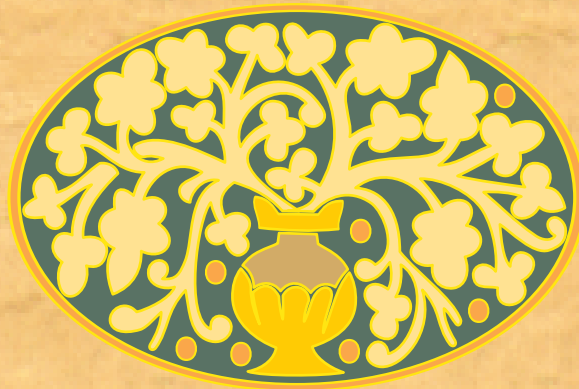


JUDEO-CENTRIC PREMILLENNIALISM



by

HORATIUS BONAR

THIS volume was originally titled *Prophetical Landmarks, containing data for helping to determine the question of Christ's premillennial advent*. However, a more contemporary title has been added which emphasizes the author's strong conviction that the truth concerning Israel is at the heart of biblical eschatology. This principle is stated on page 111 in the chapter entitled "Israel," which is substantially the largest. Here we read that, "the prophecies concerning Israel are the key to all the rest. True principles of interpretation, in regard to them, will aid us in disentangling and illustrating all prophecy together. False principles as to them will most thoroughly perplex and overcloud the whole Word of God." Hence, "Judeo-centric Premillennialism" is a most appropriate title for an era that increasingly bears witness to Bonar's contention.

Barry E. Horner

PROPHETICAL LANDMARKS

containing

DATA FOR HELPING TO DETERMINE
THE QUESTION OF

CHRIST'S PRE-MILLENNIAL ADVENT

BY

HORATIUS BONAR, D.D.

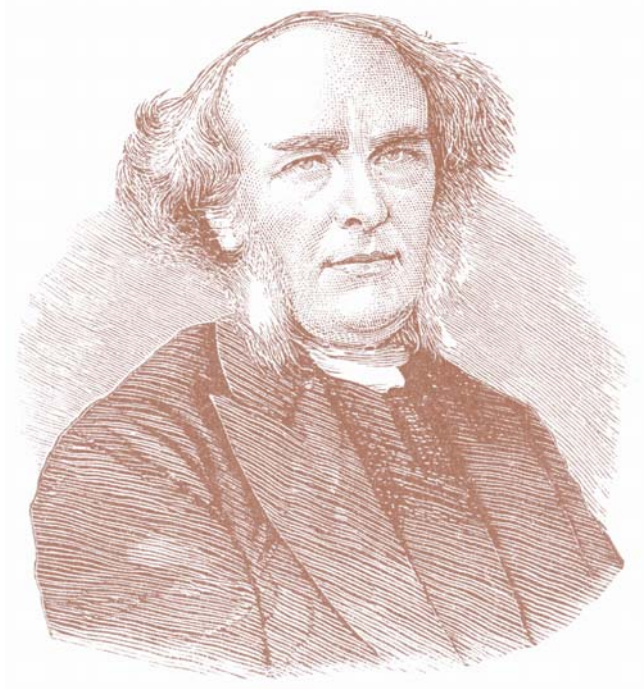
“O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?”
Dan. Xii. 8.

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MDCCCLXXVI [1876]



Horatius Bonar

“I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe the doctrine of the Millennium; and there will be two distinct resurrections of the dead; *first*, of the just, secondly of the unjust; which last resurrection of the reprobate will not commence till a thousand years after the resurrection of the elect. In this glorious interval of one thousand years, Christ, I apprehend, will reign in person over the kingdom of the just”—TOPLADY, *Works*, vol. iii, p. 470.

“The Revelation teaches (agreeing perfectly with the statements of our Lord and the Apostles) that a period will come in which the Spirit of Jesus Christ should not only prevail in secret, but should also gain the victory externally, and found a kingdom of peace and righteousness upon earth. With the arrival of the reign of peace there will be connected, on the one hand, the appearance of Jesus Christ and a resurrection of many saints; and, on the other, a previous mighty struggle on the part of evil. The principal idea is the perfect return of the supremacy of good, the restoration of the lost Paradise to the earth which has been laid waste by sin.”—Olshausen *on the Gospels*, vol i, p. cviii.

