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ROME AND TURKEY IN CONNEXION WITH The Second Advent.

SERMONS.

By REV. E. HOARE,

VICAR OF TRINITY, TUNBRIDGE WELLS, AND
HON. CANON OF CANTERBURY.

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PREFACE.

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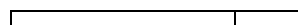
THE three lectures on Turkey are published at the request of several of my parishioners; I have added two others respecting Rome, which were written in 1873, because I consider that they strengthen the conclusion derived from the present position of the Ottoman Empire. I regard Rome and Turkey as two great political witnesses to the near approach of the glorious end. If this be the case, it is clearly right that their two testimonies should appear together and confirm each other.

E. H.

*Tunbridge Wells,
Jan. 1876.*

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ROME.

p. 1

I. THE OUTLINE.

It is impossible to imagine anything more delightful than the prospect of the promised return of our most blessed Saviour. How do the father and the mother feel when they welcome their long-absent son from India? How will many an English wife feel when she welcomes her husband from the Arctic Expedition? And how must the Church of God feel when, after her long night of toil and difficulty, she stands face to face before Him whom her soul loveth, and enters into the full enjoyment of the promise, 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.' There will be no tears then, for there will be no sorrow; no death then, for there will be no more curse; no sin then, for we shall see Him as He is, and shall be like Him. Then will be the time of resurrection, when all the firstborn of God shall awake to a life without decay and without corruption; and then the time of reunion, when the whole company of God's elect shall stand together before the Lord, never again to shed a tear over each other's grave; and then will be the time when those who have loved and longed after Him, as they have journeyed on alone in their pilgrimage, will find themselves on the right hand of His throne, and hear His delightful words, 'Come, ye blessed children of my Father: inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!'

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No wonder then that the people of God are waiting with anxious hearts for the advent; and no wonder that many are ready to say, 'Lord, how long?' and to ask, 'What hope is there of His quick return? Have we, or have we not, any reason to look out for it soon?' To this inquiry I would endeavour to draw your attention this morning; and in doing so, I do not intend to examine into what are usually called 'the signs of the times,' but to study the great prophetic sketch of the world's history as given to us by the prophet Daniel. This may be termed the backbone of prophecy, and almost all the great prophecies of Holy Scripture fit into it at some point or other; so that, if we wish to understand them, we must begin by studying it. I fear I may not interest those who aim simply to have their hearts warmed by the ministry. But they must remember that the real study of God's Word requires work, and that work, though it lays the best possible foundation for feeling, does not at the time excite it. To-day, then, we are to work, and I hope the Lord may so bless His Word, that through work we may be led to feel.

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Our business, then, is to endeavour to discover whether the great prophetic sketch of history, given through the prophet Daniel, encourages the blessed hope that the coming of the Lord may be near. Daniel gives a prophecy of the history of political power from his own day till the time when 'the Ancient of Days shall sit,' and describes a succession of events which must take place in the interval. It is clear that our business is to ascertain how many of these events have taken place, or, in other words, how far we have advanced in the series.

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In the study of our subject we have the advantage of looking at two sides of the picture, for it has pleased God to give us the same series as seen in two different aspects. In the second and seventh chapters you will find predictions of the same events under different figures. In the second chapter the prophecy is given as a vision to a proud, idolatrous monarch. So the different kingdoms about to arise appear to him as the several parts of a mighty image, with himself as the head of gold. It was given in just such a shape as should coincide with his idolatry and his pride. Whereas, in the seventh chapter, the vision is given to one of God's people, and he sees in all this glory nothing better than a series of wild beasts coming up one after another to devour. How different is the estimate of the world from that of God! The world regards Babylon as the head of gold, the summit of glory and greatness, while God looks on it as a savage beast, to be dreaded by His saints! The same difference of character may be observed in the visions of the coming of the Lord. To the great king it appeared as a triumphant kingdom, to the captive prophet as a manifestation of the Son of man. The one saw a kingdom, the other a person; the one, the overthrow of power, the other, the advent of the Lord of Glory.

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But now let us look at the series. In both prophecies there is a description of four kingdoms which should in succession be supreme in political power, and which should fill up an interval between Daniel and the Advent.

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1. There is the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's image, the same as the lion in the vision of

Daniel. The most precious of metals corresponding to the king of beasts.

2. There is next the breast and arms of silver, corresponding to the bear of Daniel.

3. After that the belly and thighs of brass, representing the same nation as the leopard of the prophet.

4. And following them is the last kingdom of the four, represented to Nebuchadnezzar as the 'legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of clay,' and to Daniel as a beast, 'dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.'

It is interesting to observe how the same iron character is attributed to this last power in both visions. In the one we read of it, chap. ii. 40, 'The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all things, shall it break in pieces and bruise.' And in the other, chap. vii. 7, it is said to be, 'strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth: it devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.'

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Such is the series of kingdoms that were to hold the chief political power of the world, and fill up the whole interval between the date of the prophecy and the advent of the Lord. Now the remarkable, and I believe I may say the indisputable, fact, is that, according to the prophecy, all these four kingdoms have arisen. They have followed each other exactly as it was predicted. Babylon was the head of gold, or the lion. The Medes and Persians were the breast of silver, or the bear. Greece, always called 'the brazen armed,' in classic poetry, was the belly and the thighs of brass, or the leopard. And then the mighty power of Rome, far exceeding all the others in its terrible strength, with the legs of iron in the royal image, and the teeth of iron in the prophetic beast. Thus far there is an agreement almost unanimous among the students of prophetic Scripture; and the conclusion certainly is, that we have already been a long time under the last of the four successive empires of the world. So far then as those four empires are concerned, we are encouraged to entertain the strong hope that, as we have reached the last kingdom in the succession, we may begin hopefully to look out for the end. We have passed the last station on the line, so now we may begin to prepare for home.

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But again. There is one remarkable difference between the fourth kingdom and the other three, viz., this, that its history is divided into two periods, during the first of which it appears as an undivided power, and during the second split up into ten. In chap. ii. 41, it says, 'the kingdom shall be divided.' In this divided period it is represented by the ten toes on the image, and the ten horns on the beast. The ten toes are described as kings, or kingdoms, in chap. ii. 44; and so are the ten horns in chap. vii. 24, where it is said, 'The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise.' So then the prophecy teaches us that when Rome had overpowered Greece it would go on for a time as one mighty undivided empire, but that after a time it would break up into a cluster of kingdoms, and that this cluster would retain amongst them the supremacy of the world. It does not describe any fresh shift of political supremacy to any new kingdom that should arise, or the loss or decay of that supremacy. But it teaches that there would be a division in the kingdom, that the parts should fall asunder, and that, while the iron of the fourth kingdom would remain amongst them, there should be so much clay mixed up with it, that it should never again be united under a single head.

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Now this is exactly what has happened. In the days of the Cæsars united Rome was supreme in the pomp of the iron empire. Its body was Europe, and its heart was the emperor. It was one as much as Babylon had been one under Nebuchadnezzar. But look at it now. There is all the old power; for Europe and its races practically govern the world. It has not lost its iron. But there is no one kingdom that embodies all. The power is vested in a cluster of independent nations. Many attempts have been made to combine them: some by conquest, as in the case of Napoleon; some by negotiation, as in the case of the Spanish marriages. But all in vain, for the toes are irrecoverably divided, and whatever is done, though as an aggregate they retain their power, as individual nations they are always distinct. I have no time to enter into detail, but I regard this division as a most remarkable fulfilment of the prophetic word. More than five hundred years before the coming of the Lord there was a captive in Babylon, and God so directed that man's mind, as through him to communicate to the world even then the present position of modern Europe. With such a fact before us who can doubt the inspiration of the prophet, or the statement of St. Peter, that 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?'

