

**"THE GLORY OF JERUSALEM:
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"**

from

*Plain Sermons
On Subjects
Practical and Prophetic*

by Alexander McCaul

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:1-3.

THAT the Jewish people once occupied the most glorious position ever vouchsafed to a nation can be denied by no one who believes the Bible. For however they may have been surpassed by others in extent of conquest, or progress in art and science, theirs is the glory of being the greatest benefactors whom mankind has ever seen. From them has been derived all the knowledge of God that the world possesses, and all those blessings which the word of God can bestow. Other nations may have taught us to form the taste, or to cultivate and strengthen the intellect; but to the Jews we are indebted for the art of living in holiness and dying in peace. The wisest of the heathen can offer nothing but conjecture as to our hope beyond the grave. If we desire a promise on which to rest in the last great conflict of nature, it must be supplied from the treasures of Jewish prophets and apostles. They were once the sole depositories of Divine truth, and the only instrument for its diffusion.

The contemplation of privileges so high and holy leads us to look with astonishment upon the melancholy reverse displayed in the present position of that once favoured people, and to ask whether those privileges have been taken from them forever? Whether, for the time to come, the Jews are to be dependent for instruction upon the Gentiles, or are destined to appear once more in their ancient character, and again prove a blessing to the world? The prophet in the text furnishes the reply, and tells us that the will and purpose of Israel's God is to make them a universal blessing; that He will arise and have mercy upon Zion, and that the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

But before we can enter upon the consideration of the blessings here promised to the Jewish people, and through them to the world, it is necessary—

I. To prove that it is of the future destinies of the Jewish people that the prophet is speaking. And this is necessary, not because of any obscurity in the prophetic announcement, or any ambiguity in the words, but because of a certain perverse ingenuity which has got possession of Gentile Christians, and prevents them from receiving with humility and reverence the simple sense of the Divine revelation. Some say that the Zion here addressed is the church of Rome; others affirm, on the contrary, that the aggregate of the Reformed churches is the subject of the prophecy; whilst a third party declares that it is the church universal that is here spoken of. All however agree in excluding those who seem to be intended, and in determining that, to whomsoever it may refer, it does not belong to the people among whom it was delivered, to whom

for centuries the knowledge of it was limited, and through whose fidelity the original has been preserved.

In the preceding and following context Zion is addressed by name, and the captive children of Israel hope that Zion still means what it did when Isaiah wrote, and that therefore the prophet announces a removal of God's anger from the nation and a restoration of their holy city. This and similar predictions have been their only comfort in their long and dreary exile; but of this consolation Christians endeavour to deprive them, assuring them that their faith in the plain and obvious import of the Divine promises is mistaken; that the curses of the law are their only portion, but that the blessings necessarily belong to others. The champion of Romanism points to the 12th verse, which says, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted;" and says, See how the churches and kingdoms of the Arians, the Nestorians, and all other ancient heretics, have passed away; how the powers of Calvinism and Lutheranism are gradually declining; but how the faith and dominion of the Roman church stands immovable, and is extending in the East and in the West.¹ Consider the prophetic words, "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet;" and, behold, how marvellously they have been fulfilled by the kings who rebelled against the sovereign pontiff, and were afterwards compelled to prostrate themselves to kiss his feet, and sue for mercy."

The Protestant, on the contrary, avoiding the promises of glory and professing horror at the gross conceits of the Papists,² looks at a few passages which speak of an afflicted and forsaken being, such as the 15th verse: "Whereas thou hast been forsaken, and hated that no man went through thee," [and] points to the churches of the Waldenses, and the Bohemian brethren, and says, See how the prophetic words have been accomplished in the sudden and unexpected glorification of

1 Cornelius à Lapide, on Isaiah lx. 12, thus writes :Ð ^aPari modo Ecclesiñ et regna Arrianorum, Gothorum, Wandalorum, Nestorianorum, Eutychnianorum, Iconoclastarum, Monothelitarum, aliorumque hñ reticornm subversa sunt, ut hodie sensim Lutheranismi et Calvinismi regnum subvertitur. Ecclesiñ vero Romanñ ^bdes et regnum stat et propagatur per Indos Orientis et Occidentis: stat, inquam, a Christi adventu per annos 1600, stabitque usque ad ejus reditum in ^cne mundi.^o