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INTRODUCTION

HORATIUS BONAR (1808-1880) today is best known as a hymn writer, though his overall ministry in Scotland was of far greater dimensions, particularly with regard to his preaching and writing on various Christian topics. Born into a godly household that included his well known brother Andrew, he studied divinity under Thomas Chalmers at Edinburgh University. Licensed as a Presbyterian preacher in 1833, his first pastorate was at Kelso that extended for twenty years. At this time he participated in a remarkable moving of the Spirit of God in Scotland that involved Thomas Chalmers, William C. Burns and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. His brother Andrew also joined a *Mission of Enquiry to the Jews* in 1839 in which he, along with M'Cheyne, Drs. Keith and Black, toured the Holy Land and reported their findings back to the Church of Scotland. Horatius himself toured Israel, as well as Egypt, Arabia, and Syria during 1855-1856. His published *Notes of a Spring Journey*, in two volumes, concludes:

Palestine bears no trace of *Israel's* land. The heel of the Gentile has broken all its ancient monuments to pieces, save what could not be effaced, the sea, the mountain, the rock, the valley, the river, the lake. But the minaret of each village you pass, tells you that the land is "trodden down of the Gentiles" [Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25]. . . . The land belongs to Israel by an entail that has not been cancelled. Yet at the present he has no possession here. . . . The Greek and Latin churches are very largely buying up the land, as if to secure it against Israel's claim. How long their lease will be, is not for us to determine.¹

Subsequently there followed a further twenty years at Chalmers Memorial Chapel, Edinburgh, that included assistance in arranging meetings for D. L. Moody in 1873.

Another investment of Bonar, that is frequently reflected in his prolific hymn writing, was a considerable interest in prophetic events, particularly from a premillennial perspective. He edited *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* (1849-1873).² In 1847 he published *Prophetical Landmarks, Containing Data for Helping to Determine the Question of Christ's Pre-millennial Advent*, which went to at least five editions. Here, in contrast with much contemporary prophetic writing, there is a refreshing combination of reverent mood, judicious expression, spiritual perception, and scholarly investigation. Of particular significance in this volume is the fact that of fifteen chapters, the largest by far runs to fifty-eight pages, simply being titled, "Israel." The second largest chapter is of thirty-five pages. Hence, in this manner Bonar substantially expresses his belief that the subject of Israel is of fundamental significance for biblical eschatology, and here his sanctified artistry with prose in expressing this conviction is no less than that of his poetry.

Because over 150 years have passed since the original publication of this volume, some editorial comments are footnoted, though they are clearly designated as the opinions alone of the editor. Occasional expressions of a past era are substituted with equivalent idioms of the present.

¹ Horatius Bonar, *The Land Of Promise, Notes on a Spring Journey from Beersheba to Sidon*, II, pp. 479-480.

² Many chapters in this volume conclude with select verses from Charles Wesley's two volumes titled, *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*. These were obtained from the article by Horatius Bonar, "Charles Wesley's Millenarianism," published in the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, 1849, V. I, pp. 95-100.

PREFACES

PROPHETICAL LANDMARKS

BY

HORATIUS BONAR

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I DO not mean this volume for a controversial one. It touches, no doubt, upon controverted points, and to that extent must partake of this character. But I have striven to avoid the attitude of disputation as much as possible, and to treat with respect the judgment of brethren in Christ who differ from me.

I have read most of the works written against the system here maintained. They are very few in number. What may be the reason of this, I do not undertake to say. I have not referred to any of them by name, nor quoted their language; but I have endeavored to state fairly the substance of their arguments.

In reading these, I have been struck with the peculiar method of reasoning which they adopt. Their object is rather to *disprove* our hypothesis than to *prove* their own. They take for granted that if Millenarianism be overthrown, then their system must come in its place as a matter of course, without any further proof. They do not build up nor fortify their own system so much as they try to overturn that of their opponents. Hence their theory does not stand upon *direct* textual proof from Scripture in its favor, but upon the supposed absence of proof for the opposite.

