

The Signs of the Times

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Contrary to general opinions on the philosophy of current history is the biblical revelation that the world is not coming to the end of an age but is moving toward the convergence of three ages. Since from the divine viewpoint there are three divisions of humanity (1 Cor 10:32), there are three separate programs being consummated on the earth. For convenience we shall refer to them according to their relationship to the threefold classification of men: Gentilic, Judaic, and Ecclesiastic.

I

The beginning, course, and end of the Gentilic program in the earth is contained largely in two major passages, both of which are in Daniel, chapter 2 and chapter 7. Our purpose is not to prove that our interpretation of these chapters is the true interpretation, but simply to review it for the purpose of relating ourselves in time to the end of this program.

It will be recalled that chapter 2 of Daniel records Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the inability of the wise men to reproduce it, and Daniel's success in recalling the forgotten dream and in giving the interpretation thereof. In this dream, the Babylonian king saw a huge image of a man, whose head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs brass, legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. This image was smitten and ground to powder by a stone cut out without hands, whereupon the wind blew the particles of the image away, and the stone grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

The interpretation, given by Daniel, was that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, and that following him there should arise another kingdom inferior to his own. This second kingdom was to be followed by a third of brass and a fourth of iron. Historically these were the Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empires respectively. This succession is confirmed in the beast-vision of Daniel in chapter 7. Perhaps many will think that the days of the Roman Empire passed with the invasions of the Goths and Vandals in the fifth century, but from many biblical considerations, there is to be a revival of the Roman Empire. Let us note carefully this fact as predicted by Daniel. The first thing to notice is that there were ten toes on the image of Daniel 2, and ten horns on the fourth beast of Daniel 7. The toes and horns refer to the same thing. That these represent ten kings is seen in Daniel 2:44 where we read, "in the days of those kings." This means that the Roman Empire will be revived under the form of a ten-power confederacy. From this point, the farthest seen by Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel takes us on to see that one of these kings will displace three of the ten and assume leadership of the whole (Dan 7:8). Now, it should be noted that according to Dan 2:44 the God of Heaven will set up His kingdom, typified by the smiting stone, by first reducing all human sovereignty to subjection (the image was ground to powder) and abolishing all human rule (the dust blown away by the wind). From Dan 7:11, 13, 14 it is seen that this is directed against the "little horn" dictator of the revived Roman Empire.

Contrary to the exposition of many of the church's learned men during recent centuries, it is the contention of the premillennialist that there never was a time in Roman history when the above-mentioned conditions prevailed, nor has the God of Heaven yet set up His kingdom on the earth. The fulfillment of the remainder of Daniel's prediction is still in the future. If it be

objected that it is a very strained method of interpretation that takes such a point of view, declaring that

an Empire long gone the way of all ancient kingdoms and empires is to be revived after 1500 years of decadence is ridiculous because the rest of the events foretold have come to pass in an unbroken series of events, let it be said that God's ways are not man's ways, and that He for His own good pleasure chose to leave hidden in olden times a whole age that has already lasted about 1900 years. We shall see later, how this fact dovetails with the revealed outline of the other programs.

Since the purpose of this paper is to relate the divine program to the current events of history, we now address ourselves to the question of whether or not there is any indication of the predicted revival of the Roman Empire. A hundred years ago the question would never have come up. Fifty years ago it could have been a bare possibility, but only a pipe dream of a few fanatics. Today it is the avowed purpose of Italy's prime-minister-dictator, and it is on the verge of becoming the ideology of half of Europe. Forces are at work today that are driving the nations comprising the geographical extent of the old Roman Empire into ever closer alignment. There is a stirring around the Mediterranean that presages the time when that Sea hitherto open to the nations of the world will once more be only a Roman Lake. The signs of the times unquestionably point to the rise of Italy as a leading world power, not in herself alone, but as the head of a confederacy of nations. With such a set-up, it is quite easy to believe that one man could seize directorship of the whole and rule alone.