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But, without stopping to consider the wonders of the prophecy, let us learn the lesson which it teaches us with reference to the nearness of the Advent. We have already found that we have long since reached the fourth kingdom of the series; and now we are led a step further, and find that we have long since reached the second period of that kingdom. It is difficult with accuracy to assign a date, for the transition was gradual; but we shall be sufficiently near if we say that it practically took place between twelve and fourteen hundred years ago. And when we reflect on such a promise as that in Daniel, ii. 44, in which God assures us of a kingdom that shall be set up in the days of these kings, and never be destroyed: when we consider that those kings have already been reigning through that lengthened period, it is surely time that we begin to look out for that which is to come; for the happy and blessed day when we shall welcome the kingdom which shall never be moved, and when Christ Himself shall reign in glory.

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But this is not all, for, although we shall learn no more from the vision of the king, we may gather much more from that of the prophet, for in it we find a most important additional prophecy. I can perfectly understand why it was given by the prophet, and not by the king, for I believe it to refer

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to the religious history of Europe, and the king of course had no concern with that. He did not care for religion, or for the saints of God. I allude to the prophecy of the little horn raised in the midst of the other ten. I have no time to discuss arguments, and can merely state conclusions. All therefore that I can do now is to express my own convictions on two points:

1. That the little horn diverse from all the rest is the Papal power.
2. That the time, times, and dividing of a time, which is to be the limit of its power, stands in prophetic figure for 1260 years.

If this be correct it gives some idea as to the duration of the second division of the last kingdom, for it shows that it must last at least 1260 years. Still more, as the Papacy is to be destroyed at the approach of the Ancient of Days, if we could only ascertain the date of its commencement we might calculate the date of the Advent. But here is the difficulty, for who can say when a horn begins to grow? and who can determine the date of the first swelling of Papal pride? It is impossible to make any such calculation, and I believe it would be wrong to attempt it. But we may still be led by the great outline to hope for the approach of that most blessed day. The horn has been growing a long time, and it is impossible to read European history without believing that the 1260 years cannot be very far from its close. Everything therefore looks like an approaching end. We have long since reached the fourth kingdom; long since reached its second, or divided period; and, though we cannot say when it took place, we have long since seen the commencement of the 1260 years of the little horn. Surely then it is high time that we be looking out for the coming of the Lord, high time that we be watching with our loins girt and our lamps burning, and we ourselves as those that wait for their Lord.

With these facts before us, I may fairly ask any thinking person, whether there is not good ground for the hope that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh? You observe I have not dwelt on minute and isolated points. I have taken the great outline of the world's history, and compared it with the great outline of the word of prophecy. I see that the two exactly correspond. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for the evidence given of the inspiration of Scripture, for no such prophecy could have had its origin with man; and, while I thank God for such a confirmation of the faith, I cannot resist the conclusion that we have nearly reached the end of the series, that we are living in the last part of the last period of the last kingdom, and that the next great event of this prophecy is nothing else than the sitting of the Ancient of Days, the glorious kingdom of the Son of Man.

But do we all desire it? Are we all looking out with loving and longing hearts for the appearance of our beloved Redeemer? I fear that many would be very far from glad if they thought it would come to-morrow. Their own consciences tell them they are not ready; and in such a case how can they desire it? You might say to them, as in the words of the prophet, 'To what end is the day of the Lord to you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light.' I believe it to be impossible for any man really to desire the coming of Christ as his king until in his own soul he is personally acquainted with Him as his sin-offering or atonement. Thus I believe that you will find very few really desire the Advent who have not practically and experimentally drunk in the great doctrine of justification by faith. If you are reconciled through the precious blood of Christ; if you are justified in the righteousness of Christ; if you are preserved and sanctified by the loving Spirit of Christ, then of course you will be ready to say, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.' But if you are still living for the world, content with the world's gifts and the world's enjoyments; or even if you are still toiling, and struggling on to reach Him you know not how, and know not whether you may trust Him to place you on the right hand of the throne or not, how is it possible that you should be happy in waiting for Him? Never rest, therefore, till you stand accepted in Him; till you have good reason to believe that you are safe, and not safe only, but beloved. Then you may wait for Him, then you may welcome Him, then He cannot come too soon to please you; and if His sign is seen even to-night you will be able to say, 'This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'

II. THE CONSUMPTION.

I ENDEAVOURED in the last lecture to bring before you the blessed hope of our Lord's return, and to show, from the great outlines of prophecy, that there is enough to justify the expectations of those who humbly trust that we shall not have much longer to wait. I purposely avoided any reference to what are called the 'signs of the times,' and confined your attention exclusively to what may be called the great backbone of prophecy, *i.e.*, to the prophetic history of the four mighty kingdoms which were foretold as holding the empire of the world. From that outline I endeavoured to show that these four great kingdoms were to arise in succession, one after the other, and that they would fill up the interval between the time of the prophecy and the sitting of the Ancient of Days. I hope, also, I made it plain from history that three of those kingdoms have long since fallen, and that, as far as the predicted periods enable us to judge, we must be drawing near to the close of the fourth. The great outline, therefore, leads to the hope that the time of the glorious kingdom of our blessed Lord may be near. But, though we did not study the signs of the times then, I do not think we should undervalue them, for our blessed Saviour foretold certain things that should take place, and added, 'When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.' If, therefore, any of these things are now taking place, it is clear that we ought to study them; and that we should not be really carrying out the teaching

of the Lord Jesus if we were to neglect them. I propose, therefore, in obedience to His words, to bring before you in this lecture what has long appeared to me one of the most conclusive signs that the time is not very far distant. I allude to the present position of the Church of Rome, and I earnestly hope that God has directed my thoughts in the study of it, and that whatever in what I may now say is according to His word, may be written in all our hearts and minds by the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

There are three great historical prophecies, which, in the opinion of the majority of our best expositors, predict the rise, the progress, and the fall of the Church of Rome.

The first of these we briefly noticed last Sunday. It is the prophecy of the little horn rising amidst the ten horns of the beast, or the Papacy rising in the midst of that cluster of European kingdoms which succeeded the power of the undivided Roman Empire. p. 24

The second is the prophecy of 'the man of sin' in 2 Thess. ii. And I cannot forbear the mention of one illustration of a verse in that prophecy which I saw myself in Rome. Many people think that the description in the fourth verse is too strong for Popery: but there is a curious illustration of it in St. Peter's. You may there see what they call the altar in the usual place at the end of the chancel, and above it, surrounded by an elaborately decorated reredos, is what is called the chair of St. Peter, or the Pope's throne, the seat of Papal power. On the altar below, according to their own teaching, is the living person of the King of Glory, perfect man and perfect God, and in front of that altar may be seen men worshipping the wafer because they call it God. But above it is the Pope's chair, and if he were to occupy it he would sit there with that which they call God, and worship as God, beneath his feet. Can anything be a more exact fulfilment of the words, 'Exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped?' p. 25

The third is the prophecy of the woman in Rev. xvii. The application of this to the Church of Rome is less disputed than that of either of the other two, for the seat of the woman is decided by the 9th verse to be the seven-hilled city, which is almost universally admitted to be Rome.