Assuming that Millenarianism is in its very nature impossible, and therefore not capable of being proved, they endeavor to

turn the edge of Millenarian expositions, and to show that a different sense is *possible*. But surely this is not all that is needed. Millenarianism may have no foundation in Scripture; but still Anti-Millenarianism may be equally baseless. What I desire of our opposing brethren is, that they would produce the *direct positive texts* on which they ground *their* theory; not on which they rest their opposition to our theory, but *on which they build their own*. All the length they have advanced as yet is, that our system is false, and that theirs *may* be true. It remains they prove from Scripture that their *must be* true. They have not done this. But surely, logically and theologically, their reasoning is at fault till they do so.

Besides, in reference to most of the disputed passages, the ground which they take up appears to me very narrow and insecure. Our position is, that the texts in question *must* be interpreted in a certain way, and do not admit of another sense. We may be wrong in this; but such, at least, is our position. What, then, is the counter position? Only that they *may be* interpreted differently; that certain doctrines (supposed to be in jeopardy) *demand* a different sense, and that the passages themselves *admit* of it. Now, these passages are the hinges of the whole question. They can have but *one* true meaning; a

meaning to be determined not by general inferences from collateral doctrines, but from the examination (textual and contextual) of the words themselves. If, then, we maintain that the principles of sound interpretation *compel* us to adopt the literal view, why do our brethren not take up the opposite position, and say that these principles *compel* them to adopt another sense? Why do they stop short of this, and say that they do not feel constrained to adopt our meaning, for the passages admit of another? Why do they not oppose their “must be” to our “must be?” If their theory be thoroughly invulnerable, and ours as thoroughly feeble, why do they not venture upon a more positive method of interpretation?

Let me illustrate my meaning by reference to a passage which I have taken up at length in the seventh chapter. I mean II Thessalonians 2:8. It is one of the most conclusive that has been adduced in the discussion; not only because it is clear and pointed in itself, but because it occurs in a plain epistle, and not in any book of figure or symbol. *Its testimony to a Pre-Millennial Advent appears to me irresistible.* Our position respecting it is, that, if there be certainty in language, consistency in statement, and coherence in argument, the expression “BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING” must refer to the literal Advent. How, then, is this met? Not by showing that it cannot be so, or by proving that it does not imply this, but simply by trying to show that the words *may* mean something else. This surely is a very feeble and indirect way of meeting our statements. Nor do I think it the fair method, either logically or scripturally. Respecting such an important passage, something more decided and direct ought to be produced. It should at least be shown that *our interpretation is wrong*, and not simply that another is *possible*. For what is this but an admission that the *natural* sense of the passage is on our side, and only the *non-natural* on the other?³ And if the natural and

³ No Post-Millennialist has attempted to show that our interpretation of this passage is false, or unlikely, or unnatural. All they assert is, that

probable sense be ours, and only the non-natural and possible be theirs, can we hesitate in deciding which of the two is according to the mind of the Spirit?

The general line of argument adopted by Anti-Millennarians appears to be both unsound and unsafe. They argue that Millenarianism is in itself so carnal, so absurd, so inconsistent with other doctrines, that it cannot be believed. Hence they approach Scripture with such a bias, that one can scarcely expect a calm and thorough examination of the passages under discussion. But even though the bias were not so injurious, still the method of procedure is inadmissible. If the question be one purely of Scripture interpretation, then no previous ideas of our own as to the nature of the doctrine ought to be allowed to weigh with us. Our inquiry simply is. What has God written? It is unfair, it is illogical, nay it is deeply sinful, to come to the consideration of an important doctrine with minds so *pre-occupied with the conviction that it cannot be proved*, that the weighing of evidence is altogether unnecessary. But let us not undertake to weigh it when we have previously, and upon other grounds, settled the whole question.

It is most unsafe to make *our ideas* of the possible our standard in measuring Scripture. It is clear that, in such a case, we are dictating to God, and not submitting to be taught by Him. I know not a more melancholy instance of this than Dr. Bush, of America, in his recent work upon the resurrection.⁴ He sets out in the same track which many Anti-Millennarians have adopted, viz., that the doctrine in question is an impossibility. “The physiological fact,” he writes, “of the constant change which our bodies are undergoing, *is irreconcilably at war* with the tenet of the resurrection of our bodies.”⁵

another is possible! And thus they “get over” the difficulty. Would it not be better to yield to it?

⁴ George Bush, *Anastasis, or The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, Rationally and Scripturally Considered.*

⁵ P. 390.