The swift movements of our time are a feature of the day. The movements of centuries are now condensed into decades. While it might take considerable time to fully revive the Roman Empire in its final ten-power form, it should be enough for us that at least this trend in history is now evident to warn us that the time is fast approaching when the God of Heaven will set up His kingdom on the ruins of all man-made empires. So far as the carrying forward of this Gentile program in the world is concerned, history has been merely marking time for 1500 years. The Holy Roman Empire added nothing by way of fulfillment, nor did the British Empire, which from the divine viewpoint never was a world empire. There have been only four world powers. We have seen three pass and the fourth one rise and fall. But it is coming back for a brief period, and history is about to move forward again in fulfillment of God's Gentile world program. If Christ's universal kingdom comes in the days of the revived ten-power form of the Roman Empire, and we see the time approaching, even here already, when a ten-power coalition in Europe headed by Italy is more than a bare possibility and even a likelihood, then we cannot be far away from the ushering in of Christ's kingdom.

II

The second great divine program in the world concerns the Jews. There have been several epochs in their long history. At least three of these have been periods of time that were of a stated length, and which were predicted many years before they began. For instance, the captivity in Egypt, foretold by God to Abraham in Gen 15:13, to last four hundred years; the captivity of Judah in Babylon, predicted by Jeremiah in Jer 25:11, 12, to last seventy years; and the "seventy weeks" of Daniel's prophecy (9:24-27). It is concerning this last period that we wish to speak.

Although various theories have been applied to determine the time involved in the "seventy weeks," there now is little doubt among the best expositors that the "week" in question is a period of seven years. This is evident from data in Daniel alone, apart from other references in

Scripture, as a comparison of 9:27 with 12:7 would suggest. This is a period of 490 years. They are decreed upon the holy city and the people of Israel for a six-fold purpose: (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, (6) to anoint the

Most Holy Place. The beginning of the period is clearly marked: it is “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (9:24). There is only one commandment recorded in the Bible that gives such an order, and that is the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C., which is mentioned in Neh 2:5–8. This Jewish Epoch begins at that time. It runs for 69 “weeks” or 483 consecutive years until the cutting off of Messiah (Dan 9:26). That would bring us to the year of Christ’s death. What about the remaining “week” of seven years?

It is about this seventieth “week” of Daniel that some of the most diverse and fantastic theories have been offered. It would be most natural to expect that it would follow right on after the cutting off of Messiah, but all theories that proceed on this assumption break down by failing to show how the events that followed that cutting off of Messiah fulfilled the purpose for which the 490 years were decreed, or how the events of the last week were fulfilled. None of the six things for which the 490 years were decreed were accomplished when Messiah was cut off at the end of 483 years. Clearly, there remains something to be done in order that these things might be fulfilled.

What does the passage say would happen after the cutting off of Messiah? It says “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (vs. 26). Note that it is not “the prince that shall come” that does the destroying, but “the people” of that prince. Most expositors place the fulfillment of this passage in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in 70 A.D. With this we agree, but, we ask, who is the prince? It is not Titus. Nothing is said about any prince at the time of the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. It is only said that “the people” do it. But they are the people of a “prince that shall come.” This prince never has come and is yet to come in the future. He is the little horn of Daniel 7 that displaced three of the ten horns on the fourth beast. This means that

“the prince that shall come” is the man who seizes dictatorial powers under the revived ten-power phase of the Roman Empire. Hence it is said “the *people* of the prince that shall come” would destroy the city and the sanctuary. It was Romans that destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D.. It will be a Roman who will fulfill what is said about the prince of that people. He is to make a covenant with Jewry. “And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week” (v. 27 R.V.). The “he” of verse 27 is quite evidently the coming prince of verse 26. He is to make a covenant with many, or the many, that is, the majority. We believe this covenant concerns the Jews. In a time that will have thrust the Semitic question far more into world importance than it yet is, this upstart political demagogue will make a covenant with world Jewry. No doubt it will involve a return to the land of Palestine and a guarantee of political, economic, and religious establishment. It is to be for “one week.” In keeping with the context this “week” must be a period of seven years. It is the seventieth week belonging to the other sixty-nine weeks already accounted for. Just why we push this seventieth week into the future and separate it from the other sixty-nine by a period of time that has already mounted to about 1900 years will become clearer as we move on in the treatment of our theme. It seems to me that it ought to be granted that such a method of handling these weeks is not an impossible interpretation of the passage under consideration, nor is it any more arbitrary than our Lord was when in reading from Isaiah 60 in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4) he stopped abruptly (where there is but a comma in our A.V. Bible) and said that so much as He had read was then fulfilled, the implication being that

