and their own shepherds pity them not.

[pg 125] 6. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord; but, lo! I will deliver the men, every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king, and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

7. Yea, I fed the flock of the slaughter, truly an afflicted flock it was, and I took unto me two staves; the one I called Pleasant, and the other I called Painful, and I fed the flock.

8. And when I had cut off three shepherds in one month; then my soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred me.

9. Then said I, I will not feed you; that that dieth, let it die; and that that is missed, let it be missed; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

10. And I took my staff, the Pleasant, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made (for them) with all the nations.

11. And it was broken in that day, and so the afflicted flock, that waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the Lord.

[pg 126] 12. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my reward; and if not, forbear; and they weighed for my reward thirty pieces of silver.

13. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it into the treasury, the magnanimous, the precious, that I have withdrawn from them; and I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them into the house of the Lord, into the treasury.

14. Then I cut asunder my other staff, the Painful, to break the brotherhood between Judah, and Israel.

15. And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee, yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

16. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who shall not remember those that are missed, nor seek the young, nor heal the broken one, nor feed that that stands still, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their hoofs asunder.

17. Woe to the worthless shepherds, who leave the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be quite dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

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## The Rabbi's Exposition. Chapter XI.

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Verse 1. This prophecy Christians cannot but consider impenetrable, and must be satisfied to break off a few fragments, which may serve to cement their religion; for in whatever manner they expound the import of the two staves, they must still be incompetent to link its various parts together, so as to shew that it refers to what they think it necessarily must, namely, the selling of the Messiah; an interpretation which an impartial examiner must find inconsistent with that passage even if disjoined from all the rest, since there, wages, or reward (not price) is spoken of; this being desired, or required of Israel, while with him who was sold it was quite the reverse; so far was he from wishing to be betrayed, that he tried and prayed to escape it. The Jew, however, considering the tenour of the whole, contends that this was no more than what had been already fulfilled at the time when it was delivered, the allusion here being historical and not prophetic.

It commences with predicting to other nations (who are compared to fir, and oak trees,) destruction inevitable, since the shepherds of Judah also (who are compared to the lions by the Jordan, to the vine and the cedar,) howl for having been spoiled of their glory. The prophet then

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goes on, in calling to the minds of his brethren the causes that brought them so low from their former exalted station, in order that this may serve them as a warning no more to deviate from the way in which they were instructed to walk: he also reminds them with what particular and providential care they had been continually led on by their God, in one or other of the different ways stated, the pleasant, or the painful, as by a tender shepherd, whose sole intent is to lead his flock to rich pastures, and good watering places. In this manner did God tend his flock, Israel, to accomplish their happiness, indulging them when obedient to his will, but chastising them, when otherwise, as an indulgent father would his children, in order to reclaim them. And when we consider the circumstances and condition of our fathers during the first temple, we may easily trace out both the times when they enjoyed uninterrupted peace and comfort, and those, when they were exposed to troubles and afflictions, which God in his wisdom saw fit to visit upon them. To these does the prophet refer, representing them by this beautiful metaphor of the two staves.

Ver. 5. The cruel shepherds denote the tyrants into whose hands Israel was delivered, who disdained to nourish that poor flock, but sold some to slavery, and gave up others to be slaughtered.

Ver. 6. And such as escaped the fury of their own kings were ravaged by their conquerors.

Ver. 7. *I fed the flock.*—i. e. Since I have chosen them to me out of Egypt.

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Ver. 8. *When I had cut off three shepherds.*—The number three as well as seven is well known to be made use of in Scripture, instead of an indefinite number; this apparently refers to what is related in 2 Kings, ch. x. v. 32, that in those days the Lord began to be weary of Israel; it was after the kings of Judah and Israel were killed, the family of the one exterminated, and that of the other nearly so.

Ver. 10. *A covenant made for them with all the nations;* that is, that these nations should not disturb Israel, nor invade their land, but leave them to dwell there in safety, as was repeatedly promised to them. Exod. xxxiv. 24; Lev. xxvi. 5; Deut. xxviii. 10. But when under the divine displeasure, that covenant was suspended, and not only the land of the ten tribes, but also that of Judah was frequently invaded, and both were harassed by their enemies.

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Ver. 12. The reward which God required of his people means, that for the many blessings he had conferred on them, they should be obedient to his commandments. Yet he left it to their choice, to forbear if disinclined, agreeably to the message sent to them by Ezek. ch. iii. v. 27; and accordingly some few remained faithful to him, and these answer to the thirty pieces of silver. Thirty as well as ten sometimes imply an indefinite number. See Dan, i. 20; Gen. xxxi. 7. They are named silver (כסף (or כסף)) as this originally meant desirable.

Ver. 13. They are to be cast into the treasury—יוצר (or רצוי), though translated the potter, stands for רצוא (אוצר), the treasury. And again, בית יהוה אל היוצר (or רצויה לא הוהי תיב) is the same as אל בית האוצר (רצואה תיב לא or) (Mal. iii. 10), or the storehouse of the Lord, viz. the temple. The frequent interchange of the אהרי (or יוחא) letters is well known to the Hebrew scholar. The temple is here indicated as the place where the pure ones, separated from the dross, should fix their eyes on the Most High, and with prayers appease his wrath, that he might yet avert the approaching calamities. יקרתי (or יתרכי) signifies *I have withdrawn*, not *I was prized at*. See Proverbs xxv. 17, where it means *withdraw thy foot*.

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Ver. 14. *Cut asunder the other staff.* While the two kings lived in peace and harmony, the one was corrupted by the wickedness of the other, and therefore the chastening rod was applied for the purpose of breaking their brotherhood; but that staff was dispensed with, when by the dissolution of one of these kings, the cause for it ceased.

Ver. 16. *I will raise up a shepherd, &c.* Judah has likewise to lament to this day having been governed by foolish shepherds during both the first and second temple, who did neither remember the missed, nor heal the broken, and instead of feeding them that stood still, they fed upon them, and tore their hoofs asunder. Yet as the survivors stand to this day a living monument of the literal accomplishment of this prophecy from verse 15, it serves them as a sure pledge of the fulfilment of that which follows.

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## Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter XII.

Of the occurrences which succeeded the crucifixion of Christ, one of the first in order, as well as

[pg 134] importance, was the destruction of Jerusalem; an event which materially changed the condition of the Jewish nation, both as regarded their polity and their religion; to the full exercise of which the existence of their temple was indispensable. It was therefore to be expected that the prediction of this event would be eagerly sought for by Christian commentators, in a prophecy relating to the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, especially by those who chiefly look to political affairs for its fulfilment.

And accordingly this chapter appears to afford distinct intimation of such an event, as it opens with the express mention of the siege of Jerusalem. Yet is it mentioned in a way not a little embarrassing to the political exposition; for, instead of the destruction, the prophecy declares the triumph of Jerusalem; and, with the exception of one or two ambiguous expressions at the commencement, this triumph forms the whole subject of the chapter. But Jerusalem really was taken and destroyed, nor have the Jews since been able to rebuild either their city or their temple, nor has any thing approaching to a triumph, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, occurred to them from that time to the present. How then shall we explain the victory and triumph foretold in the prophecy?