Now it is not my object to study the details of these prophecies, and there is only one point to which I invite your careful attention—one most important point common to all the three, viz. that the final overthrow will be preceded by a consuming process. It will not be a sudden destruction in the height of prosperity, but will be the final act after a period of wasting and defeat. If these three passages refer to Rome, as I fully believe they do, then Rome will be first consumed and then destroyed. p. 26

In Daniel it says (vii. 26), 'The judgment shall sit.' It seems clear from the context, that this does not mean the great day of judgment, but the commencement of judgment on her sins here upon earth. 'And they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end.' There is, therefore, a consuming process before the end. The word here rendered 'consume' conveys the idea of a gradual process, and not a sudden blow; and teaches us that there will be a wasting before the final overthrow. p. 27

In 2 Thess. ii. 8, exactly the same process is described, and in almost the same words: 'Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy at the brightness of his coming.' He will first consume him by His word, and ultimately destroy him at His advent.

It is just the same in Rev. xvii. There you meet with the old beast, the ten-horned beast of Daniel; and ten horns still representing ten kings; and when we reach the close of the chapter we find these ten kings all turned against the woman: so that, instead of being ridden and governed by her, as they were when she was riding on the beast, they are now turned against her, and agree in consuming her. 'The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.' (Verse 16.) p. 28

Without stopping to look into the detail, which it is impossible to do in a short lecture, it appears clear that all these passages agree in predicting a period during which the Papacy will be consumed before its final fall. This will be brought about partly by the power of truth, and partly by the change of mind in the kings. But whatever be the agency, the result is the same. 'They will take away his dominion, to consume, and to destroy unto the end.' And this you mark is the last great process before the coming of our blessed Saviour, for the final destruction will be by the brightness of His coming.

And now comes the question, Has this consuming process begun? Is it, or is it not, in progress? I know that some fainthearted people will say, 'Oh, no! Rome is making dreadful progress, and must soon triumph.' But surely that opinion is contrary to fact. Surely it may be proved, from the great facts of European history, not merely that the consumption has begun, but that it has been going on during the last few years with peculiar and unexampled speed. p. 29

Let us look at a few great European facts, not at little things that happen to fall within our own observation, but at great facts that are conspicuous before the world.

Rome has always claimed, as she does still, dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, and she used to exercise it over all those of Western Christendom. Her claim even went so far that, by the common consent and advice of his barons, the King of England once 'resigned England and Ireland to God, to St. Peter and St. Paul, to Pope Innocent, and his successors in the Apostolic chair: and agreed to hold these dominions as feudatory of the Church of Rome, by the annual payment of one thousand marks.' [30] Imagine any one standing up amongst the barons of England, and making such a proposal now! That dominion of the Papacy is taken away, and p. 30

taken away, as I believe, for ever.

When the dominion was gone he made concordats, or compacts, with the different states; in which, with varying conditions, it was agreed that he should uphold them by his spiritual power, and they uphold him by the secular arm. It is a most remarkable fact, that within the last fifteen years almost all of these concordats have been brought abruptly to a violent end: those with Naples, Tuscany, and the Italian Duchies in 1858; that with Austria, including Venice, in 1866; with Spain in 1868; with France in 1870; and with Bavaria in 1873. There may be others remaining in force, but I know of none. According to the best information I can obtain, all are dissolved. The Papacy has lost all its political power. The ten kings have shaken off his government, and there is not one left that submits to his authority.

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But more than that. The Pope of Rome used to be king over a considerable portion of Italy. But he is now deposed. The States of the Church are incorporated with united Italy, and the Pope is king no more. They have taken away his dominion. His sovereignty is at an end. Five years ago it received its death-blow, and shall we not acknowledge that the consuming process is begun?

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But further still. The Church of Rome used to have vast estates. The convents which used to swarm through Italy were richly endowed with landed property. But as soon as the kingdom of Italy was well established, those convents were broken up and their property confiscated. And now that the Pope has been dethroned in Rome, a similar measure has been passed for all those within the city, and on the 20th of October, 1874, they received notice of their dissolution. It looks very much as if the kings were eating up the flesh of the woman. [32]

But some will say, 'Ah, but in religious matters Popery is making progress, for it is winning so many perverts to its errors.' I know there are perverts, and I am deeply grieved at it, but I doubt whether Rome's progress is as great as many think. It has been calculated that in the year 1801 there were in Great Britain and Ireland twenty-seven Romanists out of every hundred of the population, but that in 1869 there were only eighteen. The proportion, therefore, had actually diminished from twenty-seven to eighteen per cent.

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But take a wider range, and look at the great facts of European history. At the Lateran Council in 1513, after all the so-called heretics had been silenced or burned, it was proclaimed, 'No one now opposes, no one now objects,' and then the orator addressing the Pope said, 'The whole body of Christendom is now subjugated to one head, even to thee.' But it is calculated that there are now more than 95,000,000 Protestants in Europe, and 67,000,000 members of the Greek Church, making together 162,000,000 who reject the Pope's authority, against 157,000,000 who profess to submit to it. Putting all these facts together, I may ask any reasonable man, any one who looks at great facts instead of minute details, Is there not reason to believe that the consumption has begun? What else is it that has taken away his dominions, broken up his concordats, overturned his throne, stripped him of his property, and above all has set 95,000,000 in Europe alone free from his yoke? What else is it but the fulfilment of the prophecy, 'Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth,' preparatory to the time when He shall 'destroy him with the brightness of His coming?'

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Now there are many lessons that we might learn if we had but time from this subject; *e.g.* I might well spend all the time that remains in pressing on you the importance of keeping clear of all alliance with Rome. If God is consuming her, God's people must have nothing to do with her either in politics or religion, for if they do, they will find themselves drawn into the vortex into which she must infallibly sink. The message to them is, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'

But this is not my point in this lecture. I am anxious rather that we should look on the whole subject as an encouragement to faith. Surely some amongst us are too fainthearted about the truth. It really seems as if they could trust the Lord Jesus for their own souls, but not for His church, or for His truth: as if they had forgotten the text, 'Are not thine eyes upon the truth?' They value their Bible, and are ready to contend for it even unto the death; but still, they do not above half believe it. They are ready to go forth to battle, but they are not ready to begin, like Jehoshaphat, with the hymn, 'Praise the Lord!' They would rather chant some plaintive lament, and go into the battle with the doleful expectation of defeat. But this is not faith. This is not trust in the Lord Jesus. Ah! but one says he cannot rely on government, and another that he does not trust in bishops. But what has this to do with it? No one asks you to trust in rulers either in Church or State, for the Scripture says, 'Put not your trust in princes.' What we ask you to do is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God. Trust Him, and all will be right, though all other objects of trust fail you.

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Now take this great subject as a help to your trust. See how it exhibits Him in His own time, and His own way, working out His own predicted purpose. It was utterly impossible for any man by private interpretation to calculate the course that things would take. But He foresaw all, and more than two thousand years ago He actually foretold what He would do. And now, after all these centuries have passed, after great empires have risen and fallen according to His prophecy, after every species of effort has been made in vain to silence God's Word, after every available means have been employed,—political influence, religious influence, priestly assumption, and fiery persecution—to stamp out God's truth, we see the Lord Jesus with a mighty hand fulfilling His word, carrying out His purpose, and preparing the way for victory. And is that the time to distrust Him? If we are so fainthearted now what should we have been before the Reformation? What should we have been after John Huss was burned, and when the Lord's own people were

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like the seven thousand hidden ones in the days of Elijah? If we cannot trust Him now, that we have experienced that 'His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth,' what should we have done if we had lived before any prophecies had been fulfilled; if we had had to trust to His bare naked word before it was confirmed by history? But now that we have this great confirmation, and now that we see the putting forth of His hand, this is not the time for faintheartedness or misgiving; this is not the time to distrust Him whom God has made the 'head over all things to His Church.' It is true that

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'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;'

but it is certain that He is riding on the storm and will perform His own wonders, so that we may add, as in the next verse of the same hymn,

'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The cloud ye so much dread
Is big with mercies, and will break
In blessings on your head.'