Again, on verse 14, on the words, ^aEt adorabunt vestigia pedum tuorum," he says: ^aQuasi ad pedes tuos supplices se inclinantes, imo terram quam calcaris, pedumque tuorum vestigia exosculantes. Patet hoc impleri in Romano pontifice, qui est caput Ecclesiñ. Frustra ergo indignantur hñ retici ad oscula pedum Papñ, cum ea prñ dixerit et promiserit Isaias. Ita reges Visigothorum, Francorum, Anglorum, Normannorum, Longobardorum, Germanorum, et aliarum gentium, qui sñ pius vexarunt Ecclesiam et Pontificem, Romam venerunt, ut ibi adorarent vestigia pedum ejus qui se servum servorum Dei vocat, cumque sit caput, pedum sibi nomen assumpsit, humillimorum scilicet servum se professus.^o

2 Calvin is quite shocked at these interpretations of the Romanists. ^aSed hic utuntur pulcherrimo colore: dicunt enim Ecclesiñ dignitatem non indecenter hac magnificentia sustineri. Et habent ex sua secta quosdam ita impudentes, ut audeant palam jactare, sic demum adimpleri vaticinia illa quibus splendorem regni Christi describunt veteres prophetñ ubi regius ille apparatus in ordine sacerdotali visitur. Non frustra, inquiunt, hñ c Deus Ecclesiñ suñ promisit. *Veniant reges, adorabunt in conspectu tuo, tibi afferent munera.* Consurge, consurge, induere fortitudine tua Sion, induere vestimentis gloriñ tuñ Jerusalem. Omnes de Saba venient, aurum et thus deferentes, et laudem Domino annunciantes. Omne pecus Cedar congregabitur tibi."Ð *Institut.* lib. iv. c. 5. § 17.

the forsaken church, effected by the Reformation.³

The sober-minded reader of the Bible turns away with equal disgust from both. He denies, on the one hand, that the kingdoms protesting against Roman idolatry have perished; or that any one of the nations that despised Roman superstition has bowed itself at the feet of the pontiff; and, on the other, that either the Waldensian or Bohemian church, or any other of the Reformation, has been glorified as the prophet here describes. He finds no warrant, either in the Old Testament or the New, for interpreting Zion or Jerusalem of Romanist or Reformed churches; and, seeing that it is impossible to carry through the interpretation of the whole chapter, when applied to either of the contending parties, he justly concludes that it applies to neither, and deplores the state of mind which could lead persons calling themselves Christians thus to do violence to the word of God.

A third opinion is, that the prophet is speaking of the Christian church generally, and here announces its ultimate glory when all nations shall be converted to it. But this interpretation, though followed by the multitude, is quite as difficult to maintain throughout the chapter as either of the preceding. It is easy to say that Zion spiritually means the church, and some perhaps might agree with certain of the Fathers in thinking that camels and dromedaries aptly symbolize proud rich men; but who they are who are typified by the flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth, or what is the spiritual signification of the ships of Tarshish, does not seem so easy to determine.

There is, however, one insuperable objection to the application of this prophecy to the church at all. The church is the bride of Christ, and tenderly beloved, as we are told by the Apostle; and therefore could never have been "smitten in God's wrath," as stated in verse 12; or "forsaken and hated so that no man went through her," as asserted in verse 15. Neither the church of Rome, nor any of the Reformed churches, has been reduced to such extreme humiliation as is here described. But to apply such language to the church universal is plainly impossible. Christ promised to be with his church forever, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against her; how then can it be said that she has been forsaken and hated? Writers of every party insist upon diffusiveness through all nations as one of the notes of the true church: if so, how can she be compared to a city, not only without inhabitants, but so utterly desolated as that no man should pass through it?

These two verses prove beyond all controversy that it is not the universal church that is here intended. All these difficulties vanish when we take the prophecy in its obvious sense, and understand the prophecy of Jerusalem and her children. The description given in the preceding chapters of Jacob's sins, so inapplicable to the spiritual Israel, exactly agrees with the state of the Jewish people for many centuries. Their complaint, in chap. 59:10, "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night,"