Commencing by an attempt to prove that resurrection *cannot be*, he then goes on to show how those passages which speak of it are to be interpreted, so as not to teach it. The replies to his work which we have seen, at once assail him here as most illogical in the arrangement of his argument. They tell him he is no judge of what is possible or impossible. They admit the difficulties implied in a resurrection (difficulties far greater than any which Millenarianism contains,) but they leave these in the hand of God. Is anything too hard for Him? They tell him, also, that the object of his book is to reconcile Scripture to a preconceived theory of his own. Such are precisely our answers to Anti-Millenarian works, most of which set out with similar assumptions, and go over nearly the same ground as the American Professor. We say that such a method of reasoning is unsound and untenable; that man is no judge of the possible or impossible; that difficulties are nought to God; and that nothing can be more dangerous than to attempt to reconcile Scripture to a theory of our own. We see to what lengths this method of arguing has conducted Dr. Bush, and we ought to be upon our guard against applying that method to any revealed doctrine whatsoever.

There is another American Professor to whom I would refer, in connexion with some of the above remarks; I mean Moses Stuart, of Andover. He has recently published a very elaborate Commentary on the Apocalypse. In it he is compelled, as a critic, to admit that the first resurrection, spoken of in the twentieth chapter of that book, is a literal one, and that the words do not admit of being spiritualized. But to compensate for this singular admission, he gives us his opinion very freely upon the merits of Millenarianism. He calls it "a gross conception;" an "impossibility," having no "foundation but in the phantasy of the brain." He speaks of "the dreams of men;" "visionaries of ancient and modern times;" "phantasies of lively imaginations;" "enthusiastic visions;" "idle, yea, worse than idle, fancy dreams;" "dreams of phantasies of ancient and modern Millenarians, who make

a worldly and sensual kingdom."⁶ I do not cite these expressions to complain of them, far less to retort them. Neither do I refer to them as evidences of an unbecoming and uncandid spirit in the Andover Professor; of this I leave others to judge. Nor do I feel aggrieved by the epithets bestowed upon Millenarianism; they have not tended to persuade me that I am wrong, nor convinced that I am an enthusiast dreamer. I cannot suppose that they will weigh much with any calm and thoughtful mind. If I can only hold fast, and defend what God has written for the instruction of His church, I shall not be offended at these reproaches;—reproaches which both in Britain and America are but too common among the assailants of the derided system. The reason I have quoted Professor Stuart is, because his method of dealing with the subject is a specimen of the mode of reasoning which is too much indulged in by Anti-Millenarians. They tell us that our theory is visionary and impossible, and that, therefore, it *cannot* be scriptural. Now, did it not occur to the learned Professor that this is precisely the false position which Unitarians adopt, and which he and his fellow-Trinitarians condemn? No one knows this better than he; and we might well be surprised at his adoption of principles in one case which he would condemn in the another. I was struck, too, when I remembered the calm manliness with which he argued the question of the Divinity of Christ against the Unitarians, and could not help wondering why he should

⁶ See vol. ii. pp. 361, 362, 374, 479, 480. I have been struck with the resemblance to Jerome in these expressions. He is perpetually recurring to the Millenarians, and never fails to bestow some hard epithet upon them; at the same time he acknowledges that very many (*plurima multitudo*) even in his day held that doctrine,—so much so that he tells us that he foresees "the fury which he is likely to raise against himself" in opposing it (*ut præ sagâ mente jam cernam quantum in me rabies concitanda sit*).—JEROME, *Proem to the Sixty-fifth Chapter of Isaiah*. The reference to this passage in Kitto's "Cyclopædia" is inaccurate, and the translation is second-hand; but the article on Millenarianism is good and fair.

speaking more kindly to the deniers of his Lord than to his brethren in Christ. When he was arguing with the former, he stood upon the broad ground of Scripture, refusing to be moved away from this by their oft-repeated charges of impossibility and absurdity. When reasoning with the latter, he both loses sight of his former principles, and leaves behind him his former spirit. He does not meet us calmly, and prove that *his* system is scriptural and *ours* unscriptural; but he assumes throughout that Millennialism is a silly fable, and that, therefore all texts which seem to favor it *must* be explained away. This, surely, is indefensible; for, however unworthy of his grave notice we may be, yet the peril of admitting such a principle ought to have deterred him from the course he has pursued. Would that he might be persuaded to return to his former position, and take up the present question calmly on the direct scriptural ground! Of this, however, I have little hope. He has entered upon devious paths, and studied too admiringly the German school. His work on the Apocalypse is, notwithstanding its scholarship, a fearful exhibition of Rationalistic irreverence for the inspired Word of God.