what He left unread was not then fulfilled. Here, then, is the situation at the end of the Jewish period we are considering. A dominant political figure, "the prince that shall come," has arisen on the horizon in a time when the Semitic question is a world issue. We assume that it will be an issue, else why should this prince make a covenant with Jewry, if

there is nothing about which to make a covenant? This covenant is a seven-year plan. Hopes will be high among the Jews for a period of peace and prosperity. They will begin to breathe more easily after a period of world-wide anti-Semitic action such as we are seeing now. But all the hopes of this unfortunate people will shortly be dashed to the ground. In a Hitleristic mood of treachery this covenant-maker will decide that it will be to his advantage to break off the favorable relations he had established with the Jews. Perhaps this people had been prospering too greatly for the past three years. Perhaps an ally of his at the other pole of some political axis of the time is bringing pressure upon the erstwhile champion of the Jews. At any rate, in the middle of the "week," after the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period, the very man who had made the covenant will abrogate it. It will thenceforth be but another "scrap of paper." In an outburst of demoniacal hatred against the Jews he will invade Palestine, desecrate the temple they had established, and precipitate upon this defenseless people the most terrible persecution of their history.

So far does Daniel take us. Revelation supplies the details of that last awful period of three and one-half years, at the end of which He who was "cut off" at His first coming will come again to His ancient people, deliver them from their enemies and establish them in the land, fulfilling all their ancient covenants and making them the head of the nations. Only then, after that final seven-year period has run its course will the seventy weeks be fulfilled. Only then will the purpose for which they were decreed upon Israel and upon the Holy City be accomplished. Then will the Jewish age we are considering come to its close.

So much for the problem of interpretation. We now turn our attention to the problem of finding, if any, some relation between the divinely predicted course of events and the happenings of our own time. It is right here that is found the strongest confirmation of the assertion that we are approaching the time of the Second Coming of Christ. There is an anti-Semitic ferment in the world today unparalleled in history not only in its extent but in its nature. It is true that past centuries have witnessed many terrible persecutions of the Jews. Ever since they were driven into world-wide dispersion, true to the divine prediction (Lev 26:27-33; Jer 29:18), they have been a trouble to the nations. Beaten from pillar to post, shaken from the frying pan into the fire, they have never found a permanently peaceful abode anywhere in the world. Persecuted in one land they have fled to another, only to be driven out thence again after a brief respite. It has been a most fortunate thing in the past that there always was some country willing to receive them. But today they are faced with the danger that no country may receive them. They are not wanted anywhere. The seeds of anti-Semitism are being sown broadcast over the world so rapidly and effectively that those countries disposed today to receive the Jews may next year refuse them. Where will this people find a haven of refuge? That is the burning question of the hour. It will be a hotter question in the coming years. Where will they go? Who will champion their cause? It is all one grand movement to force the Jews back to Palestine. That is where they belong. That is where they will be, ultimately. God is allowing the modern surge of anti-Semitism to prepare His people to be willing to leave their homes in the nations and go back to Palestine. In his time, the coming prince will be allowed momentarily to champion the Jews in order that political barriers to the return of Palestine to the Jews may be removed. When that is accomplished, the whole world will suddenly be thrown into the birth pangs of the new age. Israel will receive the last

strokes of their age-long punishment, the nations will be shaken, and into the very heart of the chaos the Son of Man will come to reduce out of it His own order, His kingdom, when the golden age of man will finally have come to earth.