And not only so, but we may reverently hope that it will not be long before we behold His triumph. When the disciples were on the lake the night was dark, and the winds were contrary, but He came to them in His own good time, and all was rest. So we may meet with rough weather, but there will be a great calm when He comes, and I cannot but hope He will soon be here. We have long since known of Him on the mountain-top, but now we can almost see Him walking on the waves. It is high time therefore that we act on His own words, 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.' He does not say, 'Wait till they have all come to pass,' but 'look up as soon as they begin.' Now they most undoubtedly have begun, and for a long time have been in progress. It is high time therefore that we begin to look up in faith and hope, waiting for Christ, looking for Christ, longing for Christ, and meanwhile trusting in Christ, so that when He comes we may be found pardoned through His blood, accepted in His covenant, clothed in His righteousness, and with loving hearts waiting for His appearing.

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TURKEY.

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III. THE EUPHRATES.

THE condition of the Turkish Empire is one of the greatest interests of the day, and is engaging more than any other public subject the grave thoughts of thinking men. The capitalists of England are deploring the loss of not less than 50,000,000*l.* through its bankruptcy. Those who rejoice in religious liberty are watching with the deepest interest the noble struggles of the men of Herzegovina to free themselves from the fearful yoke of Mahomedan oppression. And the politicians of all the great states of Europe are at their wits' end to know what is to become of Turkey. Nor is this a state of things that has come on suddenly. It is not the transitory effect of any sudden calamity, but the result of a steady decay that has been going forward with irresistible power for certainly not less than fifty years. France and England combined in the Crimean war to endeavour to maintain the Turkish power, but it was all in vain. That power has been steadily on the wane ever since, till now the crisis of bankruptcy has arrived, and 'the Sick Man,' as the Turkish empire has been called, appears on the very point of his dissolution.

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Now I am quite aware of the difficulty of preaching on such subjects, and I have no doubt that in your mind as well as my own there is a preference for those portions of the Word of God which bear directly on our spiritual experience; but still 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;' and, moreover, there is a special blessing on the congregational study of this Revelation of St. John, for it is said, chap. i. 3, 'Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.' I propose, therefore, to consider three questions: (1.) Has the present state of Turkey been foretold in prophecy? (2.) Does it teach us any lessons respecting our spiritual position? (3.) Does it throw any light on our hope of the coming of our Lord? I pray God that He may fulfil to us the promise attached to this wonderful book, and that both they that hear and he that readeth may alike enjoy His blessing.

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With reference to the first question,—Has the present state of Turkey been foretold in prophecy? I have not the least hesitation in expressing my own conviction that it has been foretold in a most remarkable manner, and that the present state of things is nothing more than the fulfilment of what God predicted little less than 1800 years ago.

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It is impossible in a short lecture to give all the reasons for this opinion. I can only attempt the barest outline. But we may gain some idea of the subject if we consider what is meant by the Euphrates; what by its overflow; and what by its drying up, in the words of Scripture, as contained in Rev. xvi. 12: 'And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the waters thereof were dried up.'

I. The Euphrates. By this we must not understand the literal river, for the whole book is symbolical. The river, therefore, stands as the symbol for something else. It is this that makes the subject so difficult, for the symbols are like hieroglyphics, and therefore, though full of meaning, peculiarly liable to be misunderstood. The question then is, what is the power of which the Euphrates in this verse stands as a symbol, or hieroglyphic? Of course, in the answer to such a question, we must distrust ourselves, and I dare not speak on it with the certainty with which we ought to speak of the plainly revealed facts of Scripture. All I can do is to express my own very confident conviction that by the Euphrates is symbolized the Ottoman, or, as it is frequently called, the Turkish Empire.

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For this I give two reasons:—

(1.) It is the one great empire existing in the world that originated on the banks of the river Euphrates. Its birthplace was at Bagdad, and it would be historically more correct to call it the Euphratian than the Turkish Empire. For we must remember that the Turks, or Ottomans, do not belong to the soil. The French are the natives of France, and the Italians of Italy, but the Turks are not the natives of Turkey, but invaders from Asia. They hold the country by conquest. The head-quarters of the empire are now in Turkey, on the shores of the Bosphorus; but its birthplace was Bagdad, on the banks of the Euphrates.

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(2.) There are two series of prophecies in the book of Revelation, the one given under the figure of seven trumpets, the other of seven vials, and they appear to be linked together by a very remarkable connexion as to the subject of the prophecies. You will see the correspondence clearly if you compare the account of the trumpets in chapters viii. and ix. with that of the vials in chapter xvi.

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When the first trumpet sounded the judgment was on the earth, viii. 7; and so the first vial was poured on the earth, xvi. 2.

When the second trumpet sounded the judgment was on the sea, chap, viii. 8. So the second vial was poured on the sea, xvi. 3.

When the third trumpet sounded, the judgment was on the rivers and fountains of waters, viii. 10. So the third angel poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of waters, xvi. 4.

When the fourth trumpet sounded, the judgment was on the sun, viii. 12. So the fourth angel poured out his vial on the sun, xvi. 8.

When the fifth trumpet sounded, the judgment was on those men who had not the seal of God on their foreheads, ix. 4. So the fifth vial was on the seat of the beast, xvi. 10.

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The correspondence is not at first sight so apparent in this as in the other vials; but if we bear in mind the prophecy that all shall worship the beast whose names are not written in the book of life, we shall see the same reality in the coincidence.

And, lastly, when the sixth trumpet sounded, there was a mighty host loosed from the Euphrates, ix. 14; and when the sixth vial was poured out, it fell on the Euphrates, and the Euphrates was dried up, xvi. 12.

Surely, then, we may come to the conclusion that this prophecy in chapter xvi. relates to the same great power as that referred to in chapter ix.; and as I believe that it has been proved that the trumpet prophecy predicts the invasion of Christendom by the Ottoman empire, so I am persuaded in my own mind that that under the vial foretells its exhaustion and decay. The Ottoman empire I believe to be the subject of both the prophecies.

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II. The overflow. There is no actual mention of the symbol of an overflow, but as that figure is employed in Holy Scripture to represent invasion, we may use it in this instance as descriptive of the invasion by the Ottomans, as predicted under the seventh trumpet. If you turn to Jer. xlvi. 7, 8, you find an invasion by Egypt described by an exactly similar figure. The invasion by Egypt is there compared to an overflow of the Nile. 'Egypt cometh up like a flood, and his waters are moved as the rivers.' So in Isaiah, viii. 7, 8, the invasion of Palestine by the Assyrians is foretold under the figure of an inundation: 'He shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow, and go over.' And so here the invasion by the Ottoman or Euphratian horsemen appears to be represented by an overflow of the Euphrates.

