

# THE RAINBOW:

## A Magazine of Christian Literature

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

*THE REVEALED FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND  
THE WORLD.*

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“The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.” —Hab. ii. 14.

### “THE PLAN OF THE AGES”—A REVIEW.<sup>1</sup>

THIS is a notable book—bold, broad, and breezy; very refreshing after the stereotyped dogmas and platitudes which pass current in the theological world. It is a book for men and not for children—at least, not for English children. The American child is supposed to be a more precocious phenomenon, and we are not sure that a dose of this book might not take a little of the sceptical bounce out of *him*—and such as he. But for the ordinary, hesitating, uninstructed child in theology, who as yet knows not his right hand from his left, and who may crave for some one to do his thinking for him, and be rather too ready to be carried about by every wind of teaching, and too timidly willing to cast anchor in the confident conclusions of a stronger mind,—we cannot recommend this volume. Its faults are too serious—its conclusions are too sharply cut—its scheme is too definitely mapped out,—to be a safe book; that is to say, for theological children. Let this qualification be steadily borne in mind. For, in spite of its shortcomings, “The Plan of the Ages” is a valuable production, and is probably destined to furnish material assistance in shaking down old walls and building up new. We confess to a feeling about it which may be conventionally described as “naughty”: as if craving the immense gratification of putting doctors of divinity and infidel orators

<sup>1</sup> “The Millennial Dawn”; Vol. I. : “The Plan of the Ages.” By Charles T. Russell. Pittsburg, Pa., U.S.A., Office of *Zion’s Watch-Tower*, etc.

alike through a determined course of reading in this book, Bible in hand. It is a many-sided book. All thorough prophetic students ought, as a matter of course, to read it—for is it not the first volume of a projected series started under the general title of “The Millennial Dawn?” and does it not deal liberally with unfulfilled prophecy, not omitting the apocalyptic visions of God’s two eminently holy and beloved servants, Daniel and John? and does it not stake its entire claim to be heard on its high culminations regarding “the age” and “the ages” to come, as alone furnishing the key to Jehovah’s ways in the permission of moral evil? Of course, then, students of prophecy who have not a cut-and-dried theory of everything prophetic, which is never going to be seriously modified as long as they live, *must* read it; and all classes of them. Even Universalists, who care to try to go by Scripture seriously interpreted, cannot very well afford to neglect it: it too plainly both helps them (a little) and hurts them (a good deal) for that. On the other hand, even our excellent brethren of the straitest “Conditional Immortality” school, who seem to have a weakness for some sort of go-to-nothing-at-death theory, will find their own here: for, with regret we say it, Mr. Russell regards even the first death as simply (temporary) non-existence. No doubt this last admission will shock a number, who will forthwith go away from any further thought of procuring Mr. Russell’s “Plan of the Ages.” If *that* is what has been descried from *Zion’s Watch-Tower*, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, they will conclude, then such a Zion can have no attractions for them. So be it. They had better go. Yet are such rather simple. It is with more regret than we can passingly express that we have noted this extreme as having been endorsed by Mr. Russell; but, all the same, we think we should have soon felt self-condemned for displaying so much weakness as to throw aside the volume for that sole reason. Truth to say, the regrettable conclusion referred to only peeps out here and there—two or three times perhaps in the book: though we are free to admit that, in our opinion, it vitiates Mr. Russell’s conception of “The Plan of the Ages” more than he can be supposed very readily to surmise. As for other classes of desirable readers for this book, suffice it to say that so-called “Christian Socialists,” and all who interest themselves in the burning questions of the day relating to Capital and Labour, will here find something to lay seriously to heart—the more so as coming from an American observer of social and political questions.