[pg 135] The solution appears to be this; that the event here foretold is no political, but a spiritual siege; namely, the warfare of worldly feelings against true religion, for this is the spiritual Jerusalem. The abrogation of the law, and the promulgation of the Gospel, are foreshewn under the types of the Old and the New Jerusalem; which symbolically signify the Old and New Covenant, or Judaism and Christianity, the one abolished and the other established, in reality at the coming of Christ, but ostensibly at the destruction of the city and temple, which is probably on this account employed symbolically, to represent the spiritual change.

The prophecy, however, does not declare the destruction of the old Jerusalem, but merely the re-peopling of it, in verse 6; and in the spiritual sense it was not destroyed, though merged in the superior splendour and greatness of the New City; for Christianity is built on the foundation of Judaism. The new Jerusalem here spoken of, is then, the new Covenant, or Christianity, the spiritual City, the building of which began at this time, whatever may be the period required for its completion.

[pg 136] In the spiritual sense also must be understood the triumph of Judah, which was the triumph of the Gospel; and her salvation, spoken of in verse 7, which was eternal salvation. Her victory was the victory over the world, which every true Christian has to gain, but which was first gained by Judah, for the first Christians were Jews; although the Gentiles were subsequently admitted into the Church of Christ, and became the principal inhabitants of the spiritual Jerusalem, when deserted, for the most part at least, by its former inhabitants the Jews. The Gentiles from this time became Israelites by adoption, and the distinction between Jew and Gentile converts, or lineal and adopted Israelites, is marked in the prophecy, as might be expected.

[pg 137] But the time of Israel's spiritual restoration requires some explanation, being adverted to in this and the following chapter ten times at least, with the definite expression of "*in that day*:" an expression which seems as little to accord with the time required for a whole nation or people to change their faith, as with that which would be requisite for their literal return from all parts of the world to be reunited in one city, as the Jews understand the prophecy. A literal day cannot therefore be understood; nor yet would the difficulty be removed by supposing it to mean a prophetic day, or a Jewish year of twelve months, being three hundred and sixty days; for this period would be alike inadequate to the event in question.

[pg 138] How shall we then understand the expression, "*that day*," so often recurring in the prophecy? The answer appears to be simply this, that it means *one day to each individual*, but not *the same day to all collectively*. As the earlier Christians did not all embrace Christianity on one day, so neither have we reason to expect that the later Christians will do so. History declares to the contrary, that some of the house of Israel have been continually flowing into the Church of Christ in every succeeding century, from the Apostolic age to the present time. And as some understand the Day of Judgment to be to each individual the day of his death, so to each will the day of his "*Redemption*," in Scriptural language, be the day of his receiving Christ. St. Paul in the 2 Corinth. vi. 2, says "*Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation*," and in the same light must it be viewed in the passages before us; that is, as one day to each individually, not as the same day to all collectively.

The opening of this chapter closely resembles that of the 9th, and may help to throw light on those parts of it which appeared obscure. Both begin by declaring God's superintendance and control over human affairs, and both assert his right to the disposal of events on similar grounds: there it was alleged, because all creatures belong to him, *for the Lord's is the eye of man, and all the tribes of Israel*; and here, because he created all things.

*The burden of the word of the Lord upon Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*

[pg 139] There, the burden of the prophecy was laid on the Gentiles, but the admonition meant for the benefit of Israel, to whom it was addressed; here, the burden is upon Israel, but the admonition expressly intended for all nations, "*all the people round about*;" and of such was the new Jerusalem, which is the subject of this chapter, chiefly composed after the overthrow of their idolatry and their conversion to Christianity. This appears to be the spiritual warfare here



intended, namely, the successful progress of the Gospel against Paganism.

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the nations round about, and upon Judah it shall be in the siege against Jerusalem.*

Upon Judah is the burden of the prophecy chiefly imposed, for to Judah was first committed the task of promulgating the Gospel. The Apostles, and also the disciples of our Lord were all Jews, they were the founders of this city. "*A cup of trembling*," must not be here understood to signify an example by punishment inflicted, but as the Jew renders it, "*a cup of astonishment*," or confusion to all nations; or, as it is next termed, "*a burden-stone*," to crush its enemies; and such has been the Gospel of Christ, as the prophecy declares.

*In that day, will I make Jerusalem a burden-stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.*

[pg 140] The people, here spiritually signifies their false religion, which was to be abolished; and Jerusalem is here understood to mean Christianity, or true religion, which was triumphant. Confusion is then denounced against its enemies, while Divine protection and support are promised to the house of Judah, who received Christ.

*In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness, but I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.*

[pg 141] The blind rage of the heathen and the infatuated frenzy with which they strove to extinguish the light of the Gospel, are here clearly foreshewn; but the spiritual Jerusalem resisted all their efforts. And when the lineal Israelites abandoned their city, its gates were thrown open to the Gentiles, who entered and repeopled it, and became thenceforward "Israelites by adoption." The new Jerusalem being Christianity, its inhabitants must mean the Christians; and who were they, after the Jews rejected Christianity, but the Gentile converts? Accordingly, they are so styled in the next verse, as contradistinguished from the first Jewish converts, who are called the governors of Judah, being the founders and builders of the spiritual city.

*And the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength, in the Lord of hosts their God.*

The fitness of the expression, *Inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to symbolize the Gentile converts, further appears in the fact, that the original inhabitants of the city, who were never expelled, were Gentiles. *The governors of Judah* can signify no other than the apostles and disciples of our Lord, the first teachers of Christianity, or the founders of the new City. These, when the Jews were no longer willing to hear them, turned their attention to the Gentiles, and directed all their efforts to effect their conversion. As the strength of a city lies in its inhabitants, so the hope of strengthening theirs, from that time, rested in gaining over the Gentiles: "*The Governors of Judah say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.*" Does not this mean in the Lord of hosts *becoming* their God? That is, in his becoming the God of the Gentiles by their conversion to Christianity?

[pg 142] The extraordinary success of the apostles and disciples, in converting the Gentiles and repeopling the city, is foreshewn in the next verse.

*In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour all the nations round about on the right hand and on the left, and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.*

If the spiritual Jerusalem be Christianity, it was certainly the Gentiles who repeopled this city, when the Jews deserted it. But still it was not deserted by all the Jews, for the first Christians were Jews, as emphatically expressed in the next verse.

*The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.*

[pg 143] The salvation of Judah here spoken of must be salvation through Christ; but if Judah signify the first Jewish converts to Christianity, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem mean those from the gentile nations, who are *the house of David*, here spoken of, and classed with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as receiving their salvation subsequently to that of Judah? The house of David must surely mean those of the Hebrew nations, who did not at first receive Christ along with the house of Judah, but subsequently; or, the prophecy being still prospective, those who shall hereafter embrace Christianity must be also included. To this the Jew may probably answer: How can a Christian believe that the house of David, the very house from which Christ came, still remains unredeemed? I answer, that we are nowhere assured that all of his own family believed in him; still less the whole house of David, of which they were only a branch. To the fact, whether any of that family be still left among the unredeemed of Israel, let the Jew answer. If not, then where is their expected Messiah to come from? But if there be such, then have these not yet received the salvation which is through Christ; and as far as they are concerned, the words of the prophecy yet remain to be fulfilled, however it may have received its fulfilment in regard to others. When it shall please God to remove the veil which is before their eyes, and to restore the spiritual strength which they have lost, then will the following words be accomplished in them also, as it

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was to Judah in the apostolic age.