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Now consider the result of the recent floods in our own country. When the Trent rose above its banks, what happened? The waters spread far and wide on both sides the river, till, instead of fields and homesteads, you saw a vast inland lake. As you passed by in the train you might have seen the whole country under water. Just so it was when, according to the symbol, the Euphrates overflowed its banks; or, according to history, the Ottomans invaded Europe. The invading waters rushed on in every direction. On the east they reached the borders of China; on the west they soon reached Palestine, and all the heroic efforts of the Crusaders failed to check them. They then spread out in two branches. On the south they crossed into Africa, and spread over the whole northern portion of that vast continent. In the north they spread rapidly over Asia Minor, crossed the Bosphorus, conquered Greece, and spread over Europe till they reached the shores of the Adriatic, and even Venice. Thus when they had reached the height of their power, the whole of south-east Europe, the whole of north Africa, and the whole of west Asia, were flooded by the vast inundation. Their dominion extended from the shores of the Adriatic on the

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west to the borders of China on the east; while in Africa it reached from the Atlantic to Suez. Accordingly we have been taught from our childhood of Turkey in Europe, Turkey in Asia, and Turkey in Africa. But I am not sure that we are all aware that the Turks, or Ottomans, are Asiatic invaders who obtained their dominions by conquest.

III. So much for the overflow. Let us now turn to the drying up as predicted in the prophecy.

Think once more of the illustration of the river, and consider what would be the effect on the overflow if the waters were to subside in the river. The inundation would gradually recede, and one field after another would be left dry, until after a time the whole country would be free. If, therefore, the interpretation of the prophecy be correct, we should expect to see the Ottoman power gradually dying out, and the various nations that were overrun by conquest one by one shaking off the yoke. And this is exactly what has been taking place ever since the year 1820. There is a remarkable prophecy in Daniel believed to refer to this same Ottoman power, and from it some of the best students of prophecy in the course of the last century named that year as the probable commencement of the decline of Turkey. Up to the spring of the year all appeared to prosper; but then the waters began rapidly to recede. That very year the Greek insurrection began. The flood receded from Greece, so that in 1827 the present kingdom was established. In that same year the inundation went back so far that Servia was left dry. In the same year Moldavia and Wallachia, and the territory north of the Danube, were set free from the Ottoman yoke; and now there seems to be every hope that Herzegovina and Bosnia will succeed in shaking off the invader. Indeed, the whole Turkish Empire is in such a condition that if the statesmen of Europe could agree as to who should possess Constantinople, the whole Ottoman Power would in all probability be driven out of Europe before another year is over.

As for Africa, the flood has already left it almost dry. Morocco has become an independent state. The French have taken Algeria, while on the east, Egypt has asserted its independence, and with the one exception of an annual tribute, is entirely free from the Turkish yoke. For some years this process had been going on, till at length, in 1866, the Pasha assumed the title of 'Khedive,' which means king, proclaiming thereby an independent monarchy. The only possession remaining to Turkey is the little province of Tripoli, containing considerably less than 1,000,000 inhabitants. Turkey in Africa has almost ceased to exist. Turkey in Europe may last a little longer, but is going fast. As for Turkey in Asia, it has ceased to be a power to any distance east of the Euphrates; and I fully believe that on the west of the river the drying-up process will be steadily continued till the floods recede from Palestine, and that beautiful land is set free from the blight of Turkish misgovernment, and handed over to be once more a land flowing with milk and honey to its rightful possessors, the seed of Abraham, the nation to which God has given it.

Such are a few of the leading events with reference to the decline of the Ottoman empire; and there is only one further remark that I would make respecting it. The failure has not been the result of external conquest, but of internal decay. The Turks have not been brought down by any great defeats, but by their own want of life. The powers of Europe have not attacked them, but, on the contrary, have done their best to uphold them, as, *e.g.*, in the Crimean war; but, notwithstanding all that France and England could do, their power is falling to pieces of itself. The sick man is dying, and the physicians cannot keep him alive. Their energy seems gone, their exchequer is exhausted, and their population is so much diminished, that there are now only 2,000,000 Turks or Ottomans left in Europe. In other words, the Euphrates is drying up, and the inundation cannot long remain upon the land.

Now I can quite understand the feeling of those who have experienced a certain amount of disappointment in hearing this morning about the Turkish empire, instead of something bearing more directly on their own personal salvation, and I should myself have preferred to have preached on some such subject. But I have taken this subject on principle.

1. Because, as I have already said, 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' No portion, therefore, of God's word, whether it be prophetic or historical, ought to be set aside by those who really desire to know God's truth. If we wish to know the whole mind of God we must be prepared to study the whole of the Holy Scriptures which God has given us.

2. But, besides that, we must remember that our whole faith depends on Holy Scripture. All that we know of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His great high priesthood, of His atoning blood, of His free salvation, of the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the new birth, and of the coming advent, all our hope for the future, and all our rest for the present, depend simply and entirely on the word of God. In it we find all; without it we have nothing. When, therefore, we see a great prophecy of Holy Scripture fulfilled in our own day, within reach of our own observation, traceable on our own maps, and included within the range of our own memory, we ought not to pass it by, but should accept it with thankfulness in these days of rebuke and infidelity, as a most blessed confirmation of our faith. Let any one who has a different view respecting Scripture look at the facts. Two thousand four hundred years ago there was a prophet, the prophet Daniel, by the river of Ulai, and he foresaw in a vision the rise and progress of a mighty power, telling us at the same time how long it was likely to continue. Six hundred years after him there arose another prophet, who described what appears to be the same power, and gave a graphic picture both of its progress and decay. Students of Holy Scripture have since been diligently occupied in the study of these two prophecies; and by comparing Scripture with Scripture were long since brought to the conclusion that in the course of this century the decline of the Ottoman Empire would take place. And now we see it going on. Just when the students thought it would begin, then it began,

and just as the prophet described its decay, so it is decaying. The prophets themselves could have known nothing about it when they prophesied, for the empire did not arise till many centuries after they had foretold its fall. But God knew all, and a thousand years were to Him as one day. These prophecies, therefore, did not arise from any private interpretation or human calculation of probabilities, but 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

Now what should be the result on our minds? What effect should such facts have on ourselves? Should they not strengthen faith and confirm us in a simple, childlike, unquestioning trust in the inspired word of the living God? Who but God Himself could have foretold either to Daniel or John the rise and decay of the Ottoman Empire? It is God's own word, then, with which we are dealing when we study Holy Scripture. There may be things in it completely beyond all power of human calculation, as the history of the Ottoman Empire was utterly beyond the human calculation of either Daniel or John. But God's truth does not depend on our power of calculation. It is beyond us altogether, infinite, eternal, divine; and our part is, whether we can fit it together or not, to receive the whole as God has given it, and as weak, ignorant, short-lived, and short-sighted creatures, to receive His will as He has revealed it, into our hands, and hearts, and say, 'I believe God, that it shall be as it was said unto me.'

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IV. THE FROGS.

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IN opening our subject in the last lecture, I said that there were three questions to be considered: 1. Has the present state of Turkey been foretold in prophecy? 2. Does it teach us any lessons respecting our spiritual position? and 3. Does it throw any light on the blessed hope of our Lord's return? The first of these questions we examined in the last lecture, and surely it was proved that in the symbol of the drying up of the Euphrates we have a most remarkable symbolic prophecy of the exhaustion of the Ottoman power. To-day we are to pass on to the second question: Is our own spiritual position affected by the exhaustion of Turkish power? Now I can quite understand the thought that has no doubt occurred to many of you, that the two things can have no possible connexion with each other, for there seems to our mind to be no possible connexion of even the most remote character between the Turkish Empire and our own spiritual life. We may well say, 'What have we to do with the Turks, or the Turks with us in our own daily, private walk with God?' It may surprise some of you when I say that, although no man can explain the reason of the connexion, I believe it to be very intimate, and that the religious life of modern Christendom is in a most remarkable manner bound up with the decline of the Turkish Empire.