I intended to have devoted a chapter to the history of Millennialism. This, however, I have since resolved not to undertake. To do it thoroughly, would have occupied more time than I can at present afford; for though there are many sketches of this in various works, of which I might have availed myself, yet most of these are second-hand; and having, in the course of reading, noted down many things, both in the fathers and in later divines, I could not have satisfied myself with a brief sketch, and I had not the leisure, nor had I sufficiently digested my materials, to prepare a full history. But the conclusions to which all enquirers upon this subject have come, in reference to the *early* history of the doctrine, is, that *during the three first centuries it prevailed universally*, its only opponents being the Gnostics. This is now an acknowledged historical fact, a fact which we may well ask our opponents to account for, save upon the supposition that *Chiliasm* was an article of

the Apostolic Creed.⁷ But I do not mean to enter further into its history. And one of my chief reasons is, that I have no wish to prop up a scheme by human authority, even of the most ancient and universal kind. I would not that our faith should “stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” If it cannot be unequivocally maintained from Scripture, I will not even attempt to call in human witnesses, however numerous and however venerable. Let it stand or fall by the Word of God alone. Yet it would be well if our opponents, when casting reproach upon us, would remember that some respect is due to the honored names that have been associated with it from the days of the apostles to our own.

As to the difficulties which are said to adhere to the system, and to render it incapable of proof, let me say a word. Previous to the fulfillment of every prophecy, there have always been difficulties connected with it, by which faith has been proved, and over which unbelief has stumbled. The predictions concerning the first Advent contained an amount of difficulty, perplexity, and apparent impossibility, which completely overshadows everything of that nature in the present case. Man’s reasoning with regard to *difficulties* has been thus entirely overthrown. It has been shown that he is no judge of these, and that when he attempts to estimate them, and to mould God’s Word according to them, he is sure to err. We have been made to see

⁷ “The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of the saints on earth a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among the best of Christians, for 250 years, for a tradition *apostolical*, and as such, is delivered by many fathers of the second and third century, *who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and His Apostles*, and of all the ancients who lived before them, who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the scriptures which are then so interpreted, and say that it was held by *all Christians that were exactly orthodox*.”—*Whitby’s Treatise on Traditions*. Whitby, it is well known, was a Post-Millennialist, so that his testimony is the more striking.

how very careful we ought to be in pronouncing upon these, and how befitting our position it is, as finite learners, to insist upon weighing a doctrine in the balance of our difficulties, rather than in the balance of the sanctuary. We seem to take for granted that the *harmony* of Divine truth must be so necessarily and immediately perceptible by us in all its parts, that if there appears to us any dislocation or incoherence we are entitled to strike out the doctrine that seems to introduce the discord, *previous* to any consideration of the amount of scriptural evidence in its favor. Our difficulties are reckoned sufficient to place it beyond the circle of evidence altogether, and to justify us in at once throwing it out of our system upon the internal evidence of its own incongruity. But such a mode of adjusting systems is inadmissible—especially seeing that all these systems contain in them many things which we cannot reconcile or link together in our present state. Were this method of reasoning lawful, the Jews might well have excused themselves in disbelieving the incarnation; and Unitarians might maintain the field successfully against the asserters of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, we ourselves should be thoroughly baffled in our attempt to prove the resurrection of the body; for, beyond all question, that doctrine presents to us difficulties so formidable that there is absolutely no escape from them, save by a direct appeal to what God has written, and to what God is able also to perform.

Instead of being staggered by the existence of difficulties, ought we not to feel that nothing else could be expected? Had there been none such, should we not have been inclined to say that the doctrine was of man, not of God? Man may construct a scheme of the future, as a child draws up a map of the stars, in which there shall appear no difficulties, no incongruities. But is God's system of the future likely to be as smooth and comprehensible by us? It is a future which is all His own; a future where there are ten thousand movements to adjust, and ten thousand conflicting forces to calculate; a future in which there are new truths to be

evolved, and, hence, new links to be formed for knitting the whole together. Surely, then, it is no great demand which God makes upon us, to wait in patience for a little while, and not to prejudge HIS system, because the links are not visible, and the order not in keeping with our ideas of harmony. The points in which it now appears dark or even disjointed, may be the very parts where there has been most of the Divine wisdom expended; and the cause of the seeming difficulty may be the vastness of the truth revealed, so far transcending the lowness and narrowness of human thought. How often does that part of a picture on which the artist has bestowed most pains, and into which he has cast his own soul, appear a blemish to the unpracticed eye? So it is with reference to the things of God; and hence the exceeding danger, not to say irreverence, of testing a doctrine by the difficulties connected with it. These are not for us to decide upon. We are very likely to pronounce falsely upon these, or to reason improperly from them.