*In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them, at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them.*

The esteem and veneration with which the primitive Christians, and particularly the apostles, would be regarded for their purity and holiness, and for their spiritual strength, notwithstanding that they were designedly chosen from the lowest and most illiterate class of men, is here emphatically foretold. Their consequent success in preaching the gospel is next declared; the nations being destroyed, figuratively signifies their false religion being overthrown.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come up against Jerusalem.*

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The next verse, which foretels *the pouring out of the Spirit*, so closely resembles the prophecy of Joel, of which St. Peter gave the interpretation on the memorable day of Pentecost; and at the same time, coupled the application with a reproach to the Jews for having crucified Christ (Acts ii.), that the Christian can hardly fail to see that they refer to the same event, though not here restricted to that particular day, as appears from "*the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*" being mentioned; nor was the gift of the Spirit confined to the day of Pentecost, but continued to all on whom the apostles laid their hands.

*And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look to me for him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

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The most solemn fast almost universally observed throughout Christendom, in commemoration of Christ's crucifixion, is manifestly the event which was here foretold, at least four centuries before its fulfilment. The prospect of its receiving a more evident accomplishment at any future period, seems to be rendered hopeless by the enumeration of the different families that follows, all such distinctions being now lost among the present race of Jews.

*And in that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon;*

*And the land shall mourn every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

*The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;*

*All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

If any thing more be intended by this emphatical repetition of the families mourning apart, beyond the strong expression of the depth of their grief, and the sincerity of their repentance, may it not be to convince the unbelieving Jews of the hopelessness of a more literal fulfilment after the loss of their genealogies?

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## Notes To Chapter XII.

Verse 2. וגם על יהודה יהיה במצור על ירושלים:

*When they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*

Such is the translation in our version, a sense which can in no way be extorted from the words of the text, as every Hebraist must be well aware. The Jew, by inserting the relative *who*, as understood after the word Judah, renders the passage thus,

*And also upon Judah, who shall be in the siege against Jerusalem.*

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This is certainly no violation of the text, as the relative pronoun is often understood in Hebrew. But still I hold it to be a rule not to insert a relative unless the sense requires it, and I see no such necessity here, as either of the preceding nominatives, namely, *the burden of the prophecy*, or *the cup of trembling*, may govern the verb *shall be*, and thus we have, as I have rendered it, *and also upon Judah it shall be, in the siege against Jerusalem*; by which I understand *the burden*

*shall* be upon Judah also.

Verse 3. אשים אה ירושלם אבן מעמסה לכל העמים:

*I will make Jerusalem a burden stone for all people.*

Here the Jew may probably ask, How can Jerusalem, in the spiritual sense, as signifying true religion, become a burden stone, or a cup of confusion to the heathen? I answer, in every way. In the first place, by frustrating, as it did, all their efforts to suppress and extinguish it;—in the next place, by its opposing and outraging all their worldly feelings, condemning their pride, and teaching humility, requiring them to receive their religion from one whom they despised as the most degraded of human beings, a crucified malefactor;—and, lastly, by stultifying all their previous notions, enjoining the restraint and control of the passions, instead of which their religion sanctified their indulgence as an act of devotion. Thus was Christianity, in every way, a cup of confusion, and a stumbling-stone to the heathen nations.

But against the spiritual exposition of the Old and New Jerusalem, as symbolizing the Old and New Covenant, the Jew may, perhaps, further object, that he was never taught to look for a New Covenant, and that he finds no intimation of it in the Prophets. This being a question of fact, rather than of reasoning, we must look to the Scriptures for the answer.

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Without enumerating the many intimations of the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Covenant, not being *intrinsically* acceptable to God, but of less estimation than the attributes of moral excellence, we find the following direct declarations of a New Covenant to be established at the Messiah's coming, who is symbolically styled, *My servant David*. Thus in Isa. lv. 3, we find, *Incline thine ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*. Ezekiel also says, chap. xxxiv. 24, *And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it; and I will make with them a covenant of peace, &c.* And again in chap. xxxvii. 26, he says, *Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore*. But Jeremiah still more expressly declares the superseding of the Old, and the substitution of the New Covenant; while he describes the latter in terms equivalent to those used by Christ himself, "The kingdom of God is within you." Thus Jer. xxxi. 31, *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my Covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

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Here we have clear intimation of a new law superseding the old, the spiritual nature of the new being contrasted with the ceremonial of the old, by its being written in the heart; while the stress laid by all upon its everlasting duration, implies that the one preceding it was only meant to be temporary.

Verse 5. ואמרו אלפי יהודה בלבם אמצה לי ישרי ירושלם ביהוה צבאות אלהיהם:

*And the Governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.*

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"This text," says Dr. Blayney, "has been supposed corrupt, and many attempts made to amend it. But without any alteration, it well expresses the sentiments of the men of Judah, concerning the interest they had in the safety of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, on which their own safety and security depended in a great degree," &c. I fully agree with Dr. Blayney in the literal meaning of the words, which involves no difficulty; but in looking beyond the literal, to the symbolical and spiritual sense, considerable difficulty appears. A different solution from that I have offered at first occurred to me, which is this, that as *Judah* means the earliest converts to Christianity, these being evidently contrasted with *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, who were subsequently saved, the latter might mean the yet unconverted Jews. Upon this view, the anxiety of Christians for the conversion of the Jews, would appear to be the subject intimated in the verse before us; and as this idea may occur to others as it did to myself, I think it right to state my reasons for relinquishing it. One objection to this view is, that in verse 10, the *unconverted Jews*, if they be the inhabitants of Jerusalem, would here mourn the crucified Saviour, which would be a complete solecism. Another objection is, that the abolition of idolatry in the next chapter, instead of being represented as opening the way for the admission of the Pagans to Christianity, which it certainly did, would then be represented as opening the way to the conversion of the Jews, which it certainly did not, but rather had a contrary effect, as history declares. And, lastly, upon this view, the corruption of Christianity, leading to the loss of the spiritual Jerusalem, mentioned at the beginning of chap. xiv., instead of being ascribed to the Gentile church, would thus appear to be the work of the Jews, either of those more recently converted to Christianity, or of those still unconverted, both of which would be alike unreasonable. Such are the reasons which led me to reject that view, and adopt the one proposed in the text. With respect to the house of David, as signifying the Jewish converts who embraced Christianity subsequent to the Apostolic age, those objections do not apply.

Verse 10. והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו:

*And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.*

Blayney considers the *אלי* (or *ילא*), as simply a preposition, not a compound of *לא* with the affix pronoun *י*, the antecedent to *אשר* (or *רשא*), being understood, and renders the passage thus, *They shall look towards him whom they pierced.*

[pg 152] The Jew argues from the change of person, that our version cannot be right, and he renders it, *They shall look to me concerning him whom they pierced.*

In whatever way the passage be rendered, no doubt can remain in the mind of the Christian that Christ, who was pierced, is the person here alluded to; and this is the only point material to the present exposition. That the Jew should admit this, is not to be expected.

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## The Rabbi's Exposition, And The Author's Remarks. Chapter XII.

In the remaining chapters, I shall merely point out those parts in which the construction of the original is, or may be, different from that of the English version, as there seems no occasion to notice those passages where they both agree.