But what now—after this preliminary skirmish—is the one leading thought of this book? What is it, in a single word? It is RESTITUTION or RESTORATION: Restoration, sharply and constantly distinguished from Universalism. The author is not a Universalist, nor anything near it. With him the second death is total and final. From it there is no redemption and no recovery. But he is a restorationist out and out. He holds that all men will rise from the dead—all be delivered from Adam’s sin and all its consequences sooner or later—all be put afresh and individually on trial, under new and improved conditions, with a

fair chance of obtaining eternal life—so that none shall fail of the prize save by his own inexcusable crime. He holds that this restoration of the race as a whole—distinguished from the little flock, the elect, the Church, the bride of Christ, who will have been previously raised from the dead and exalted to be sharers of Christ’s own glory—will take place *during* the Millennial Age; *progressively*, if we mistake not, at any rate *within or during* the Thousand Years; and that at the close of that period, the incorrigible will be utterly destroyed for ever, and sin and sorrow thenceforward be no more. The author is strong upon the point that all loss through Adam’s sin will be more than made up to every man through Christ. Adam was created perfect. Every man must be restored to the like perfection, and then decide for himself his eternal destiny. We are not quite clear what, in our author’s opinion, the second probation is to be, either in principle or condition. It has a look of being immortalisation by works—made possible of course by the grace (and justice!) that opened the way to it by redemption from Adam’s sin and the first death.

What now are we to say of “The Plan of the Ages” as a whole? Simply what we have said; the only wonder being that we can stand to what we have written and yet go on to find with this work such serious fault as we have now to specify in detail. But this less welcome task we feel bound, in the interests of truth, not to omit. We have very grave fault to find, and it will be best that it be stated with perfect frankness. Our own standpoint, however, it should be observed is distinctly favourable to the author, and our feeling as nearly as we can tell absolutely friendly: so that perhaps the chances are small that a single word will be penned in malice. We do not forget that a critic most criticises himself, and, if candid, gives his brother a good chance of finding him erring in his turn. But now, straight to the mark; and if the reader will co-operate, brief hints may suffice.

More or less serious desiderata and shortcomings, calling for brief animadversion, range themselves under the following heads. The Millennium—the Ages—the Restitution—the Person of Christ—the Nature of Man—the Judgment—and the Prophetic Word.

1. *The Millennium*.—The series of volumes of which this is the first bears the general title, “The Millennial Dawn.” This alone makes the Millennium prominent. Moreover, everywhere through this volume, “The Millennial Age” is set forth as distinctly *the* age during which the great work of Restitution takes place. The restitution includes the race, and commences with resurrection. Hence the resurrection of the race is placed *in* the Millennium,—starting, as one would naturally infer, near the commencement of the Thousand Years. But, unfortunately for this arrangement, there stands the words in Rev. xx. 5: “The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished;”—that is, the rest of the dead, over and above such as share in the first resurrection. In other words, the very persons whom Mr. Russell’s theory requires to be raised during the Millennium are *not* to

be raised during the Millennium. How is this difficulty to be obviated? Mr. Russell removes it with a stroke of his pen. He says the words are spurious. In this we think he has been ill-advised. “The Resultant Greek Testament” shows at a glance that this verse is retained entire (saving the single word *kai* or *de*—about which there is some doubt, but which does not affect the passage to a hair’s breadth so far as its main testimony is concerned) by Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Alford, The Bâle edition (1880), Westcott and Hort, and the Revision Committee. Mr. Russell is a bold man to declare, in the face of these acceptors of the sentence as genuine, that the words are spurious. It is true that the Sinai MS. omits them; but, as Dr. Scrivener suggests that was probably a mere copying accident caused by the eye of the copyist returning to the second occurrence of the words for “thousand years” instead of the first, and not noticing that he was skipping the words between—a form of error constantly occurring in all copying by hand, well known in every printing-office as the most frequent cause of an “out,” and labelled among textual critics by a long technical word which recognises it due to “like-endings.” And then, besides, while it is easy to see how the words might slip out by accident, it is hard to see how a statement so perfectly unique could be inserted by design. We therefore must continue to believe the sentence to be genuine, and say, So much the worse for Mr. Russell. Now while we admit that the work before us must be considerably modified to bring it into harmony with the genuineness of the passage so unwisely rejected, we would beware of drawing a too adverse inference against our brother’s principal conclusions from this his mistake. His main ideas as to restitution may still be correct; only he may need to discover more room for the restoring work in the ages that are to follow the Millennial; or, which is possible, the restitution may in great part be a more summary process than he has been wont to suppose; to say nothing of a possible pre-resurrection work *in Hades*, for which his theory leaves no room at all. We beg very respectfully, but earnestly, to remit this whole matter to our brother’s patient reconsideration.