All this is specially true when the system in question is not only occupied with the future, but with that future in a very special way. Let us, for example, assume, for a moment, that the Millennial hypothesis is true; then, all that it involves is connected with a period *after the coming of Christ*. That coming must, of necessity, introduce many changes,—changes which make any calculation of ours as to the state of things *then*, still more difficult and hopeless. Even were we still to arrange the events and measure the difficulties of a future which was the natural and unbroken continuation of the present, still that would be no reason for our venturing to pronounce upon the difficulties of a system which is not to be developed till after Christ has come and taken into His own hands the reigns of government. If our theory refer to the order of things after the Advent, then we are entirely precluded from the consideration of these difficulties. Are we at liberty to affirm, that what may seem difficulties just now, will be so *then*? Are we prepared to maintain that the Advent will introduce nothing new in God's administration of the

world, and that what appears to us incongruous now will really be so then? May not what is new in that future order of the world, be the very things which shall adjust all these fancied dislocations, the very things which were awaiting to fill up that which now appears incomplete,—to knot together that which now seems loose and broken?

There is a remark of Dr. Owen on another subject which may very fittingly be quoted here: “A truth well-established and confirmed, is not to be questioned, much less relinquished, on every entangled sophism, *though it should appear insoluble.*” Were this statement weighed, and carefully applied to the doctrine under discussion, in the same way as sound divines have applied it to other truths, there would have been, if not a total abandonment of position, at least a greater moderation of language, and perhaps some abatement of self-confidence, on the part of those who have entrenched themselves behind certain fancied difficulties, as they formed a bulwark against Millenarianism, which must prove absolutely impregnable.⁸

The present volume consists properly of two parts. The first ten chapters contain what I have called the landmarks of prophecy, and the data for ascertaining the position of the Advent. The remaining five are devoted to an enquiry into the principles of interpretation, with some suggestions as to the predictions regarding Antichrist, and a brief glance at those “signs,” which are the outriders of the approaching King, sent forward to warn the world, and to prepare the Church for His speedy Advent. I am aware that the work is far from being complete. I have done little more than set forth a few principles for the more exact exposition of the prophetic Word,

⁸ There are two classes of “difficulties,”—the direct, or scriptural, and the inferential, or rational. If the objections adduced by our opponents were of the first class, they would be legitimate, even though ultimately overruled by stronger evidence. But almost all of them belong to the second class, being inferences of human reason, which can only be taken up after positive evidence has been disposed of.

and indicate the line of argument which I conceive ought to be pursued in all attempts to determine the position of the Advent. I do not profess to have enumerated, far less to have exhausted, the proofs in favor of the doctrine here advocated. It would require many volumes instead of one, to open up and illustrate what is written in Scripture concerning the coming and the kingdom of the Lord. They greatly err who suppose that our doctrine on these points is based on a few knotty and doubtful texts. The passages on which it rests, and on the strength of which we ask the reader to hesitate before he rejects it, are neither few nor ambiguous. They give forth no uncertain sound, no feeble, no inarticulate utterance. Their testimony is not scanty and infrequent, but full and oft-repeated. No other doctrine can produce a larger, more distinct, and more vigorous testimony in its favor. Many of the truths which we receive as incontestable, are built upon a basis by no means so solid or so broad as this. Its witnesses are very numerous, and worthy of being witnessed to. It pervades the whole Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. It is not confined to the figurative books; it declares itself with equal fullness, in narrative and epistle, as in symbol or type. Like a thread of gold, it runs through the whole web of revelation, crossing and re-crossing it everywhere, and imparting the richest brilliance to the whole texture. It is the burden of all prophecy. It is the summing up, as well as the unraveling of all history. It is the final and grand solution of the mystery of God’s dealings with this world of ours. It is the germ of Israel’s types. It is woven into all their ordinances, and rites, and festivals. It is the theme of many a psalm; the heart of many a symbol; the subject of many a parable; the end and point of many a promise; the seal set to the “Gospel of the grace of God,” as the “Gospel of THE KINGDOM,” that is, the good news concerning the open gate for sinners, into that kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world!