3 ^aSed multo certius et clarius veriusque Ecclesia purior conservata in reliquiis Waldensium ac Bohemorum fratrum circa initia Reformationis: quñ sibi non poterant secundum rationes humanas promittere tantam mutationem rerum, quantam orbis vidit cum instaurata Religione Ergo *afflicta hñ c, exosa*, quamque nemo *transibat*, dum in remotis desertisque ac incultis locis a commercio hominum remotis se sustinebat, evasit Ἰσραὴλ materia *καυχήματος* gloriationis et gaudii ñ terni; in magnam erupit multitudinem per Regna et Respublicas diffusam; causam suam feliciter vindicavit; multos produxit excellentes scientia ac pietate viros; regesque ac principes nacta est defensores ac patronos." *Œ Vitringa in Ies. lx. 15.*

accurately answers to the prediction of Moses, "The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart, and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness," (Deut. 28:28, 29), and with the facts of the case. And of the literal Jerusalem it is exactly true that she has been smitten in God's wrath, and that she has been forsaken and hated so that no man went through her. The titles in verse 13, "The place of my sanctuary," and "the place of my feet," also point to the literal Jerusalem, but are by no means suited to the dignity of the bride of Christ. Jerusalem was the place chosen by the Lord for his sanctuary, and for the ark which is called his footstool: as Jeremiah says, "How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger" (Lam. 2:1). And God, by the mouth of Ezekiel, calls it "The place of the soles of my feet" (Ezek. 43:7).

The distinction made between the Gentiles and the subject of the prophecy, as intimated in verse 3, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light;" and again, verse 5, "The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee," indicates with equal clearness that it is of Jerusalem and her children that the prophet speaks, for they are the only people either in the Old Testament or the New, distinguished from the Gentiles. St. Paul marks the distinction as plainly and as forcibly as any writer of the Old Testament. Of the unbelieving Jews he says, "Who are Israelites" (Rom. 9:4). "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (10:1). But to the churches gathered from among other nations he says, "I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I magnify mine office" (11:14). "Why compel thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews" (Gal. 2:14). By Gentiles he means those who are not Jews, whether believers or not; and therefore if we follow the usage either of the prophets or the apostles, we must infer that the subject of the prophecy, as distinguished from the Gentiles, can be none other than the church or people of Israel, or the literal Jerusalem and her children.

Indeed it would be easy to go through the entire chapter, and show that on this view a consistent interpretation can be given of the whole, without either difficulty or contradiction. But the decision of an inspired apostle has made this unnecessary. St. Paul, speaking by the Holy Ghost, has explained the context, the last two verses of the fifty-ninth chapter, from which this sixtieth chapter cannot be separated, of the future conversion of the Jewish people, has thereby determined both the subject of the prophecy and the time of the fulfilment, and made it impossible for those who have any respect for inspiration to interpret it either of the Romanist, or the Reformed, or of the universal church; or indeed of anything else than the future conversion of the Jewish people. St. Paul, wishing to save the church of Rome from an arrogant assumption of dignity, belonging only to the Jewish people, says, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:25, 26). This decision of the Apostle settles the interpretation forever. To attempt to explain it of anything else is to say that the Apostle did not understand the prophet, and was, consequently, not inspired; a flight of impiety which, it is to be hoped, all lovers of the Bible will leave to Romanists and Neologians. But whatever men in their presumption may do or leave undone, St. Paul's interpretation makes it certain that this sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, and its context, refers to the future conversion and glory of the Jewish people.

II. Having thus ascertained the subject of the prophecy, we may now proceed to consider the blessings which it announces. According to St. Paul it predicts, in the first place, the deliverance

of the Jewish people from the darkness of error. When the prophet says, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion," and then calls upon Jerusalem to "arise and shine" because her light is come; the very least that we can infer from such language is, that the Jews shall be brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Christ is not only the light of the world, but its only light; and if Jerusalem is yet to shine before the nations, it must be with the light which He supplies. Before, therefore, she can obey the prophetic command, the eyes of her understanding must first be enlightened by the Spirit of God. The command is, however, itself an assurance of Divine illumination, just as the command to the dead man at the gate of Nain to "arise" was accompanied by a restoration unto life.

The time is fast approaching, when not merely a remnant, according to the election of grace, but the whole Jewish nation shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The unbelief of eighteen centuries shall be overcome, the enmity of the human heart subdued, and the ancient prejudices removed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The prophesying unto the dry bones shall in due time accomplish the work for which it was appointed, and the most incredulous of Gentiles be compelled to acknowledge that it has not been in vain.