2. *The Ages*.—It would be strange if a work on “The Plan of the Ages” were not great on the ages. This work is that; so far, at least, as earnest and not always unsuccessful endeavour is concerned. It contains three diagrams of the ages—the more complex and formidable chart which, map-wise, serves as a prelude to the book, and two slighter sketches in the body of the volume let into the text. The discussion of the subject is correspondingly full. With much of what the author has written we cordially agree. We do not for a moment think he has over-rated the importance of this part of his subject. But we have grave faults to find. To make them intelligible we must needs briefly explain what the author’s outline is. He sketches out three great “WORLDS”—*time*-worlds, as we may for clearness call them, and which he further terms “dispensations;” viz., the world that was before the flood, the world that now is and will be until the Millennium, and the

world to come upon the Return of our Lord. These worlds (or at least the second and third of them) he subdivides into “ages” of smaller dimensions. Thus, the world that now is, is subdivided into three ages—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Gospel ages; and the world to come into the Millennium Age, and the indefinite ages that are to follow. It must further be explained that the *present* world is distinctly labelled as “evil”: “The present evil world.” Now here we note (*a*) that, to work out so precise a scheme, Mr. Russell has to press *kosmos*, and *aeon*, and *oikoumenee* all into his service, in order to make out his “three WORLDS.” He can find the *kosmos* that was before the flood, of course, in 2 Peter iii. But he cannot find “present evil kosmos” anywhere in the Bible, “so present evil *aeon*” in Gal. i. 4 has to do duty. Then again we presume his “world to come” is based upon Heb. i. 6 and ii. 5—“the coming *oikoumenee*,” or “inhabited earth,” though with this we do not find so much fault as *kosmos* and *oikoumenee* are here probably practically equivalent. But certainly (*b*) we cannot see why “the present evil age” should be regarded as only reaching back to the flood and not also beyond it, for surely it was an evil time before the flood. Then again (*c*) there is no account taken in this arrangement of the homogeneousness of the period “from Adam to Moses,” which is plainly referred to in Rom. v. as the distinctively *ante-legal* period. Moreover (*d*), we miss in Mr. Russell’s scheme, what is conspicuous by its absence in every other scheme which we remember to have examined—the *limited area* over which the ages, or at least the dispensations, come and go. For example, it is easy to merge the patriarchal into the Jewish dispensation, say at the time of the Exodus: and, indeed, within the area of the one chosen Sacred Family, the transition was real, involving a new method of Divine dealing on the one hand, and new institutions and duties to correspond on the other. But what of the outlying families of the earth—were they ever brought under the Mosaic dispensation? We trow not. So again, we talk pretty fluently of the present as “the Gospel age,” and so it *is*, to those who hear it, since the hearing of it terminates the period of divine leniency by its high command to “repent” (Acts xvii. 30,31); but what of the many myriads who all along have never heard the Gospel? Have they in any practical sense, which would justly augment their responsibilities, come into the Gospel Dispensation? We think not. Besides which, it may be asked whether there are no Glad Tidings to go forth during the Millennium; and why, therefore, “the *Gospel Age*” must be held to close before the Thousand Years set in. In truth, we think the limitation arbitrary. “Church Age,” or “Age of Church formation,” would have been more accurate. Better no name than a wrong one. Then there are the Jews. Where are they? They ought to be under their Messiah; but they are not, save remotely and unconsciously. We say remotely, in the sense that they are not under their Messiah in such wise as to deliver them from Moses. They can never get fully free from their Law and Covenant of Death save by