It has been the HOPE of the Church through many a starless night, when other hopes had gone out one by one, like beacons shattered

by the tempest, leaving her disconsolate and helpless. It is now again, in our day, pressed upon her notice, as her strength in “the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world,”—the only light which cannot be quenched, and by which she will be able to steer her perilous course through the gloom of the thickening storm.

It is no dream of carnal enthusiasts, enamored of materialism, and anticipating a paradise of gross delights. It is the calm belief of spiritual men, resting upon God’s sure promise, and looking forward to a kingdom of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” [Rom. 14:17]. It is no hasty conjecture, no novelty of a feverish age, rashly caught up, without consideration and without evidence. It can produce the testimony of ages in its behalf; and they who have held it in our day, have been men who have studied their Bible on their knees, and have come to their conclusions after long, deliberate, and most solemn investigation. It is no fable of romance; it is sober, scriptural reality, though far beyond what fancy ever painted. It is no vision of the politician; yet it shows us how, before long, shall be exemplified that which earthly Governments have been vainly striving to realize,—a peaceful and a prosperous world. It is no creation of the intellect; the wisdom of this intellectual age rejects it as foolishness, and rationalism resents it as one of the exploded fantasies of unenlightened criticism.⁹ It is no popular theory of the many; there are comparatively few throughout the Churches who receive it,—few who will even concede to it a place among the things which deserve serious study, or are accessible to proof. Yet all are concerned in it; and it

⁹ Several of the opponents of Rationalism have embraced the doctrine of the Pre-Millennial advent and reign. I have already quoted Olshausen, I may here quote a sentence from Gess. “The dead saints, at the appearance of the Christ, are to be organized again with the material bodies. This is to take place a thousand years before the awakening of the other dead. . . . They are to reside again upon earth, and to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years.”—*The Revelation of God in His Word*, pp. 227, 228.

comes abroad proclaiming itself alike to the Church of God and to the heedless multitude, as the consummation towards which the various lines of prophecy are rapidly converging, as the glorious issue of all the confusion, the sin, the change, the death, that have made earth so long a wilderness, as the only cure for those deep and manifold evils under which men are groaning, and which they are so earnestly, yet so vainly, striving to remedy.¹⁰

KELSO, *January* 1847.

¹⁰ Having occasionally been called to take up some prophetic points in one of our periodicals. I have not scrupled, in the present volume, to avail myself freely of what I have written.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IN revising this volume for a second edition, I have refrained from any material alteration. A few verbal changes have been made, and some notes added in different places, chiefly in the way of quotation from writers of note, such as that in p. 68 from Dr. Owen respecting Christ's intercession.

Objections have been taken to some expressions in my preface, as if I had misstated the position and arguments of Post-Millennialists. I am not persuaded that I have done so. I did not mean to assert that they have gone beyond a "may be" in their *conclusions*; or that they have not come to a "must be" in regard to their *system*. Nor did I mean to suggest that they did not think their position stable, or their arguments conclusive. I merely maintained, and do still maintain, that in order to reach this conclusiveness and certainty, they have to call in the aid of general systems and inferences from systems, and that it is by means of these that they raise their "may be" into a "must be."

Take, as an example, the twentieth chapter of the Revelation. I have no doubt that Post-Millennialists have come to the conclusion, that the prediction there *must* refer to a spiritual, and not to a literal resurrection. But how did they reach this inference? Was it by the simple examination of the text and context? No. The examination of these brings them only to this, that the passage *admits* of a figurative interpretation. In order to demonstrate that the words cannot be understood literally, general conclusions from systems and doctrines are brought to bear upon them; so that the "must be" is not educed from the language itself, but from other sources entirely, which are made use of in order to make the prophet speak in a more decided (not to say a different) tone than he seems to do of his own accord.

