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THE PILGRIM.

"I am not far from my home,—therefore I need not make much provision for the way." I hear the rising tempest moan,
My failing limbs have weary grown,
The flowers are shut, the streams are dried,
The arid sands spread drear and wide,
The night-dews fall, the winds are high,
How far from home, O Lord, am I?
I would not come with boards of gold,
With glittering gems, or cumbrous mould,
Nor dim my eyes with gathered dust
Of empty fame, or earthly trust,
But hourly ask, as lone I roam,
How far from home? how far from home?
Not far! Not far! The way is dark,
Faint Hope hath quenched her glow-worm spark.

The trees are dead, beneath whose shade
My youth reclined, my childhood play'd,
Red lightnings streak the troubled sky,
How far from home, my God, am I?
Oh, find me in that home a place,
Beneath the footstool of thy grace,
Though sometimes 'mid the husks I fed,
And turn'd me from the children's bread,
Still bid thine angel-harps resound,
"The dead doth live, the lost is found."
Reach forth thy hand, with pitying care
And guide me through the latest snare,
Methinks, e'en now, in bursting beams
The radiance from thy casement streams,
No more I shed the pilgrim's tear,
I hear Thy voice, my home is near.

L. H. S.

THE OBSCURITY OF UNFULFILLED PROPHECY.

BY REV. J. DOWLING.

The two great ends to be accomplished by prophecy, are first, to excite before the event, an expectation of its fulfilment, and thus to encourage a delightful hope, or promote a salutary fear, according as the prediction may foretel either prosperous or adverse events, and be calculated to awake either one or the other of these emotions; and secondly, to confirm after the event, the truth of the prediction by its complete fulfilment, and thus to convince all, that the prophets were inspired by God, and to illustrate the omniscience of Him to whom past, present, and future are all one.

The design of God in foretelling future events, was not to encourage an impertinent curiosity, or to furnish a minute history of the world previous to the events. Hence there is always a degree of obscurity resting upon prophecy before its fulfilment, however plainly its meaning may be understood after the events have come to pass. Some of the prophecies may even appear to involve a contradiction while unfulfilled, and yet the fulfilment itself will show that the apparent contradiction resulted not from the prophecy itself, but from the obscurity which was, probably by design, thrown around it, in order to render its fulfilment a more striking evidence of the prescience of its divine author, and the inspiration of the prophet selected as the messenger of God to man. An illustration of this remark may be found in the prophecy of Jeremiah, compared with that of Ezekiel, in relation to the captivity in Babylon of Zedekiah, king of Judah.

Jeremiah was commissioned to say to the king, (chap. xxxiv. 3,) "Thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon."

Ezekiel had proclaimed the purpose of God concerning the king in the following words, (chap. xii. 13,) "My net also will I spread upon him, and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it though he shall die there."

The reader who is acquainted with the solution of these apparently enigmatical predictions, furnished by Jeremiah after the fulfilment in chap. 52, verse 11, sees at once that there is no contradiction. He there learns that Zedekiah's eyes did behold the king of Babylon, though he never saw Babylon itself—and that he was carried a captive to Babylon and died there, though he never saw the place. The explanation of the whole is, that when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, "He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death."

Now indeed, the prophecy is plain enough to us; not so to those who lived before its fulfilment. Josephus tells us that Zedekiah did not believe the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for the reasons following:—"It happened," says he, "that the two prophecies agreed with each other in what they said as to all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive, but Ezekiel disagreed with Jeremiah, and said that Zedekiah should not see Babylon, while Jeremiah said that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds; although," says Josephus just after, "all the things foretold him did come to pass according to their prophecies."

Who does not perceive that this very obscurity resting upon these two prophecies, before their fulfilment, added new lustre to them when they were accomplished?

Apply this idea to the various prophetic periods mentioned in the Scriptures, and we see one reason why a degree of obscurity generally appears to rest upon the time when these definite periods commence. The seventy weeks, or 490 years of Daniel, predicting the coming and death of the Messiah, is one of the most remarkable prophetic periods mentioned in the Scriptures. Yet even in this, before its fulfilment, there was an uncertainty about the date of its commencement. The prophecy, it is true, fixes an event from which to date (Dan. ix. 25,) viz., "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." But there are two other decrees mentioned by Ezra, besides the one which time has shown to be the right. The first, in the first year of Cyrus, B. C. 536.—[Ezra, chap. 1.] The second, in the reign of Darius, about the year B. C. 518.—[Ezra, chap. 6.] The third, (which is the date of the prophecy,) in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, in the year B. C. 457.—[Ezra, chap. 7.] Before the advent of the Messiah, there was enough in these prophecies to encourage expectation, and to show about the time that the Messiah might be expected, but not to indulge that irreverent curiosity which inquires into the day or the hour.

It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death till he had beheld the promised Messiah. Yet even he probably knew not the precise year of his coming, unless indeed by special revelation. He would doubtless, meditate with intense interest upon this prophecy; and since more than 490 years had elapsed from either of the former decrees, he had probably arrived at the conclusion that the last named decree was "the going forth of the commandment" intended. Still, had he known the very year of the commencement of the 490, he could not have decided on that of the Messiah's appearance; as the prophecy pointed not to his birth, but to his death—not to the precise time of his coming, but to the time when he should be "cut off, but not for himself," and at the same time did not reveal the number of years that should intervene between his coming and his death.