dying to it. They must follow their only Leader and Deliverer along the path of death and resurrection (Rom. vii. 1-6) before they can become a happy, free and truly holy people. Assuredly, for the Twelve Tribes there is no escape from Moses but by the Christ. The Tutor still holds the Child's hand, nor will he release it till he brings him to the Risen Liberator. The truth is, as we suppose, that the story of the ages has yet to be written, or at least the plan of the dispensations has yet to be mapped out—so far as human decipherment is concerned, of course. Mr. Pember differs from Mr. Guinness, and Mr. Russell differs from both. Each of them brings some important dispensational land-mark to view, and we heartily thank them all for what they have done, but for the complete and undeniably accurate map of the ages we must still wait.

3. *The Restitution.*—It cannot be denied that there is to be a restitution: and very likely it is to be larger and grander than most of us have dreamed. For, though the word *apokatastasis* in Acts iii. 21 might be satisfied by the rendering “due accomplishment” (of the prophecies, that is), and so merely send us to the old prophecies to see what therein we can find to be fulfilled, yet still, when we get to the prophets, it is undeniable that they descry in the Messianic Age such an enormous amount of restoration than our poor systems can noway find room for it. If Elijah is to restore all things, depend upon it, it must be a restitution to Moses whose counterpart he is (Mal. iv.) The only Messiah that Elijah knows must needs honour the Law before he delivers from it. So here is a great, even if only temporary, work of restitution to make room for. Then, again, there is the restoring of Israel, to her *saving shame* (Ezekiel xvi.); and if this includes her dead generations, as it surely must, who of us can find room for *that* in our “little systems,” to say nothing of the restoring of Samaria and the restoring of Sodom itself; yes, of Sodom itself—for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it, and when we tremble at His word as we ought, and at the same time have an adequate apprehension of what fair interpretation really is, we shall blush even to begin to explain and mystify it away as we have done all too long. So that, up to this point, we can have no quarrel with Mr. Russell; nor can we doubt that there is much more of restitution in the Old Testament than even he has formally pointed out: *there*, in the sacred text itself, if we only knew how to read it. The fact is, we cannot yet believe for wonder, and so we cannot see. But, withal, we do not ourselves quite understand how Mr. Russell manages to make such short work of getting the whole human race, outside the Elect Church, restored to precisely the perfection that Adam was in when he came from the hands of his Maker. We feel quite sure that “the former estate” of neither Israel, Samaria, nor Sodom, was Adamic perfection in either mind, body, or estate. *Nolens volens*, all the dead will be raised: that we take to be a fixed point; but how by the law of moral continuity and persistent accountability for personal choice, the unsaved dead are to be raised perfect we cannot

imagine. And if the perfecting of them be regarded as a post-resurrection work,—then, can we be quite so sure as Mr. Russell seems to be that every man will be rendered as perfect as sinless Adam was, before being put on his final trial for eternal life? Several most grave considerations seem here to have been left out of the account by our author; nor can we, as at present enlightened, do otherwise than think his teaching at this point rather crude, or, at any rate, much ahead of Biblical evidence. Before dismissing the subject of “The Ages,” it may be remarked that our author affirms the first dispensation—that, namely, extending from Creation to the Flood—to have been peculiarly under the ministration of angels (p. 66). He makes no scriptural reference in support of this assertion, and we have not the slightest notion what Bible proof can be adduced in its behalf. We remember, of course, the negative statement advanced by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 5) that God “has not subjected the COMING inhabited earth UNTO ANGELS;” but this rather favours the idea that until that state of things is inaugurated, and *man* therein, under the headship of his Princely Leader, take his destined place of dominion, the world is and must remain in some sort under the ministration of angelic powers. At all events the statement of the writer to the Hebrews is consistent with that view, and a good many hints scattered through the Bible pretty clearly point in that direction. Superhuman beings, both good and bad, seem to have found place in the vicinity of our earth not only of ministry, but of a considerable amount of control, and exert as against each other antagonistic powers which plainly have not yet reached their climax of activity. (Compare Job i.; Ps. xxxiv. 7; xc. 11; Dan. ix. 21-23; xii. 1; Zech. iii. 1,2; Matt. iv. 11; Eph. vi. 12; Heb. i. 14; Rev. xii. 7-12.