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To understand this we must remember that the great prophecy in the book of Revelation is arranged in periods. Each seal, each trumpet, and each vial, represents a period. So there is one particular period of history foretold under the figure of the sixth vial, and all the events predicted under that vial we should expect to appear at about the same time in history. Whether we can trace any connexion or not, the events of each vial are linked together in respect of time; so that if there are two events under any one vial, when we see the one we ought to look out for the other, and when one takes place we have every reason to believe that the other is at hand. Now there are two events, apparently quite distinct in themselves, which are thus connected with each other under the sixth vial—the drying up of the Euphrates, and the appearance of certain most dangerous and seductive spirits, going forth to gather men together for the battle of Almighty God. If, therefore, it be a fact, as I firmly believe it to be a fact, that the Euphrates is now being dried up, then it follows as a sure and certain consequence that the unclean spirits are soon, if not already, going forth to do their deadly work. The two things go on according to the prophecy within the same prophetic period, and therefore if we see the one, as believers in the word of God, we ought to be on the look-out for the other. We are thus brought to the conclusion, that whenever the Euphrates shall be drying up, there will be a time of great spiritual seduction; or, in other words, that the exhaustion of the Turkish Empire will be accompanied, or quickly followed, by a remarkable development of mischievous spiritual power. This, then, must be our subject in this lecture, and we will study (if God permit) first the danger, and then the caution. May God grant that the result may be that we may be like those few men of Sardis who had not defiled their garments, and who will walk with the Lord Jesus in white, for they are worthy!

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I. The danger.

This is described in verses 13, 14. 'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.'

All students of prophecy are well aware how much has been written in exposition of these two verses, and what different explanations have been given of these three seductive spirits. I have not time this morning to discuss any of them, but there are three things perfectly clear, and it will be sufficient for us to study them.

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(1.) The subtlety of the danger.

The passage does not describe three empires, or three churches, or three great societies, or three organizations of any kind whatever, but three spirits. Now a spirit is something subtle and unseen. Its presence is not perceived; its voice is not heard; its touch is not felt. It comes and goes, but it leaves no footsteps in the sand. It seems, therefore, a great mistake to explain this

prophecy by different systems that are conspicuous to the eye, and we must be careful lest, by so doing, we should be thrown off our guard with reference to our real danger. There may be no false system presented to us, and we may be perfectly safe with reference to any definite form of evil, such as infidelity or popery, but there may be any one, or indeed all three, of these deadly spirits imperceptibly breathing poison into our souls. It is this subtlety of spiritual action that makes it so pre-eminently dangerous. If it were all open and before the eye we should know how to avoid it. p. 69

(2.) The variety.

There is not one spirit only, but there are three acting together. We are taught, therefore, that at the time of the drying up of the Euphrates we must be prepared for subtle and seductive power of various forms and characters. If there were only one spirit the danger might assume only one form: but as there are three spirits acting together we should be on our guard against every possible combination. We are not merely to look out for three distinct and separate forms of error, but, as all the three act together, they may combine in every conceivable variety. One may act on one mind, two on another, and all three on a third, and so produce the most remarkable and inconsistent combinations. Suppose, *e.g.*, that the first was Infidelity, the second Worldliness, and the third Popery. Remember, I do not say that they are, but suppose they were. In some cases you might have avowed Atheism; in some, a life so absorbed in the world that a man does not even take the trouble to be an infidel; and in others pure and unadulterated Romanism. But, besides that, you might find every possible combination. Sceptical opinions might be combined with Romish ritual, and high ceremonial with worldliness of life. Indeed, there is scarcely any form of seductive error that you might not develop by combining in different proportions those three most dangerous spirits. Thus it follows that, though a person may be well on his guard against one, he may be gradually entangled by the other two; and though he may be on the watch against all in their distinct and separate forms, he may be drawn out of a straight path by a beautiful combination of the three, in which, according to St. Paul's illustration, Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light. p. 70

(3.) The result of the action of these spirits in conflict. Verse 14,—'For they are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.' p. 71

Their special object appears to be to gather together the kings to the battle of the great day of God Almighty; and in studying the prophecy it is impossible to forget the political difficulties that have already arisen from the decline of Turkey. But we must not limit the prophecy to kings, for the warning voice of verse 15 clearly applies to us all. Kings are not the only persons who find it necessary to watch and keep their garments. These spirits, then, are predicted as gathering men together for battle. When they are abroad truth and error will be thrown into antagonism. The Lord Jesus Christ will be collecting His forces, and Satan his: there will be on both sides the mustering of the host. Those that are on the side of the Lamb will rally round His banner, 'called, and chosen, and faithful;' and those that are under the influence of any of the seductive spirits will throw themselves into the ranks of open opposition. The characteristic of the day will be, not sloth or indifference, but zeal, eagerness, and conflict. p. 72

Now no one can have watched the progress of men's minds during the last half century without observing that this has been most remarkably the case. There cannot be a doubt as to the fact that, while the Turkish power has been declining, the powers of good and evil throughout Christendom have been awakening into life. The two processes have gone on side by side. Turkey has been drying up, and almost every state in Europe has been aroused to religious conflict. Many amongst us have been able to trace the vast change that has taken place during our own lifetimes. I can see myself an immense difference between the state of things when I commenced my ministry forty years ago, and the state of things now. Then the characteristic of the day was stagnation, but now it is conflict. Then our warfare was against cold, dull, dead, stolid indifference; but now error in every shape is in full activity, and we require to be armed at all points against every species of attack. Then all that unconverted men desired was to be left undisturbed in the deep sleep that had settled down on their souls. But they are all awake now, and the cry is 'To arms!' Many, alas! are on the wrong side. Far too many have fallen under the fatal influence of these seducing spirits; but, whether on the wrong side or the right, they are awake. They are up, and hurrying to their post. The time for sleep is over; the bugle has sounded, the ranks are forming, the struggle has begun, and the time is come when those who know their Saviour must be prepared to stand with a holy decision on His side. p. 73

II. And now you can see the overwhelming importance of the warning of this verse: 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' You can see that the exhaustion of Turkey is a conspicuous signal from God to arouse all Christendom to watchfulness. We cannot see the three unclean spirits coming forth, but we can see Turkey decaying; and that is God's visible signal that the invisible spirits are at work. If ever, therefore, there was a time for especial watchfulness it is now. If ever there was a time when our young people require to be cautioned, and warned, and helped, and guided, it is now. And you will observe that the warning is given to those who have some garments. It is not spoken to the heathen, or unconverted worldlings; but to those who have, what I may term, some sort of Christian clothing. I have not time to discuss what that clothing is. It may be their baptismal robe, that which they put on when they were baptized into Christ. It may be the robe of their Christian profession, that which they wear habitually in daily life; or it may even be that spotless robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb, in which alone they can stand before God, the p. 74