Within the memory of many living men there was a time

when it was the wildest theorizing to predict on the basis of Bible prophecies that the Jews would go back to Palestine. The results of the World War awakened students of the Bible to see its possibility, and now, since the rise of the Nazi philosophy in Germany and the ferment of anti-Semitism among the nations fostered by it, it is becoming increasingly evident that the return of the Jews to Palestine is the only ultimate solution of the problem.

Here is how the matter stands. Once the seventieth week of Daniel begins to run its course it cannot be more than seven years until the return of Christ to earth. If we are now living in a time which, so far as we can tell, is developing exactly the conditions that we conceive must precipitate the making of a covenant with the Jews by a great political leader, should we not give heed to the signs of the time and agree that the coming of the Lord is near? As we pointed out in the former section, the political events of our time are most significant on the bearing of the biblical prediction of the revival of the last world empire. In connection with the section now concluding we see the Jews being stirred up into national life, there is an internal drawing back to Palestine (many have gone, are going now), and an external forcing of them back. Surely it ought to be conceded by anyone who believes and studies the Bible that at least these are straws in the wind to show us which way it is blowing. Especially forceful should this be when for so many years there were no straws-indeed, even no wind, for, just as it has been in recent times that there has been any consistent effort in the secular field of history to develop a philosophy of history, so also it has been in recent times that there has been anything like an approach to a uniform biblical conception of prophecy.

III

It should have occurred to anyone who has read between the lines, that the two ages thus far treated might conceivably, from the standpoint of time required, have been fulfilled long ago. They have been kept from completion while a third

age runs its course, because their fulfillment cannot come as long as the third age is in process of fulfillment. This age I have termed the ecclesiastic or church age. It is the most interesting of the ages that have yet unfolded, and its results will continue throughout eternity to display the marvelous grace of God to the whole universe.

The present age was not a subject of prediction in the Old Testament. Hidden in the counsels of God from eternity, it was not His will to reveal anything about it until after the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth. The reason that God did not disclose His purpose in this age before Christ came was because He wanted to give the Jews a genuine offer of the fulfillment of all their covenants in the offer of the covenanted Kingdom by Jesus. It was when they rejected that offer that our Lord began to intimate that He had other plans. Now men may laugh at this and scoff at the postponement theory of Israel's covenants, but we have an exact parallel in Scripture of this principle. All the working out of God's plans in history are done in such a way as to have them implemented by the decisions of men themselves so that no man will ever be able to evade his own responsibility. When God led the people of Israel up to Kadesh Barnea with a view to entering Canaan at that point, He knew they would refuse to go in and possess the land. Yet there

was a real opportunity for them to go in. God's knowledge that they would not enter did not in any way detract from the freedom on their part they exercised in refusing to go in, and they bore the consequences of that refusal in the thirty-eight years of wilderness wandering. So in the parallel case of the rejection of Christ, God knew, when He sent His son, that He was to be rejected and die upon the Cross. It was necessary for the expiation of the sin of man that He should die. But that most necessary and central fact of the universe was in no wise put in jeopardy when from the human standpoint God made it contingent upon the rejection by Israel of a bona fide offer of the promised Kingdom on the part of the King Himself.

It is absolutely unbiblical to speak of the church, in the New Testament sense of the word, as existing before the death and resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Israel was a church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) only in the sense of a congregation. The New Testament meaning of church goes far beyond that ordinary meaning of the word to denote a body of people saved through the shed blood of Christ and united to Him by the Spirit (Eph 1:22, 23; 1 Cor 12:13). All saved people of all ages that have been saved at all, have been saved by the blood of Christ. That shed blood is the only divine cure for sin. But that does not necessitate putting all the saved of all ages on the same plane of privilege within the sphere of salvation. John the Baptist lived before the death of Christ and he spoke of himself as being the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29). It is a privilege of honor to be in a wedding party, but no guest, not even the friend of the bridegroom, is as highly privileged as the bride. The church is the bride of Christ, His body (Eph 1:22, 23). It is likened also to a building (Eph 2:19–22). Its formation began on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came not simply to dwell in each individual saved heart (Rom 8:9; 2 Tim 1:14), but to take all those individuals and unite them in one body (1 Cor 12:13). As in the development of a body or the erection of a building there comes a time when the structure is complete, so the church, begun on that Pentecostal Day, is continually growing throughout this age, an holy temple unto the Lord (Eph 2:21), until it reaches completion. When the last member has been added to the body, the last living stone placed in the building, and the whole is completed, the church will be raptured into the air to meet the Lord (1 Thess 4:15–18). The age relating to the church will then have been completed and the program relating to the completion of the Gentile and Jewish ages will move rapidly forward to completion. As has been intimated above, a period of seven years at least must elapse between the end of the ecclesiastic age and the other ages. That is the minimum; it may be longer, but we do not believe it will be much longer.