But though we thus believe that the conversion of the whole Jewish nation is promised in the text and context, we cannot think that it is merely of a spiritual coming of Christ that the prophet is speaking. The promise, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion," if interpreted as the New Testament interprets the similar passage in Zech. 9:9, "Thy King comes unto thee" (and how else can a believer in the New Testament think of interpreting it), plainly implies a personal return of the Saviour to that city where He was crucified. And the prophetic words, "The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee;" and again, "His glory shall be seen upon thee," necessarily imply a visible manifestation of the Divine glory, if we are to understand the words in that sense in which they are used throughout the inspired volume.

Thus, in Exod. 16:10, it is said, "And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud:" and, again, 1 Kings 8:11, "The priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house." In these and many similar passages a visible display of glory is manifestly intended: and thus also in the New Testament, when it is said, Luke 2:9, "The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them," it is evidently meant that a bright display of heavenly light astonished and terrified the shepherds: and why the same words should in this sixtieth chapter of Isaiah not mean the same thing, I know not. To say that in the more glorious dispensation of the new covenant it is unworthy of the Deity to do that which he was pleased to do before his incarnation, both in the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, seems a rash and unguarded, if not a presumptuous and infidel, assertion, and one that has been advanced as equally powerful for the overthrow of the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement. Whatever it has pleased God to do already, it cannot be unworthy of Him to do again; and whatever it is unworthy of Him to do now, He has never done at all. But what is worthy or unworthy of the Divine Being, no humble Christian will dare to discuss farther than he finds a warrant in the revelation of the Divine will.

The words here used unquestionably intimate a visible display of the Divine glory; and Scripture (as has been shown already) promises in many places that Jerusalem is to be signally glorified by the manifestation of the Divine presence. In Paradise God revealed himself unto man. Before the giving of the law holy men of old were honoured with visits of their Creator: under the law

He dwelt between the Cherubim. At the beginning of the Gospel dispensation, "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And is there then presumption in hoping that the earnest desire of reconciled sinners to have in the midst of them their Saviour and their God shall yet be realized? Shall the glorified church of Christ alone be deprived of that blessed privilege vouchsafed in every former dispensation? No, brethren; the word of prophecy stands sure. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together;" and Jerusalem shall be the honoured place of his manifestation, "for when the Lord shall build up Zion, then shall he appear in his glory" (Ps. 102:16): or as the text says, "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee!"

Another blessing which these words announce is the restoration of Jerusalem and of the Jews to their own land. If Jerusalem is again to be the dwelling place of the Divine glory, it is plain that it must be delivered from its present state of humiliation and captivity: and so the prophet promises, ver. 9, "that the sons of strangers shall build up her walls;" and verse 13, that "the glory of Lebanon shall come unto her: the fir tree, and the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify God's sanctuary." Her children also are to be gathered from their dispersion. "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy one of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." The same truth is implied in our Lord's words, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" from whence it seems to follow, that when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, Jerusalem shall be trodden down no longer. For national unbelief the people were dispersed, and by means of national repentance and faith they shall be restored. "Theirs are the promises;" and when therefore the condition is fulfilled, the accomplishment will not be wanting.

But the greatest of all the blessings is, that the glory of Jerusalem and the conversion and restoration of the Jewish people is to be the means of enlightening the world. "For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Some persons, however, say that this is utterly impossible; for that the Jews are to be the last of the nations converted: and, in support of this assertion they urge the words of St. Paul, that "Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." Now it would be very easy to show, that, whatever fulness may mean, it cannot signify the totality, nor even the majority of the heathen; and yet without this it is impossible to prove that all other nations are to be converted before the Jews.

But every discussion of the kind is rendered unnecessary by a preceding declaration of the Apostle, in which he says that the restoration of the Jews to the favor of God is to be the means of giving spiritual life to the world. "If the casting away of them," says he in Rom. 11:15, be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead." This plain declaration proves that it is impossible that the Jews should be the last of the nations converted. On such a supposition the Apostle's assertion must have been the very reverse; he must have said, "The receiving of the Gentiles shall be as life from the dead to the Jews." When he says that the receiving of the Jews shall be as life from the dead to the world, then he necessarily implies, that, until the receiving of the Jews, the world shall remain in a state of death; that is, ignorant of God, and without hope. The Apostle therefore confirms the announcement of the

prophet. The latter says, that until the Lord arise upon Zion, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. The former teaches the same doctrine, but uses a stronger figure, by representing the world as continuing in a state of death until the receiving of the Jewish people.