wedding garment of the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In whatever sense we understand the expression, the solemn and sacred warning from God to every one of us, both old and young, is the same; viz. that we watch and keep our garments, lest we walk naked, and they see our shame. We see the Euphrates drying up, and therefore we know that the evil spirits are abroad. We know, *i.e.* that there are subtle, deadly influences all around us, of various kinds and characters, whose object is to draw us away from the simplicity that is in Christ, to strip us of our garments, and to enlist us on the wrong side of the struggle. We may not be aware of their stealthy approach; and we are not likely to be so, for we are certain not to see them. We need not necessarily be shocked by their suggestions, for, though they be unclean spirits, they can clothe their temptation in the form of beauty. But, whether we detect them or not, we may be sure they are at work, and in full activity. They are moving with stealthy steps in the midst of us. They are approaching our minds in secret, disturbing prayer, suggesting doubts, weakening faith, poisoning thought, alienating love, and so labouring by subtle, mental influence, to detach us from Christ. And only think what the result would be if they were to succeed; nothing less than this, that we should walk naked and they would see our shame. It is not clear who is meant by the 'they' that are to see the shame. It may be the world at large, or it may be the very spirits that have done the mischief, looking on with a fiendish smile on the misery and nakedness of the poor wretch whom they have ruined. But it matters not who sees it; that will make very little difference. To be naked before God, that is enough. He is sure to see it, and the dreadful horrors of such a position far exceed any power of human imagination. You remember how St. Paul spoke of it in 2 Cor. v. 3: 'If so be that being clothed' (clothed, *i.e.* with the resurrection body) 'we shall not be found naked.' Clothed, but yet naked. Risen, but not covered. Alive with all the realities of the body, and all the faculties of the mind, memory, and conscience; but with the poor soul naked, without a claim, without an excuse, without an atonement, without a plea, without a Saviour, without any hope for all eternity of either concealment or forgiveness. The thought is too dreadful to be borne. Oh, may God in mercy grant that not one of us, and not one whom we love, may be found naked in that day! And oh! what an inexpressible joy it is for the child of God, however weak, however unworthy, however unable to cope with all the seductions of those wicked spirits, to fall back on the sure promise of his blessed Saviour: 'They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.' He can keep us, and we may be sure He will. Let us throw ourselves then into His hand to be clothed, to be kept, to be watched over, to be held fast, that so, preserved in Christ Jesus, and clothed in His spotless robe, we may never be found naked, but may when He comes be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

V. THE ADVENT.

I TRUST there are many amongst us who are able to say, from the very depths of their longing hearts, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait.' The long-expected coming of the Lord is the blessed hope on which their hearts rest in eager and earnest expectation, and they can add their unqualified 'Amen' to the last prayer of Scripture, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

I am persuaded that all those who are thus looking for the coming of the Lord must feel the greatest possible interest in the last of the three subjects proposed for our consideration with reference to the exhaustion of the Turkish Empire, as symbolized by the drying up of the Euphrates. We have seen that the exhaustion which is now attracting the anxious attention of all the politicians of Europe was foretold more than eighteen hundred years ago in this remarkable symbolic prophecy. We found also in the last lecture that the internal decay of Turkey is a warning to us all to be on the watch against the seductive spirits of the latter days; and we now have to examine whether there is any connexion between that decay and the glorious advent of the Lord Jesus; whether, in other words, the decline of the Ottoman empire is not like the cry which aroused the ten virgins in the parable, 'The Bridegroom cometh.' There are two questions which will clearly require our careful study, (1.) What light does the decline of the Ottoman Empire throw on the near approach of our Lord's return? And (2), if it does throw such a light, how are we to understand His declaration that He will come as a thief? May God Himself, who has inspired His own word, be graciously pleased to direct us in the study of it; and to lead us, every one of us, to be perfectly ready, waiting for the Lord Jesus!

I. What light, then, does the decay of the Ottoman Empire throw on the prospect of the near approach of our Lord's return? Has it any bearing on our Christian hope? and may we regard it as a signal from God that the time is come when we may soon expect the Advent?

In order to answer this question we must examine:—

(1.) The position of the prophecy in the general structure of the Book. The prophecies of this wonderful book are arranged on a divinely ordered plan. There are some chapters to which it is difficult to assign their place; but it is easy to see what may be termed the backbone running through the whole. To use a very homely illustration, there is the main line of rail conspicuously running through the whole, and you may trace that clearly, though you cannot always trace the branches. Now in this outline there are three great series of prophetic periods—the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials; and these three series appear in a remarkable manner to follow each other. First there are the seals, as in chap. vi.; and when the sixth seal is opened, and the seventh about to follow, there appears a general expectation of the coming of the Lord. But when the seventh seal is actually opened, instead of our coming to the end, as apparently was expected, we find a second series developed. The seven trumpets were wrapped as it were

in the seventh seal (viii. 1, 2), so that when it was opened they appeared, and a fresh series commenced, and the trumpet-angels one after another blew their blast. At length the seventh trumpet is sounded, and again it appears as though you had reached the end. But like the seventh seal, it, too, is found to contain within itself a third series. The seven vials are wrapped within it, and when that last trumpet is blown they are poured forth in awful succession on a wicked world. Thus the seventh seal contains all the trumpets, and the seventh trumpet all the vials. Now if this be the case it is clear that the sixth vial must come very near the end. The trumpets are none sounded till the six seals are passed and the seventh seal is opened. The vials do not begin till the six trumpets have completed their blast and the seventh has sounded; and of the vials five must have been poured out already, so that there can be nothing remaining but the seventh, or the last.

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To take the very homely illustration of a railway. Suppose a series of stations on a line, the seventh being a junction; suppose that on the branch from that junction there was another series of stations, the seventh again being a junction; and from that second junction there was another line of seven stations, the last being your home. What would you think of your position when you had travelled the whole length of the main line, and the whole of the first branch, and when you had gone so far along the second branch that you had actually reached the sixth station on that last line? You would say, surely, that you were near the end of your journey, close to home. Now whenever the Church of God reaches the sixth vial that will be its position. All the seals will have been opened, all the trumpets blown, and six of the seven vials poured out.

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But that I believe to be our position now, and that we are at this present time living under the sixth vial. I believe that the great public, political event of the sixth vial, is the drying up of the Ottoman Empire, and that we can all see to be in progress. There can be no doubt about the great, public, political fact. It is confirmed by every newspaper, and is forced on the attention of England by the sore distress brought on many families through the Turkish bankruptcy. But if this be the fact predicted by the symbol of the drying up of the Euphrates, then it follows that we are living under the sixth vial, and that the seventh vial is all that remains of the great prophetic series.

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(2.) But consider next the contents of the seventh vial. The seventh seal contained the series of seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the series of seven vials. May there not be some similar series wrapped up in the seventh vial?

Such a question would be perfectly reasonable, but the only answer that we can give is that we do not find any such series described in the prophecy. On the other hand, everything in it looks like the end. When the seventh angel poured out his vial there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying, 'It is done!' It certainly did not look like the commencement of another series, but taught us rather to look out for the great winding up of the world and the final close of the great prophetic plan. So in the account of the seventh vial you may see four things plainly revealed. The fall of Babylon, which I believe to be the fall of Rome: chap. xvi. 17, to the end of xviii. The marriage supper of the Lamb, chap. xix. 1-9. The triumphant victory of the Son of God: chap. xix. 11, 12; and, last of all, the millennial reign, chap. xx. Surely, then, this vial brings us to the end. Surely when it is poured forth we shall have done with the politics of the world, and shall cease to look for the gradual development of history. All thoughts will then be occupied by the unspeakable blessedness of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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It seems clear, then, that the seventh vial is the close of the series, and that under it we are to expect the final victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The conclusion, therefore, is plain, that if the exhaustion of the Ottoman Empire is the event symbolized by the drying up of the Euphrates, it is high time that we awake out of sleep; for the sixth vial is already begun, and we must soon expect to behold Christ Himself, with all the joys of His kingdom and all the terrors of a crushing victory. I say 'soon,' not 'immediately,' for it does not appear that this passage teaches us to expect it any day or hour, for it describes certain great political events which have not yet taken place. The Euphrates is drying, but not yet dry. The kings have not yet passed over from the East, and the battle of Almighty God, whatever it may symbolize, has not yet been fought. All, therefore, that we can say is, that we appear to have reached what Daniel terms 'the time of the end;' that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for we already begin to see the first streaks of morning dawn. We have already witnessed some of the great events that must very shortly precede the Advent, and we may begin to look out full of hope for the actual return of the Lord Himself.