The same uncertainty prevailed among the Jews while in Babylon, in relation to the ter-

mination of the seventy years' captivity, before the completion of that appointed time.

There were three captivities by Nebuchadnezzar; the first, in the reign of Jehoiakim, B. C. 606; the second, eight years after, when Jehoiakim was carried to Babylon, B. C. 598; and the third, ten years after this, when Jerusalem was destroyed, and Zedekiah taken captive, B. C. 588.

The actual termination of the seventy years' captivity could alone show which of these three was to be considered as the commencement.

Instances such as the above, have satisfied the most judicious expounders of prophecy, that it becomes them to exercise the profoundest modesty, and the greatest caution, in endeavoring to fix the commencement, and consequently the termination of prophetic periods. Sir Isaac Newton wisely remarks in his work on Daniel and the Apocalypse, (page 251,) "The folly of interpreters has been to forget times and things by this prophecy, as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness, they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this, (i. e. the Revelations,) and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event and God's own providence (or foresight,) not the interpreter's, be then manifested to the world."

A moment's reflection will convince us, that it is, at least, probable, that the same uncertainty which existed in reference to the commencement of the prophetic periods of the "seventy years" and the "490 years," will also exist in relation to the commencement of the prophetic periods, which in my view are to usher in the Millennium.

Accordingly we find, in point of fact, that there is at least an equal uncertainty about the commencement of the "1260 years," the completion of which, it is supposed by most protestant commentators, will be coincident with the overthrow of the various false systems of religion which exist in the world; and introduce, either at the same time, or with but a short interval, the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth. The opinions of several writers are given in the following pages, not any one of which, I would venture, with any thing like certainty, to pronounce the correct one. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." The event must determine.

"Prophecy," says an able and elegant writer, not unknown to the American public, "is intended to guide us along the bright outline of the future, but not to make us historians by anticipation: to impart so much as may serve for the needful instruction and encouragement of the people of God amidst the tribulations of those latter days, which will provide the ultimate triumphs and glory of the church, but not to acquaint them with the secret intentions of God with regard to the minutest character of those events, which are written in the book of his decrees. To steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of a desponding and neglectful indifference to prophecy, and a dogmatic interpretation, is an important attainment, and is precisely that course which tends to tranquilize the spirit amidst surpassing changes, and sustain it by pleasing hopes."

Many expounders of prophecy have lost sight of these evident first principles in the interpretation of the prophetic parts of Scripture, and

* Vide Lectures on Daniel, by the Rev. Dr. Cox, of Hackney, Great Britain.

have attempted dogmatically to decide upon the very year of the coming of Christ. Every person of information knows that several in the past century, and some in the present, both in America and in Europe, have undertaken to fix "the day and hour," of which no man knoweth, and which "the father hath put in his own power."

I will not tax the reader's patience by relating the individual histories of the wise and positive interpreters of prophetic times, who have undertaken to fix the year of the Judgment.—Their histories were all alike. They succeeded in awakening a degree of alarm in the bosoms of some simple people, who forget that Christ had said "of that day and hour knoweth no man"—the time drew on,—the year passed by, and the prophet and his doctrine were forgotten.

One great evil however, resulted from these presumptuous speculations. Many would identify the correctness and veracity of these prophets with the truth of the Scriptures themselves; because, they professed to build their calculations upon the Bible. Hence, when the appointed year passed by, and no unusual event occurred, many would reject at once the pretensions of the man who had deceived them, and the claims of the Bible upon which he professed to base his calculations, and thus a new impulse was given to the cause of infidelity.—It is impossible to calculate how far recent attempts of this kind may contribute to the spread of infidelity, though undesigned, unless their inconsistency with the Bible is exposed. Let not any think, therefore, that the truth of the sacred volume depends upon the fulfilment of any predictions concerning the precise year of the end of the world. Let none "burn their Bibles," in disappointment. Nor let the advocates of infidelity triumph, though time should speedily expose, (as it undoubtedly will,) the absurdity of these waking dreams, and that year pass by without any unusual occurrence.

(From the London Times.)

SUFFERING IN GERMANY.—H. Chappel, minister of the Lutheran Church, has forwarded us the following:—

SIR,—The condition of the peasantry in many parts of Germany, has chiefly through the failure of the potato crop last year, at length become one of such fearful and indescribable distress, that I feel sure a few particulars respecting it will prove a subject of painful interest to many of your readers. Poor Southern and Central Germany, still suffering from the baneful effects of the late political convulsions, have now, in addition, been visited by dearth, disease and famine. Truly heart-rending accounts from many parts well known to, and much frequented by English tourists for the beauty of their scenery; so from Wurtemberg, Bavaria, the Grand Duchy of Baden, Nassau, and more especially, from the Vogelsberg and the Odenwald, rough mountainous districts, the one situated in the northeastern part of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, the other to the north, and forming part of the "Bergstrasse," a road extending from Darmstadt to Heidelberg, within thirty-eight hours reach of London, and traversed generally by excursionists on their way to Switzerland. In these localities, whole villages are being deserted for want of food; their unfortunate inhabitants, who, in time of comparative prosperity, eke out but a scanty and miserable existence, have been wanting their staple food—potatoes.—In other parts trade is standing still, of 18,000 looms, in a single province of Bavaria, almost exclusively inhabited by weavers, not half are at full work. The people are deprived alike of the productions of nature and the fruits of industry; and, to consummate wretch-