It may be asked, however, how the assertion, that darkness shall cover the earth, can be reconciled with the fact that the Gospel light has now been shining for so many centuries, or with the astonishing efforts now made for the propagation of the Gospel. With regard to the latter, I must confess my ignorance of any great or vigorous efforts made by any church for the conversion of either Jew or Gentile. Sums of money are raised by the multiplication of small and trifling subscriptions, but I behold nothing like great or vigorous exertion, still less like earnest and unreserved devotedness. Many there are who throw mites into the Lord's treasury, whose means, if they were really in earnest, would enable them to bear all the expenses of the missionary societies which they profess to support; to print Bibles, send forth armies of missionaries, and build schools and churches at their pleasure.

The Protestant churches at large, however, show no symptom of hearty desire for the conversion of the world. It is almost impossible to procure educated missionaries. Men of experience, of learning, and of character in the church, notoriously treat the missionary office as beneath their dignity, and think it sufficient to send forth those whom, however devoted, they consider as having less pretensions than themselves. It is a fact, that since the beginning of the great missionary efforts in this country, the battles of the Lord in heathen lands have been chiefly fought by foreign auxiliaries. A patriot of antiquity reprov'd his countrymen for leaving the defence of their country to foreign hands; what would he, if a Christian, have said to Christians, who, with an apathy still more culpable, refuse to go forth themselves to the help of the Lord against the mighty?

To me it seems that from such a spirit and such a method of conducting missionary operation, the conversion of the world is not to be expected. And hence, notwithstanding the exertions which form the theme of many an eulogy, darkness still covers the earth, and gross darkness the people; or to use the words of a popular writer, "Not only did gross darkness envelope both the world, and the land of Israel, when Christ came in the flesh; but darkness, equally intense, has covered the visible Christian church, as well as the Mohammedan and Pagan nations; and we have intimations of a still more gloomy scene, just before the Lord shall arise in his meridian brightness, most gloriously to irradiate mankind with his beams of truth and righteousness."⁴

In truth the Bible nowhere promises universal conversion to the preaching of the Gospel. Far from ascribing the introduction of the Millennial glory to the gradual diffusion of Christian knowledge and true piety, it announces that the last days are to be the worst—that "perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1): that "there shall come scoffers walking in their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming" (2 Pet. 3:3, 4): yea, that an almost universal apostasy is to precede the coming of Christ (Rev. 13); or, as the prophet says, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." But when Satan shall appear almost to triumph, the Lord will arise, and have mercy upon Zion. The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from iniquity in Jacob. He shall appear for the destruction of Antichrist, and the deliverance of his people at Jerusalem, as we are told in the 66th chapter of this prophet, when he says, "Behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by sword will the

4 Rev. Thos. Scott, Comment, in loc.

Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.”⁵

Those that escape the dreadful overthrow shall be sent “unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow; to Tubal and Javan, and the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory: and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” The wondrous tidings will no longer leave any room for unbelief. The nations will hasten to bring back the still scattered sons of Israel, and say, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23). And thus the renewed glory of Jerusalem shall be the means of calling all nations to the knowledge of the truth. “The Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.”

How inexpressibly important to the world is then the restoration of the Jewish people! How incomprehensible the ways of God! Stiff-necked and rebellious as Moses called his people; idolatrous and wicked as the prophets describe them to be; obstinate and unbelieving as we behold them, they have been chosen of God as the instruments of his mercy and the heralds of his salvation; and with their destinies is indissolubly bound up the happiness of the human race.

With what respect and pity, then, should we now behold them, and with what earnestness should we pray and labour for their restoration to the Divine favour. The church’s duty is to go and teach all nations; and far from circumscribing efforts for the conversion of the heathen, I would desire to see them multiplied a hundred-fold. But still, with the Scripture before me, I cannot but believe that the Jews have the first claim upon the church’s efforts, not only because of past benefits conferred, or because God, by placing them in the very bosom of the Christian church, has especially commended them to her care; but because the great object of all the Church’s prayers and labours, the conversion of the world and the happiness of mankind, cannot be attained until the Lord arise in Zion, and his glory be seen upon her. Until then darkness must cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The faithful labourer among the heathen will always have souls for his hire. But nothing else than the receiving of the Jews can be as life from the dead to the world.

5 Compare also Joel iii. and Zech. xiv.