Verse 2. *Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of confusion unto all the people round about, and also upon Judah, who will be in the siege against Jerusalem.*

By this it appears that Judah, namely, those who will be without the city, will likewise be greatly confused at their being compelled by the other nations to take part in the siege, and fight against their brethren.

[pg 154] Verse 10. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look unto me (CONCERNING) whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, &c.*

The change of person clearly proves, that it is not he who was pierced, to whom they will look; but it must be considered as if it were *אלי על אשר דקרו* (or *וירקד רשא לע וטיבהו* or *אלי על את אשר* or *אלי על את אשר* or *אלי על את אשר*) particles are well known to be frequently omitted or exchanged. This may either allude to those who had been formerly slain for their bold admonitions and warnings; or to those who will hereafter be slain in battle.

[pg 155] They who apply this to the Christian Messiah, have another difficulty to solve, besides the one above mentioned, and that is, to explain how a death is to be lamented, which, as they believe, was indispensable to the salvation of so many myriads of souls. And further, it may be asked, if it was the especial will of God that this should be so accomplished, how could the perpetrators of his death avoid it? And, lastly, what cause had the house of David, comprising the Messiah himself, to supplicate for mercy on account of his death, in which they, being his own family, had surely no share?

Ver. 8. *וּבֵית דָּוִד לֹאֱלֹהִים* (or *מִיְהוָה לֹאֱלֹהִים*) cannot mean, *and the house of David shall be as God*, but only as a powerful being, *as the Angel of the Lord before them*. The witch of Endor, who saw *אֱלֹהִים* (or *מִיְהוָה*) ascending out of the earth, surely did not mean to say that it was God. And in many other passages we find *אֱלֹהִים* (or *מִיְהוָה*) applied to mortals as well as to God.

[pg 156] In answer to the difficulties proposed by the Jew, the Christian may say, that he does not mourn the death of Christ, but the sins that required such a sacrifice; and as to the free agency of those who crucified him, he will say, that God's seeing fit sometimes to employ the wicked in accomplishing his purposes, does not imply that he first makes them wicked for the purpose. When was there ever a time, that none could be found in Israel who were ready to slay the prophets? And as to the difficulty in the text of verse 10, it is one of the Jews' own creating, as the Christian finds none in receiving it as it stands without even the proposed alteration, an alteration admitted, but not proposed by him. The only remaining objection, which regards the house of David, has been anticipated and answered in the interpretation of verse 7.

## Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter XIII.

The progress of the Messiah's kingdom being regarded as that of Christianity, the next important step after the abolition of Judaism, was that of Paganism, which is evidently the subject of the chapter now before us; but along with this is coupled in the prophetic view another event, no less important, which arose out of, and accompanied the nominal conversion of the Gentile nations. This was the corruption of Christianity by the Pagan converts. For instead of relinquishing their former prejudices and superstitions, they retained, and brought most of them into the bosom of the church; and thereby in a short time totally changed the character of the religion which they professed to embrace.

It is true that this is a point of church history not always very distinctly stated by ecclesiastical historians; who seem more inclined to represent the conversion of Constantine, and the events of the fourth century, as every way favourable to the Christian cause. But the truth is, that precisely in proportion to the church's advancement in worldly prosperity and power, were its spiritual decline and degradation; in so much that the best historians admit, that from this period are its degeneracy and corruptions most indubitably to be dated. So different is the light under which the same event appears, according as it is viewed with regard to its spiritual or its political import. Which of the two best accords with the spirit of this prophecy, the reader will be at no loss to decide, when he sees that no prosperity is here spoken of, but on the contrary, that the cutting off two-thirds of the inhabitants of the land, or their spiritual death, is the event which is coupled in the prophecy with the admission of the Pagans into the church of Christ. And such was truly the result that followed to the many; namely, the loss of the true spirit of Christianity.

But if the abolition of Paganism be the subject of this chapter, it may be asked, how comes the purification of Israel to be announced in the opening of it? The answer is plain. Adopted Israel may be here understood. To lineal Israel indeed was the prophecy given; and with Israel, idolatry was, and ever had been, the besetting sin; most nearly therefore were the Jews also concerned in its abolition.

Viewed, however, in the more enlarged sense, idolatry comprises the indulgence of every evil propensity; for Paganism, by appointing a presiding Deity over each, had sanctioned the unrestrained gratification of every passion, in making it an act of devotion. Christianity, on the contrary, enjoins the restraint and control of our passions, and thus becomes the natural antidote to the poison of Heathenism: or the fountain of purification from the sin and pollution of idolatry, as the opening of this chapter declares.

*In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

That day, as formerly explained, is to every one the day of his conversion to Christianity. The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, here, as in the last chapter, symbolically represent the later converts to Christianity; as the house of Judah, which was first saved, signify the earlier Christians. The nature of the sin and pollution to be thus washed away, is next declared to be idolatry, and its abolition is foretold.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered; and also I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

It may be worthy of remark, that *the names only of the idols*, and not the spirit of idolatry, is here declared to be cut off; and *from the land*, which in prophetic language, commonly means the land of Israel, here, adopted Israel, or Christendom. Now, this nominal abolition took place in the fourth century, from which time both Jews and Gentiles have been prohibited from the open worship of idols. But we have now reached the nineteenth century without seeing the spirit of idolatry really extinct; if then the total abolition, which is yet to come, be here intimated, it must be symbolically foreshewn by the nominal abolition which then took place. *That day*, in regard to the inward and spiritual purification, is to be taken as the day of his regeneration to each individual, not as the same day to all collectively; but regarding the outward and ostensible abolition, this occurred when the pains and penalties of the Theodosian code prohibited the open practice of Pagan rites. The prophetic view may, however, include both.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, when any shall get prophesy, that his father and his mother that begat him shall say, Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him, shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.*

To prophesy, or foretel future events, was the main purport of Pagan rites; no undertaking of any

moment being entered upon until the priests and oracles had been previously consulted. This, in a superstitious age, formed a lucrative profession for the soothsayers and diviners, and was successfully practised, till the darkness of Heathenism was dispelled by the light of Christianity, as foretold in the next verse.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed, every one of his vision when he prophesieth; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive.*

The Pagan, as well as the Jewish prophets, appear to have worn a distinct dress; but after Paganism was abolished, those who practised its rites in secret, of course denied and sought to conceal it.

*But he shall say, I am no prophet but a labourer; for a husbandman bought me from my youth.*

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Slaves and bondmen frequently received a mark in their hands, to shew the master to whom they belonged; and persons attached to the Heathen temples were sometimes marked in a similar manner; the worshippers of Bacchus, for instance, were distinguished by the mark of an ivy leaf. (See Lowth in loco.) This explains the following verse.

*And one shall say unto him, What are these marks in thine hands? Then shall he answer, Those with which I was marked in the house of my friends.*

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Thus seeking to avoid the suspicion attached to the marks of Paganism, under the pretext of their being the indication of bondage or servitude. But this evasion denotes that the abolition of Paganism was ostensible only, as it was still practised in secret. In reality the advancement of Christianity to the imperial throne, instead of promoting the sincere conversion of the Pagans, only served to complete what had already begun, namely, the corruption of the Christians; whose character and conduct soon totally changed, after the road to the acquisition of wealth and power was opened to them. In the contests for the attainment of these, which soon arose, (witness the Donatist faction,) the majority of Christians in a short time lost sight of the spirit of their religion; while the rancour and cruelty with which different sects persecuted each other, sprang from the same source, or their rivalry in the struggle for worldly power, as Mosheim declares. Such was the spiritual sword which undermined Christianity, and destroyed the life which is in Christ; as next foretold.