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(3.) This conclusion is confirmed by the words of our Lord Himself. I need not stop to prove that He is the speaker in this passage, but we must carefully observe His words. What does He say when the sixth vial is poured out, and the Euphrates is drying up, and when the three evil spirits are gone forth through Christendom? What is the warning voice which He Himself then gives out with reference to His coming? What lesson would He have us learn from these great events? Of what are they His signal? Does He not teach us to be looking out for His coming? Does He not say, 'Behold, I come as a thief?' Does He not call us to a double watchfulness, and teach us not merely to watch against the seductive influence of these foul spirits, but to watch also for His own appearing, and for the bright hope of joyfully meeting Him? But if this be the case, and if the prophecy of the sixth vial is really being now fulfilled, as we believe it to be, by the drying up of the Turkish power; then every fresh symptom of decay in that power, every loss of territory by the Turks, every fresh insurrection, and every proof that the empire is reduced to hopeless bankruptcy, is like a clarion blast of the trumpet of God ringing through the ears of Christendom;

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and proclaiming, with a distinctness which cannot be mistaken, 'Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh!'

II. But if this be the case, it behoves us carefully to examine our second question. If such a warning is so clearly given, how can He be said to come as a thief? He Himself teaches us perfectly clearly that the meaning of the illustration is that, as the thief comes without giving notice, so He will return without previously giving any such notice of His approach as will arouse the sleepers. The thief does not tell you when he is coming; and when he comes, he neither knocks the door nor rings the bell. But he comes quietly. He does nothing to disturb those that are asleep, and His object is to enter unobserved. So our Lord teaches us, that when He comes He will do nothing to startle the world. There will be nothing to prevent men eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, right up to the very end. The men of the world will find Him in the house before they have the least idea of His approach. That this is the meaning of the words is perfectly clear from what He said (Matt. xxiv. 42-44): 'Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.'

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But, you may say, how far is this consistent with what has been said of the probability of His return following quickly on the exhaustion of the Ottoman Empire? If there be a prophetic series in the book of Revelation, and we have already reached the last station on the last branch of the line, how is it that He can be said to come upon us without notice as a thief does? Has He not given us notice in this prophecy?

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In answer to that question we must observe the clearly marked distinction between His own believing people and the unbelieving world. To His own people He will not come as a thief, for we read in 1 Thess. v. 4, 5, 'But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief.' *You* are in the light, *i.e.*, for you can see Him coming; so *you* will not be found asleep. So He Himself taught us distinctly in the very passage in which He uses the illustration; for He there shows that His own disciples are to expect His coming when they see the predicted signs, just as they expect the summer when they see the budding of the trees in spring. (Matt. xxiv. 32, 33.) Nor are they to wait in their expectation till they see these signs fully developed; not to wait, *i.e.*, till the young branch is fully grown; but they are to watch beginnings, and learn from them. They are to draw their conclusion when the branch is yet tender, without waiting till it is fully ripened; as He Himself taught us in Luke, xxi. 28: 'When these things *begin* to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.' If, therefore, you be amongst the people of God, you need never be taken by surprise. We do not know the exact time, but we may study the predicted signs, and, having them before us, may look out for the second advent just as Simeon and Anna looked out for the first. We may be like the servant of Elijah, going up again and again to the hill-top to watch for the coming rain; or like the loving servant watching for the footsteps of the master whom he loves, and perfectly ready, whenever he returns, to open the door, and welcome him to his home. The Lord came suddenly to His temple, but He did not come suddenly to Simeon; and the Lord will come as a thief to the world, but if you hold fast to His own word He will never be as a thief to you.

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As I have already said, it is the *world* that will be found asleep, and to whom He will really come as a thief. But some man may say, 'If there be these signs beforehand, will they not arouse the world as well as believers? Will they not awaken society? Will they not compel men to prepare?' I answer that by another question, Do they? There are certain signs already given; do they wake up society? Have they produced such an impression as to arouse the great mass of worldly men? There are the Jews preserved as a separate people, in fulfilment of a prophecy given more than three thousand years ago; what effect has such a fulfilment of God's word had in the city? There are all the politicians of Europe at their wits' end because of the decay of Turkey; how many even of yourselves have been led thereby to look out for the near approach of our blessed Saviour? There is Rome stripped of its temporal power in fulfilment of great prophecies given, some of them, more than two thousand years ago; how many are there that have been led by that fulfilment to look out even for the fall of Babylon? The simple fact is, that these great fulfilments, though conspicuous to the eye of those who study them, completely fail to produce the least impression on the deep sleep of the unconverted world. The prophecies are not read; the facts are not compared with them; the lessons are not learned; and the soul is not aroused to preparation. How many are there even in this very town on whom the fulfilment of God's prophetic word has never produced the slightest effect? They are living just as they would have lived, or rather sleeping as they would have slept, if there had been no prophecy to give the warning, and no history to confirm its truth. Can you wonder, then, that the Lord Jesus should come upon such persons as a thief?

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But I trust, dear brethren, that He may not come as a thief to you, but that you may be found in the light and awake, not in darkness and asleep; or, to use the illustration of this text, that you may not wake up naked to your everlasting shame. I am sure you desire when He comes to be found awake, looking out, ready to welcome Him. You wish to be found clothed. Oh, think what it would be to be found naked, when all the saints of God are standing around you in their resurrection robe! We have lately read of poor people startled in the night by shipwreck, and rushing as they were to the deck, utterly unprotected against the bitter blast of the winter's snow-storm. Think what it would be to be suddenly aroused from your own deep sleep, to see all that you have in the world wrecked around you, and to find your poor soul quite naked, while the

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terrible storm of God's most just judgment beats upon you, and breaks down every hope of escape! Oh, dear brethren, may it never be so with you! May you be amongst those who can peacefully look for His appearing, because you are clothed in His righteousness! May you be kept walking in the light, and cleansed from all sin through His most precious blood! Then you will have nothing to fear, but everything to hope for, in the thought of His coming. Then He will never come as a thief to you, for you will be ready at any time to open the door and welcome Him. As the bride delights in the bridegroom, so will you delight in Him. Your trial will consist, not in the dread of His coming, but in the difficulty of patiently waiting for His return; and when He comes you will find no language to bless and praise His holy name, for His boundless and unmerited love in having redeemed you by His atoning blood; in having called you by His sovereign grace; in having forgiven you through His finished atonement; in having sanctified you by the Holy Ghost; and in having preserved you in His own unchanging faithfulness, till He shall have finally presented you spotless and faultless before the throne of His everlasting glory.

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Footnotes

[30] Hume, ii. 67.

[32] I was interested, two days after preparing this lecture, by reading the following sentence in the *Times*, 'Upon every temporal consideration Rome never was so low as she lies this day.'—*Times*, Dec. 15, 1873.

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