That it might be seen that God has a special program in force in this age, let us examine briefly a few passages of Scripture. In Matt 16:18 Jesus spoke of His church as being not then in existence. "I will build my church," He said. After the Day of Pentecost we find that the church was then in existence (Acts 5:11). Taken together with other Scripture we believe the Day of Pentecost was the birthday of the "church which is his body." The book of Ephesians gives us the highest teaching concerning this church. In 3:3–6 Paul speaks of a "mystery" made known to him "by revelation," a "mystery...which was not made known (in other generations) unto the sons of men as it hath now been revealed...to wit (or namely), that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (R.V.). This body is a new thing, "one new man" (2:15) created in Christ Jesus, particularly with reference to His death. The course of the church throughout this age is sketched in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, and its end is predicted in 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15 to be when the Lord comes into the air for His own and they go up to meet Him, the dead saints being raised incorruptible and the living being instantaneously changed. This Rapture of the church, as it is

called, is the blessed hope of the believer (Titus 2:13). It is his purifying hope (1 John 3:3). For it he is to be constantly waiting. It is represented in the New Testament as imminent, liable to come at any time (1 Thess 1:10).

The length of this age is nowhere revealed in Scripture, but the apostle Paul predicted the conditions that would obtain toward the end of the age. "The Spirit saith expressly," he said, "that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim 4:1) ...in the last days grievous times shall come (2 Tim 3:1) ...the time will come when they will not endure

the sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3)." Still more definite are the words in 2 Thess 2:3 where we read, "let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first." The use of the definite article fixes this apostasy as a very definite falling away. There have been many apostasies in the church, but one particularly evil one is predicted for the last days of this age. It is thought by many that the present defection called Modernism is the apostasy. If so, we are now in the last days of the church, and the coming of the Lord must be near.

IV

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established" (Deut 19:15). God has given three distinct lines of evidence that constitute three witnesses to the near approach of the predicted Coming of Christ. There is the sign of His coming in world governmental, political, economic, and social trends that is related to the consummation of the Gentilic program. There is the sign of national revival among the Jews, and a changed world attitude toward them that indicates that the Jewish program is moving forward to its completion. And there is the apostasy and other significant signs of the times in the church that point the honestly inquiring heart to the inescapable conclusion that the church age has nearly run its course. Inasmuch as the Scripture distinguishes these three programs it is important to understand the differences in the predictions concerning each, and to distinguish the characteristics of the ages themselves from the special characteristic of their respective ends.

There are several passages of Scripture that reveal the characteristics of each age. Let us consider the first or Gentilic program as discussed above. To Nebuchadnezzar, the first of the four world powers recognized by God, Daniel said, "Thou, O King, art king of kings, unto whom the God of Heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the

beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens hath He given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all" (2:36, 37). In other words, a world mandate was given to Nebuchadnezzar. This mandate was passed to each of the succeeding empires envisioned in the dream of the great Nebuchadnezzar, until it came to the fourth, or Roman Empire. Historically the Roman Empire has been the last world Empire. Every effort of men since the fall of Rome to establish a new world Empire has failed, because in God's plan the Roman Empire is the last. The completion of the Gentile world-empire program has been delayed by the coming in of the unannounced church age, but when the church age has run its course, the Gentile program in the world will be taken up again and will move to its completion. Hence we find that during the church age while the Gentilic program is on the side track, no nation is able to assume complete world dominance. So far as the Gentile nations are concerned, the characterizing thing about them at present is that condition of affairs spoken of by the Lord in Matt 24:6, 7 when He said, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars...for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." But when the time of the

end begins to draw near, when God's time comes for the resumption of the Gentile program, we can expect changes. We can expect to see movements in the world presaging the revival of the ancient Roman Empire, in the ten-power form, as indicated above. That there is seemingly at the present time a political trend in Europe in this direction has been noted. One further fact remains to be considered, by which we may be able to discern, in relation to the Gentile world program, the nearness of the end.