*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is next unto me, saith the Lord of hosts. Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand against the little ones.*

The sword is the symbol of strife and discord, warring against and destroying spiritual life, or the life in Christ; for he is the shepherd who is smitten by the sword, the person of Christ being here figuratively put for his doctrine or religion; the corruption of which is thus foreshewn by the dispersion and slaughter of his flock. The little ones signify the new converts, who are yet weak in their faith and principles; and thence more liable to be misled.

*And it shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts shall be cut off, and die; but the third part shall be left therein.*

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The history of the fourth century, here prophetically foreshewn, amply testifies, that only the smaller number of Christians, amidst the general corruption, resisted the allurements of avarice and ambition, and retained their purity; these having imbibed the true spirit of Christ's religion, as next declared.

*And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.*

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It seems scarcely possible to give a more unequivocal intimation of the spiritual import of the whole, as not alluding to political events, but as regarding the progress of true religion, than is contained in those expressions of the last verse, which declare, that the supplications of the smaller number will be offered up in a manner acceptable to God, who will hear and answer them. The particular period alluded to, is distinctly marked by the nominal abolition of idolatry, and the general corruption of Christianity. The only difficulty, however, if there be any, regards the chronological order of the events; as the prophecy seems to foretel the entire abolition of Paganism, which has certainly not yet taken place; but this difficulty will be in a great measure removed, by supposing the prophetic view to look forward from the partial to the total, from the nominal to the real extinction of idolatry.

With respect to the division of the flock into two parts, it must not be supposed that any distinction of sects is here alluded to, for no one could, more than another, claim the character of purity and holiness. True Christianity must be sought for in the heart, and not in the outward form of worship, or profession of faith.

## Notes To Chapter XIII.

Verse 5. כי אדם הקנני מנעורי.

*For a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.*

Parkhurst, in his Lexicon, remarks upon this passage, as being *strangely* translated in our version; while Dr. Blayney agrees with him in the translation. *For a man bought me, (OR OBTAINED POSSESSION OF ME,) from my youth.* The Jew, while he acquiesces in the sense of הקנני (or ינוקה) signifying *to appropriate*, contends that אדם (or פדא) does not mean merely *a man*, but a *husbandman*, or labourer, and renders it, *For a husbandman I was appropriated from my youth.* But neither the sense nor the grammatical construction thus appearing clear to my apprehension, as the verb is not in the first, but the third person with the suffix ' *me*, after it; I propose to reconcile both by rendering the passage thus: *For a husbandman bought or appropriated me from my youth.* But in fact the difference is immaterial, as the sense, in whatever way expressed, is, *For I was a farmer's servant, and a bondsman from my youth.*

[pg 168] Verse 6. ואמר אליו מה המכות האלה בין ידיך:

*What are these wounds in thine hands? &c.*

Both Lowth and Blayney agree in regarding these words as an allusion to the custom of the idolatrous priests and prophets, of marking themselves in the hands. Their being challenged as the marks of Paganism, is a sufficient proof of their being so, and I have rendered it accordingly, *marks* instead of *wounds*. For if, as Blayney states, they were made by cutting and slashing themselves, still the marks, and not the wounds, would remain when healed.

Verse 7. הרב עורי על רעי ועל גבר עמיתי:

*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, &c.*

In supposing these words to have had no direct reference to the death of Christ in their original intention, notwithstanding their appearing from St. John's Gospel to have been used by him, in forewarning his disciples of what was about to befall him, I offer no new opinion, for Dr. Blayney declares himself fully persuaded that they had not; and what gives weight to this opinion is, that it must have been founded on other grounds than those which have led me to that conclusion. For as Dr. Blayney had not embraced the spiritual view in expounding the prophecy, he could not be led to this inference by the same train of reasoning as myself. The words, גבר עמיתי (or יתימע רבו) he renders, "The man that is next to me," which is certainly much nearer to the sense of the original than, *The man that is my fellow.*

[pg 169] *Two parts shall be cut of, and die.*

An awful annunciation! foretelling the spiritual death of two-thirds of the nominal Christian world. The corresponding passages in the Apocalypse predict the same event, and one of them in still stronger terms, for it is said, that "Every living soul in the sea died." Literally, this passage cannot be taken, for literally there are no *living souls* in the sea. The sea means the Gentile nations, or Europe. *The life* is life in Christ. The loss of that life, or spiritual death is the loss of true Christianity: here extending over the whole sea, or comprising all the Gentile converts; and the period of this death is yet scarcely elapsed, beginning with the dark ages, and continuing to the millenium. What! is Europe then still, or has it so lately been in a state of spiritual death or perdition? Such is the language of prophecy, and its meaning cannot be explained away or evaded. "Every living soul in the sea dies." The life in Christ is extinct. True Christianity no longer remains. Will *none* then be *saved*? This the prophecy nowhere says. The Gospel teaches that many may be saved who never heard of Christ. Are all Mahomedans, and they execrate the name of Christian, doomed to perish? No Christian will surely maintain this, and still less that all misguided Christians are doomed to perdition. But still the life in Christ is lost. True Christianity no longer prevails. If then, without it, men may be saved, where, it may be asked, is the use of it? I answer, in every way, and every where it is useful. Did true Christianity prevail, the myriads might be saved; the few only would perish. Without it the few only can be saved, the many are left to perish. By Christianity, all are taught to live for the next world; without it, the many will live for this; few are those that will think of another. Christianity not only diffuses peace and happiness on earth, but fits every man for enjoying eternal happiness hereafter. Such is the saving virtue of Christ's religion, in affording to all the *means* of attaining to eternal life and eternal happiness. But to return to the age in which we live, or from which we are just emerging. This period is peculiarly the age of infidelity—all Europe bears testimony to the fact. But are they who profess belief, really Christians? Look to conduct, and not profession for the proof. Is this world, or the next, the object of pursuit? If conscience whisper, that we who believe, lack the true spirit; how can we expect it in those who disbelieve? Where then in true Christianity?

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As this chapter, according to the Rabbi's view, remains unfulfilled, so he offers no particular exposition of it, but limits his remarks to a few emendations of the received translation. Of these the only one any way material to the present discussion is that on verse 5, which has been already stated in the note on that verse.

## Zechariah On The Messiah's Kingdom. Interpretation: Chapter XIV.

The corruption of Christianity, as foretold in the last chapter, is allowed to have been the means that prepared the way for those events which are announced at the opening of the present one. The ambition of the clergy, and the state of ignorance in which they purposely kept their flocks, had completely succeeded, before the end of the sixth century, in subjugating the minds of the people, and in establishing the supremacy of the priesthood in the west of Christendom, while the last of these causes served to facilitate in the east the success of the Mahomedan imposture, which, as well as Papacy, was an offspring of the spurious form of religion then prevailing under the name of Christianity.