Or take the prediction of Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory." The words, in their natural sense, distinctly point to the resurrection; and the Apostle Paul quotes

them in this sense. So that we have two things determining the literality of the promise,—first, the words themselves,—and secondly, an apostle's interpretation of them. But, then, if this be admitted, the Pre-Millennial advent and resurrection must be admitted too. In order, therefore, to avoid this, a figurative meaning is sought for these words; and it is maintained that the passage *may* point to a figurative resurrection. Here, again, it is plain that the natural sense of the passage is the literal one; but the attempt is made to show that it may admit of a figurative one; and then when this "may be" has been proved, it is elevated into a "must be" by means of inferential considerations.

Or take the prediction of Daniel 12:2, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This seems very plainly to refer to the resurrection of the body, like the previous passage from Isaiah. The words themselves are so explicit, that it is difficult to fasten another meaning upon them. A figurative meaning, however, has been found for them. But, then, all that can be said is, that such *may be* the meaning of the words. In order to arrive at the "must be," various collateral inferences, apart from the passage itself, must be made to bear upon them. And is not this just saying, that, but for the danger of Pre-Millennialism, the literal meaning of the prophecy ought to have been adhered to?

Or, lastly, take the expression in the fifth chapter of Revelation, "We shall reign on the earth" [Rev. 5:10]. Post-Millennialists think the figurative meaning of these words the only true one. But the question is, How did they arrive at their "must be" here? Not from the words themselves; for the utmost that can be said of them is, that they may admit of a figurative sense. The "must be" is derived from other quarters, and is the result of general conclusions from systems and doctrines.

But can this be called a safe and warrantable procedure? Are we not to take the words of Scripture just as we do the words of our Confession of Faith, in their *natural sense*? And is it not wrong to bring in our own inferential difficulties as a reason for preferring the *non-natural* sense? Why should we not do with the words of God just as we do with the words of man?¹¹

KELSO, *December* 1847

¹¹ In using the term *Millennarian*, as descriptive of the opinions of those who hold the literal advent and reign, I do not mean to cast reflections upon our opponents, as if they did not believe in a millennium. I merely use the word in the sense in which it has been almost universally used for the last half century, and in which the Fathers used *Chiliasm*. Indeed, both of these words seem to have been originally terms of reproach, (like Methodism,) given by their adversaries, and afterwards finding their way into general use.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

I FEEL glad at being able, through means of this third edition, to renew the testimony of past years, to the prophetic truths contended for in this volume. Each year seems to add fresh confirmation to them, and to bring out more fully the deep Scriptural foundations on which Pre-Millennialism rests.

KELSO, *February* 1860.

I LOVE the literalities of Scripture, and believe that the literal view of Scripture history and promises is truly spiritual; for what is meant by “spiritual,” if not that which is according to the Spirit of God and revealed by the Spirit in the Word? It is not only Moses and the prophets who declare the future of Israel restored and converted, but our blessed Lord himself came as the minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made of God unto the fathers. He predicted the day when the whole nation will welcome Him. The Apostle Paul teaches emphatically, and in organic connection with the doctrines of the gospel, that all Israel shall be saved; and in no book of the New Testament is so essentially Jewish as the Gospel of John, in which Israel is distinguished from the children of God scattered abroad as that *nation* for which Jesus should die, and in which, at the foot of the cross, we are reminded that Israel shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.

And why should it be thought a strange thing that Israel’s history will be consummated by a direct interference of God, “the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior”? Was not Israel’s history miraculous from the very beginning?

If any of you know the Hebrew of Isaiah 62:6-7, you will see at once the true rendering: “I have set watchmen *over* thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night. *Ye that are the Lord’s remembrancers*, keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Oh, my dear brethren, into whose hearts I trust God is pouring a scriptural love for Israel, what an honor is it for us, worms of the dust, to be made watchmen by God over the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and to be made the Lord’s remembrancers, to call His own promises to His mind, that He would fulfill them, and make Jerusalem a blessing to the whole world! Verse one of Isaiah 62 is supposed to be the language of the Lord Himself—our glorious Advocate with the Father. Oh, what an example does He set us of unwearied intercession. Verse two showeth the great effect which the conversion of Israel will have on the Gentile world. Verse three shows how converted Israel will be a glorious diadem in God’s hand, held out to show forth His praise. Verse four shows that it is *literal Israel* that is spoken of, for there is a sweet promise to *their land*.¹¹

Robert Murray M’Cheyne

¹² Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne*, pp. 196-197, 291-292.