The ten toes of the image of Daniel 2 were part of iron and part of clay. The iron speaks of autocracy, authoritarian strength. The clay represents democracy, the weakness and self-indulgence of popular government. The iron in the toes runs back up through the legs, the clay belongs only to the toes. Just so, in the last form of the revived Roman powers there will be mingled elements of the strength of an autocracy that matches that of ancient Rome, and of the weakness of the democratic procedure, democracy being distinctly a modern achievement in national government and having no antecedents in past world Empires. We have exactly such a condition today with "strong-arm" men ruling tyrannically by popular consent, and with democracy and totalitarianism fighting for the right to be called the leading ideology. If there ever was a time when iron and clay has been mixed in government, it is now. Surely this constitutes a singular sign of the times, pointing in which direction we are going.

Coming now to the Jewish program, we find that beginning with the Babylonian exile, the Jews have ever been in a state of subjection to Gentile powers. This, of course, fits the picture drawn above. If the Gentile powers were world powers at all, it meant that they had power over the Jewish nation. This condition of affairs will continue until the Gentile program has run out. In Luke 21:24, the Lord, in speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem which was even then under the rule of a Roman Governor, said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." The phrase "times of the Gentiles" covers historically the period of time represented in the image dream of Nebuchadnezzar. It is the time of Gentile world dominion. It is because of this position of subserviency to the Gentiles that Israel is scattered over the world today. Three dispersions and three gatherings of Israel are recorded in the prophetic Scriptures (Gen 15:13-16; Jer 25:11, 12; Deut 28:62-65; 30:1-10). Two dispersions and two regatherings have been literally historically fulfilled (the bondage to Egypt, the captivity to Babylon). The third (world-wide) dispersion marks the present status of the Jews. We should expect then, a literal restoration in fulfillment of prophecy, just as was the case with the predicted regatherings in the past. That such will be the case is the expectation of the Scripture everywhere and is becoming more and more evident in the world today.

In His Olivet discourse the Lord gave a significant parable of a fig tree, by which He meant to teach that the national revival of Israel would take place in the future and would constitute a sign of the Coming of the Lord. No prediction of the Old Testament is more clear or more insistent than the regathering of Israel back to Palestine from among the nations whither God has driven them in judgment for their sin. Isa 11:12 and Jer 23:3 are typical of a long list of passages that could be cited on this theme. It is a mark of utter ignorance of Bible truth, to say nothing of downright disbelief, to refuse to believe in the future literal restoration of the Jews to the land of Palestine. What seemed a great act of faith to believe this a century ago is now current news in the newspaper. The Jews are beginning to return to Palestine. Surely in this fact we find advance proof of the coming glorious restoration which will take place when the Lord comes (Matt

24:31). Surely this is one of the most evident signs by which we can locate ourselves in the plan of God.

While the signs mentioned above in connection with the Gentilic and Judaic ages primarily have to do with the programs with which they are respectively concerned, they, by inference, and by reason of the evident preparation ahead of time for the resumption of these programs in the near future, constitute signs to the people of God in this age of the near coming of Christ. Strictly speaking, however, the Ecclesiastic age, like the others, has its own peculiar signs even as it has its own peculiar end. It should be said that the Lord's coming in relation to the Gentile and Jewish programs is not the same as His coming in relation to the church. The Second Coming of the Lord is properly concerned with Israel mainly, and the Second Coming proper is His coming to earth, at which time His feet will touch on Mt. Olivet from whence He left the earth after His first coming (Zech 14:3, 4). For

the nations, as explained in verses 2, 3, 12 of Zech 14, it will be a time of judgment, out of which some will enter the kingdom (Matt 25:31–46) which the Lord will then establish in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:16; Jer 23:3–8) made with Israel. But before this coming to the earth, the Lord will come into the air to catch up His church from the earth (1 Thess 4:13–18). Unless this distinction is kept in mind there can be no clear understanding of the prophetic program.