These two usurpations under the mask of religion, divided, at the beginning of the seventh century, what had once been the Christian world, between them; one occupying the western half of it, and the other the eastern, according to our mode of expression; but as regards Palestine, where the Prophet wrote, this division is more accurately represented, as expressed in the Prophecy, by northern and southern; the northern half engrossed by the Greek and Latin churches, which being essentially of the same nature, are here taken as one; while Mahomedism usurped the place of Christianity in the countries lying for the most part south of Palestine, as Arabia, Egypt, India, Persia, and others. (See note on this.)

Such are the occurrences foreshewn in the opening of the present chapter; which *now* does, if it did not previously, declare the capture and pillage of the holy city, or the loss of the spiritual Jerusalem, true religion; this being followed by a portent awfully expressive of the events which succeeded this loss, namely, the cleaving asunder of Mount Olivet; (a symbol for nominal Christianity, Mount Zion signifying true Christianity, Mount Sinai Judaism;) one part of which moves northward, and the other southward, leaving a deep valley between them for the escape of those who are not involved in this spiritual captivity or destruction.

After this follows the intimation of a period of spiritual obscurity, which is declared to be neither day nor night, neither clear day-light, nor utter darkness; but on the evening of that day, light is said to dawn again, and living waters once more to flow out of Jerusalem. At length this is to be succeeded by the restoration of Israel, and the universal establishment of true religion in the new Jerusalem.

While the loss of true religion is clearly foreshewn in the capture of the spiritual Jerusalem, with which this chapter commences; and while the rise of Papacy and Mahomedism is foretold in the cleaving of Mount Olivet; the Christian will readily perceive, in the day of obscurity that follows, the dark ages shadowed forth; and in the dawn of light that breaks forth at the evening time, he will see intimation of the restoration of true religion at the reformation, when living waters again begin to flow out of Jerusalem.

The conclusion of this chapter, and of the Prophecy, declares the final and complete establishment of the Messiah's kingdom; that happy period for which we are taught to pray in the words, "*Thy kingdom come.*" Concerning the nature of this kingdom, the Jew not only differs from the Christian, but Christians also differ from one another. Before I attempt to decide so difficult a question, I shall state the prevailing opinions, and what the prophets have said on the subject.

The Jews expect, at the coming of their Messiah, the establishment of their political, as well as their spiritual supremacy over all the earth. The Christians reject all idea of a political kingdom, but differ in their views of it as a spiritual one. Some understand it to signify the universal establishment of true Christianity on earth, with the full enjoyment of all the blessings which it is calculated to afford; others at this second advent, look for the personal appearance of Christ on earth, to reign with the saints, who will be raised from the dead, to receive the reward of virtue in his kingdom; while many regard his kingdom as signifying a future state of happiness, having no connexion whatever with the earth we now inhabit, but to be enjoyed in an eternal abode, of which they have an indefinite idea as existing somewhere above the firmament.

This last, which is perhaps the most popular notion, seems least consonant to Scripture and prophecy; which distinctly speak of a kingdom *on earth*, as it is understood by the Jews; though not necessarily, as they suppose, a political one. As this is the chief point on which I am at issue with my opponent, I shall presently state the manner in which this city, the New Jerusalem, is spoken of by Isaiah and St. John. But previously I think it right to notice a fallacy in what I take to be the ground on which the popular notion of this kingdom rests; namely, because St. John in the Revelations gives intimation of a resurrection preceding, or accompanying its establishment. Now, we have, as I conceive, no just ground for assuming, in a vision, every other part of which is figurative, that this part alone is to be understood literally. Why, I should ask, may not this



resurrection, like the rest, be also symbolical, or signify regeneration to newness of life? which our Saviour expressed by being *born again*; that is, a total change in our nature and habits, such as was produced in his apostles and disciples by the gift of the Holy Spirit. But even admitting the literal resurrection to be here intimated, (and no Christian can doubt the reality of a resurrection,) yet this would not be at all incompatible with a future existence on earth, a light in which it is viewed by many: we shall therefore inquire what the Prophets have said that may throw light on the nature of this kingdom on earth.

[pg 177] Both Isaiah and St. John, in speaking of the New Jerusalem, use the two-fold metaphor of a City and a Woman. In Isaiah liv. 11, et seq. this city is represented as having foundations of sapphire, windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle; and St. John, Rev. xxi. 16, describes it as built entirely of precious stones, having twelve gates, each of one solid pearl, and its streets paved with gold; being, moreover, equal in all its dimensions, that is, as broad as it is long, and as high as it is wide, to wit, twelve thousand furlongs, or fifteen hundred miles. This is surely very unlike a literal city; but this City shortly becomes a Woman, in St. John, and is styled "The Lamb's Bride;" while Isaiah, using the same change of metaphor, says, "For thy Maker is thy husband."

[pg 178] If we now look to the context in Isaiah, for the purport of this figurative language, we shall find that he says, chapter liv. 14, "In righteousness shalt thou be established;" and again, chapter lx. 19, "But thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise;" and from chap. lxi. it appears throughout, that this description is intended to portray *the perfection of righteousness, the beauty of holiness, and the riches of grace*; these being, as declared, the ornaments destined to adorn the Bride. It is with a *robe of righteousness, and a garment of salvation, that she will adorn herself*, as Isaiah expresses it, chap. lxi. 10.; while St. John abounds in similar expressions; thus in Rev. xix. 9, speaking of the Bride's apparel, he says, "For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints;" and of the City, which nothing impure is permitted to enter, he says, chap. xxi. 23-27, "For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof." Thus both, under this highly figurative description, appear to signify no literal city, or political state, but one which is altogether spiritual; that is, the utmost possible degree of purity and holiness, which will constitute this *heaven upon earth*; the New Jerusalem.

This chapter opens with the denunciation of divine wrath about to fall upon mankind on account of the corrupt state of religion. The expression used to foretel this, belongs more peculiarly to the day of judgment, called the *day of the Lord*; but is often employed in prophetically foreshewing particular judgments on the world, as here:

*Behold the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*

[pg 179] *For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

The loss of the holy city, and the spiritual captivity of half its inhabitants, which is the bondage of sin, is the particular calamity here foretold; and this is followed by the punishment of those who were the authors of this evil, the enemies of true religion, who war against Jerusalem.

*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.*

[pg 180] The nations must signify here, as elsewhere, the Gentiles, or Pagans, whose spiritual hostility against true religion was shewn, as before stated, by their corrupting and paganising Christianity; while the judgment denounced against them consists in God's permitting the rise of the two great Antichristian usurpations, Papacy and Mahomedism. One, the man of sin, spoken of by St. Paul, (1 Tim. iv. 1, and 2 Thess. ii. 3,) a spiritual tyranny, enslaving the minds of men; and the other, the abomination of desolation, mentioned by Daniel, chap. viii. verses 10-12, and, as he expressly foretold, permitted *by reason of transgression*, or as a judgment on the world, its avowed object being the propagation of religion by the sword. The division of the corrupt form of religion then prevailing, into these two Antichristian apostacies, is thus foreshewn.

*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem upon the East, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the East, and toward the West, and there shall be a great valley, and half of the mountain shall move toward the North, and half of it toward the South.*

[pg 181] A mountain, meaning a place of eminence or power, in spiritual language signifies religion; *Mount Sinai*, from which the Mosaic law was delivered, means Judaism, and is contrasted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 18-22, with Christianity, which is there called *Mount Zion*, and *the heavenly Jerusalem*. The Mount of Olives is neither of these, but here symbolical of nominal Christianity, destined to be split asunder; leaving, however, a valley between the two parts for the escape of those not involved in this spiritual destruction; from which may be inferred, that true Christianity would not become utterly extinct.

*And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.*

The true Christian is thus admonished to fly, or avoid the prevailing apostacies; while divine favour and protection are promised to those who shun the general corruption. From the establishment of these two Antichristian dominations, a long day of spiritual darkness is declared to follow; which was accomplished in the reign of ignorance and superstition, during the period expressively denominated *the dark ages*. With God a thousand years are but as a day.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark;*

*But it shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.*

[pg 182] In the return of light at the evening time of that long day of obscurity, we see intimation of the revival of true religion at the reformation; which is still more clearly expressed as follows.

*And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter it shall be.*

The former and the hinder sea, or as Dr. Blayney proposes to render it, the Eastern and the Western Sea, may literally signify the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean; but figuratively the Eastern and Western Gentiles, who will receive the benefit of the spiritual waters. The expression, in summer and in winter it shall be, signifies literally, that they shall neither be dried up by the summer's heat, nor congealed by the cold of winter; but figuratively must mean, that the purity of religion shall not again be corrupted by the heat of fanaticism on the one hand, nor frozen by the cold of infidelity on the other. The universal prevalence of true religion is then declared. (See note.)

*And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.*

[pg 183] The fulfilment of what now remains of the prophecy appears to be still future, and consequently it does not fall within the limits of our plan to attempt the particular exposition of each part of it; but sufficient, it is hoped, will be found in what is already accomplished, to convince the Christian reader of the general purport of the whole; and to warrant the statement made at the outset, that these six chapters are not, as former commentators have supposed them to be, a collection of unconnected predictions relating to different subjects, but one continued and uninterrupted prophecy, presenting a view of the progress of our religion, from its promulgation to its final establishment in purity and perfection.

[pg 184] That the evidence of this will be sufficient to convince the Jew, I am far from expecting, being well aware of the many objections he has still to urge against our exposition of prophecy, after those which are here presented, may have been removed. But it may possibly have some weight with him, when he finds upon examination, the same view of the subject offered by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others; which the Christian will find more circumstantially displayed in the Revelation of St. John. In fact, my exposition of the Apocalypse, has furnished me with the clue to guide me through all the prophecies, that relate to the progress of the Messiah's kingdom; for I find that each succeeding prophet has helped to fill up the outline given by his predecessors; while the picture is finally completed by St. John, the last of them all. But as a portrait is most easily recognised when the likeness is complete; so the prophecy last uttered, being most perfect, is most easily interpreted, and naturally becomes the key to all the others; that is, the last delivered ought to be the first expounded, which is the order I have pursued.

As I have made no change in the translation of this chapter, few explanatory notes are required; and the Rabbi's reply to this, as to the one preceding, may be comprised in this single objection; that no part has yet been literally fulfilled, such being the only fulfilment which he looks for or admits.

[pg 185] The impossibility of a more literal fulfilment has been shewn in many places, but especially at the beginning of chapter x.; and until the Jew answers this, I must consider, what to me appears to be the main pillar of his argument, as fairly overthrown. And the grand question, whether Christ be the Messiah, resting upon this, namely, whether his kingdom be a spiritual or a temporal one, must be decided, as regards the present argument, by shewing whether the prophecies relating to it have regard to spiritual or temporal affairs.

[pg 186] Many who object to the spiritual view, misconceive what is meant by the spiritual exposition; and consider it as setting aside altogether the historical fulfilment of prophecy; whereas the question is simply between religion and politics, between church and state; in short, whether the spiritual or temporal history of the world should be looked to, for the fulfilment of those prophecies which foretel the progress of Christianity, or the Messiah's kingdom. By directing their view to temporal affairs, the ablest expositors have hitherto discovered only an occasional allusion to Christianity in a few verses of particular chapters, and in others no allusion to it whatever; whereas, by adhering closely to the spiritual view, and understanding the prophecy as foretelling the progress of true religion; the battles and conflicts foretold, representing the opposition which it has experienced, and the corruptions which it has undergone from the evil passions and worldly propensities of man; we have been enabled to shew the historical fulfilment of the whole; not selecting, as others have done, particular passages, but shewing that every chapter and every verse relates to the same subject, and this subject, the progress of Christianity.

## Notes To Chapter XIV.

*Ver. 4. Half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*

Although this passage is left in the text as it originally stood, yet the writer acknowledges a manifest inadvertency in supposing the division here spoken of into northern and southern to have reference to the position of the prophet, any more than to that of the reader; with neither of which it has any connection. It has been objected by a judicious friend of the author, that Mahommedism has prevailed, and still does prevail in countries lying north of Judea, where the prophet wrote. The objection is perfectly just, not was it unperceived by the writer, though he did not at first see how to remove it, simple as is the solution of the difficulty, and striking as then appears the fulfilment of the prophecy.

The solution is—that this division of the nominal Christian world here foretold, into two grand apostacies, Anti-christianism and Mahommedism, which were destined to occupy a position northward and southward, had no relation to the prophet, but simply to each other—that is, they were to be north and south of each other.—Now let a line be drawn, such as might be expected from the fracture of a mountain by an earthquake, extending from the west of Europe to the east of Asia, over a surface of not less than 180 degrees of longitude, and no where deviating more than 10 degrees of latitude, and we shall find the Greek and Latin churches occupying the whole portion lying to the north, while Mahommedism engrosses all to the south. And we shall find those parts only of Europe cut off which were pre-ordained to fall under the Moslem yoke, as Spain, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia, Calabria, Greece, and Turkey in Europe; while Russia forms the boundary line from all the Mahommedan nations lying to the south of it. This line will be comprised between 40 and 50 deg. of nor. lat. Thus singularly have the words of the prophecy been accomplished. And thus strikingly is the will of Heaven, in the pre-ordination and disposal of human events, made manifest to the mind of man.

*Ver. 8. In summer and in winter it shall be.*

Can such a state of the world, it may be asked, which shall be exempt from fanaticism on the one hand, and from infidelity on the other, be brought about without some miraculous interposition to alter the nature and constitution of the human mind? And does it comport with the usual ordinances of Providence, who seems to effect his purposes by natural means, to deviate in this instance, from the ordinary course of nature? It certainly does not appear so; and it would, no doubt, be more satisfactory, and be more likely to obtain belief, if natural means could be pointed out, adequate to produce this marvellous change in the state of the world, without calling for the necessity of miraculous interposition. Let us see then—the most fertile source of infidelity will be found in the mysteries and dogmata invented by priestcraft, which reason revolts at and rejects. Are, these then, essential to true Christianity? is the question. If not—and Christ ever appealed to the reason of his hearers, advancing nothing that reason could gainsay—then true Christianity requires only to be taught, and Infidelity will have no ground left to stand upon. With regard to fanaticism, there can be no doubt that false ideas of religion engender this extreme; ignorance, encouraging the hopes of a sensual paradise on the one hand; and fear, inspiring the dread of eternal torments on the other, as in the Mahommedan and Romish churches, have been most fruitful in producing this extravagance. With just ideas of religion and the Divine beneficence, such feelings are incompatible. A religion of love, and such is Christianity when justly appreciated, can never lead to fanaticism. We may love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and it can never disturb our reason, or lead to any but the happiest and most rational frame of mind.