The Apostasy sign has been mentioned above as marking the end of the church age. Rather than finding a world converted when He comes, the Lord will return to a world that is preparing for the rule of the Man of Sin, and to a professing church deep in apostasy. The present apostasy is peculiar in its nature. Enemies of the truth there have always been, but outside the church; today they are within the church. Heresies there always have been, but never has heresy gone to such limits as the modern rationalism within the professing church, denying every essential of the holy faith. In a day of unprecedented enlightenment and unparalleled opportunities for knowing the truth we find blatant denial and wilful unbelief. In extent and nature the present apostasy may well qualify for the doubtful honor of fulfilling the predictions of the coming of *the* Apostasy.

Ancillary to these major biblical signs in each of these fields are minor signs, trends in various departments of life that corroborate and support the prognostications of the major determining signs. In the field of the world we find social injustice and economic heaping up of treasure, the few coming to dominate the many. James foretold this condition: "Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you.... ye have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers.... which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out" (5:1–8). In Jewry today we find an unparalleled interest in Jesus. Already we see the first scales of the blindness falling from their eyes. "For I

would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, ...that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentile be come in" (Rom 11:25). The "fulness of the Gentiles" is this church age. When it has run its course God will turn to Israel's program again. How near that time we must be when the hardness and bitterness that Israel has had for centuries is showing the first signs of softening!

Meanwhile, to the eyes of the children of God many other things speak of the nearness of Christ's coming. The growth of eschatological study in the last century is significant. That most of the great defenders of the faith now are premillennarian is a sign of the times. This modern premillennialism is not the kind that once was a reproach to all who believed in the Coming of

the Lord, but a sane belief based on the doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration of the Scripture-as even the enemies of this belief admit. (See Adolf Harnack's article "Millennium" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*). The marvelous increase of invention resulting in the improved living conditions and communications among men is to the eye of faith a preparation for the millennial reign of Christ. We might go into the history of the premillennial belief and show that at no time in history have so many signs converged toward this coming event as there are today. It is true that there have been mistaken identifications in the past, and we have no desire to become a prophet. We study the prophecies of Scripture not in order to become prophets ourselves, but simply to be able to tell where we are in the progress of God's plan, and to recognize the fulfillments when they come. There are in the Bible definite signs of the coming of Christ, and we believe that they have to be literally fulfilled. When the time comes for their fulfillment, they will have historical validity. Mockers may scoff at past excitements and conclude that since nothing has happened after all these years, He is not coming. But we confidently accept the Word of God. It predicts a revived Roman Empire. It predicts a return of the Jews to their land. It predicts a unique apostasy of the professing church. We take our stand upon the Word of God, and whether or not it takes many years yet to completely consummate the divine prediction, we know that the fulfillment will surely come. The Word of God has definite "until's," and when by all established laws of reason and rules of interpretation we see the end of the "until's" in sight, then it is high time to "look up" and "lift up" our heads, "because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:18).

It was the idealistic philosopher Bishop Berkeley who wrote the prophetic line, "Westward the course of empire takes its way." Even a student of history ought to find something to think about in that fact. The student of prophecy finds food for thought in the fact that it has remained for our day and time, just such a day and time as we have described, for the course of empire to have all but reached again in its westward way the point from which human civilization first started. Is this an indication of the approaching end of "man's day" (1 Cor 4:3)? If men, too enlightened now to be terrorized by an eclipse of the sun, can yet be victims of mass hysteria over a radio dramatization of an imaginary invasion of imaginary men from Mars, what, we hardly dare ask, will they do when they awake some fair morning to discover that there really has been an irruption of the supernatural into this world, and that the day of grace is past?

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