Thus, the dissemination of true Christianity, the just appreciation of its precepts and their faithful practice, appears to furnish a remedy adequate to the removal of both these evils, without requiring the aid of any miraculous interposition to effect this purpose.

## The Millenium.

As the view of Christ's kingdom, taken in the preceding exposition, is that which regards it as not

only that state or condition of man, which is most calculated to prepare him for, and enable him to attain eternal happiness hereafter; but also as that which is adapted to produce the highest possible degree of felicity here on earth, it will be proper to consider a few of the arguments that may be brought for and against this view of the Millenium, and to state the view itself more distinctly.

[pg 191] The happy state which the world may attain to, under the universal prevalence of true religion, it is more easy to imagine, than to describe; for a volume would hardly suffice to enumerate all the blessings it is calculated to afford. The cessation of foreign war, with all the miseries attending it; the end of all tyranny and oppression at home; of injustice and misrule, are the most distinctly announced, and their benefit perhaps the most obvious. But their influence on society is limited in comparison with the wide diffusion of happiness that would ensue from the improvement in private life, and the amelioration of individual character. Were the vices prevalent in each class of society banished from the world; ambition and ostentation from the higher, inordinate love of gain from the middle and commercial, idleness and improvidence from the lower class, such a change would ensue, that the golden age of the poets would be revived. Fortunes would no longer be squandered, and families be ruined by extravagance and dissipation; gambling speculation, extortion and chicanery would be unknown in trade; poverty and dishonesty would be banished from the working classes. Thus, litigation and crime ceasing, the civil and criminal

[pg 192] code would become a dead letter, and every man would enjoy in security the fruits of his industry; while the peace and harmony of families would be insured by the increased prevalence of kindness and brotherly love, forbearance and self-control, charity and benevolence, with other domestic virtues.

Among the blessings promised in this state, is increased length of life; nor is this at all difficult to conceive or account for. The tormenting passions of ambition and avarice subsiding; the mind being no longer tortured by the cravings they occasion, nor the spirit broken by the disappointments that attend them; the constitution being no longer worn out by the toils and cares they give rise to, the larger portion of diseases incidental to man, (and more proceed from the mind than the body) would be prevented.

But those arising from bodily causes, would likewise for the most part vanish, from a proper restraint on the indulgence of the passions and appetites.

[pg 193] Nor is diminution of disease the only cause that would lengthen life. The healing art being more zealously studied, and more conscientiously practised, with more regard for the welfare of the patient, and less for the emolument; it is not unreasonable to suppose that great improvement would take place in every branch of it. And thus another source would be opened for producing increased length of days.

But with the moral and physical blessings, let not the spiritual pass unnoticed. Eternal life is the reward promised to those who strive to obtain it, and render themselves worthy of it. Surely then the universal prevalence of peace, charity and good-will among mankind is more likely to produce a fitness for this state, than the present order of things. Thus our eternal and our temporal interests would be alike promoted by it.

[pg 194] The prophetic language, supposed to foretel this state being metaphorical its meaning may be questioned; and it may be objected, that reason and experience are alike adverse to the supposition that the world will ever be materially different from what it has been. Would not this argument, if urged two thousand years ago, have been then deemed conclusive against the possibility of events, having previously no parallel in the history of man, which nevertheless did afterwards take place. That any considerable body of men should be found, who should prove themselves above the allurements of the world; despising wealth and honours; disregarding every thing before held most estimable by mankind; and braving ignominy, tortures and death:—would not the argument, that such things had never been, have been deemed conclusive against the supposition that they ever would be? And yet all this did occur in the apostolic age. If the past then afford any presage for the future, it is not against, but in favour of the conclusion, that what has been, may be again.

[pg 195] Perhaps it may be objected, that the purity and heroic virtue of the apostolic age were transient, and can never be permanent; they were partial, but can never be general. This mode of reasoning is perhaps less philosophical than it may at first appear. What has obtained amongst one race of men, may obtain amongst others. What has continued for one generation, may continue for more. The life of man is no transient period, but to each individual the longest period possible. A whole race is not a partial, but as regards them, a general prevalence. And if there be any truth in history, the principles and practices of the early Christians pervaded their whole race, and lasted during their whole lives.

True Christianity has however vanished, it may be said; and what should revive it? The evil passions of man have prevailed against it; and why should they not again? I answer; the same causes that produced it, may revive it; and the permanency of those causes, may render it permanent. Conviction was the cause that produced it; that inward, heartfelt, active conviction, which never leaves the mind for a moment, and admits no shadow of doubt; not that inert, listless, passive form of belief, which assents, it knows not why; and believes, it knows not what.

I have heard a distinguished churchman affirm his persuasion, that the most prevalent evil in the

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church is infidelity. I would fain disbelieve it. It surely is not that bold and open infidelity which denies revealed religion. If it prevail at all, it must be that secret wavering propensity to doubt, apt to arise in minds not fully satisfied of the truth, and which feel regret that its evidence is not more conclusive. This may be, and is much to be regretted. For such belief can never produce effective influence on the life and conduct; nor awaken that impassioned eloquence in the preacher, which animated the first teachers of Christianity, and carried conviction to the hearts of their hearers. Whence arises this state of mind? Are the proofs of Christianity then inconclusive? Far otherwise. Though its prophetic proofs are clothed in metaphor, and require study to understand them; though its history is by no means free from contradictions; though time may have obscured some passages, and interpolation thrown a doubt upon others; yet is there left sufficient; amply sufficient to satisfy the mind of any who think the subject worthy of serious examination.

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But here is the misfortune. Most men think otherwise. The laity are too often content to take their religion on trust; and the clergy for the most part want leisure for studies that demand so much time and attention; while their following hitherto in a beaten track, and paying undue deference to the authority of the Masoretic punctuation, have encumbered them with difficulties almost insurmountable. Hence it is, that as far as regards the prophetic evidence of our religion—the elucidation of that miraculous testimony to its truth, the force of which is ever progressively increasing and which alone can place us on an equal ground of belief with the first Christians,—the world has remained nearly stationary above a thousand years. Of learning there has been no want; of talent abundance; of reading no end; but beyond verbal criticisms, the settling of doubtful words and passages, for the improvement of the text, little has been done. The general scope, as well as the particular interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, the ultimate evidence of Christianity, has received little elucidation since the days of the Apostles.

Here is one fruitful source of conviction yet unopened. When fully opened, from more perfect conviction will flow more zeal in the teaching, and more influence on the minds of the hearers.

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If it be doubted whether the most perfect religious instruction that can be given, or the fullest conviction of an endless futurity of happiness or misery when impressed on the mind, can suffice to control the passions and propensities of man; let the effect of training on the brute creation be considered. It will not surely be contended, that man has less power of controlling his propensities, or is less capable of culture than they. If then we find that creatures the most opposite in disposition, and supposed to be natural enemies, may be trained to live together peaceably and amicably; what may not be expected from man, having moreover the aid of reason to guide and assist him?

Let adequate motives for controlling his passions be furnished; let true Christian principles be early inculcated; let religion be more practical and less doctrinal; let precept be enforced by example, and there is nothing foretold in this new order of things that may not be accomplished; nothing promised in it that may not be reasonably expected.

FINIS.

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JEWISH RABBI, ON THE MESSIAH'S COMING \*\*\*

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