4. *The Person of Christ.*—We are sorry to feel any need to introduce this sacred topic into the midst of a general theological argument; nor would we do it, were we not pretty sure that some nameless defect at this point has something to do with an entire vein of weakness running through our author’s book. Even so, we must pointedly caution our readers against imagining for a moment that we can stoop to anything making the most distant approach to heresy-hunting. Our brother Russell, we can well think, both adores and loves the Son of God, much better than we do. Nevertheless we must be faithful, and must say this much: Mr. Russell’s manner of speaking of our Lord has caused us pain. He mostly speaks of Him as simply “Jesus”—a thing the Apostles, if we mistake not, seldom did *after the resurrection*, save perhaps when speaking apologetically to promiscuous audiences. He seldom calls Him “the Son of God”—if ever; and certainly we are quite in error if he once names our Redeemer “the Only Begotten Son of God.” Nor is this all. While our author very distinctly owns the pre-incarnate *spiritual* nature of the Saviour, he seems, over and over again, to purposely avoid attributing to Him absolute Deity prior to his human birth; and so frequently affirms that “*since his resurrection* he is

a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order” (p. 175 and elsewhere) as to force one to think that he *means* to exclude our Lord’s pre-incarnate existence as not equal to this. Then, when to this statement the very serious addition is made that in his view (which on its merits has something to say for itself from Scripture) the members of Christ are also to possess “a divine nature,” we think enough has been said to show cause why some sore misgiving as to this grave matter should have been felt in studying Mr. Russell’s book. He must forgive us if we seem to him over-sensitive, but we do like a writer on general Bible truth to leave us in no suspense here. Rather let him strike out boldly at the onset, as Tennyson does in the first line of his “In Memoriam”—

“Strong Son of God! Immortal Love!”

Then our hearts are won. Then we move freely between the eternities. Then we know Who is at the helm of our adventurous bark.—Enough! save perhaps a hint or two more, further on, as to the resulting vein of weakness in our author.

5. *The Nature of Man.*—Man, in our humble judgment, was constituted to become immortal. He was equally constituted to become spiritual and heavenly. Christ, not Adam, is the complete type of our race. Adam’s perfection was initial only. Had Adam only remained loyal, and perfected his training on the initial plane of his being, we cannot doubt that he would have been ultimately transfigured into a Heavenly Man; and then only would have reached the Ideal of his manhood. All this may seem a great deal to learn from a few verses in 1 Cor. xv., but we do find it there notwithstanding; and construe the declaration in that place that “THERE IS a spiritual body” (as well as a psychical) to mean that such a body is contained in God’s ideal of humanity. Of this we are chiefly persuaded because of finding our Risen Lord there described as at once “the Lord OF heaven” and a “Second ADAM,” that is Second MAN. Why still an “Adam” at all, if he has transcended in His Manhood the Divine ideal of humanity? This is offered only as a hint regarding the basis of a conclusion, not lightly formed, which compels us to boldly question much that our author has written about restitution to Adamic perfection. We by no means undervalue earth, but our outlook takes in heaven as well; and permits us furthermore reverently to anticipate such a heavenly method of dwelling on and in and round about and above and far away (at least temporarily) from our new earth on the part of all immortalised men, to say nothing of Christ’s super-celestial elect saints (note the *EP-ouranioi* in Ephesians) as might make it seem just a little ridiculous were we to seriously discuss with Mr. Russell whether, for instance, Ireland (p. 156) is large enough to hold all the human beings that should have ever lived—save perhaps a lost few!

6. *The Judgment.*—With much on this subject we so cordially agree that it would have been a gratification to enlarge a little on points of

neglected truth as to which we find ourselves in unison with our author. But space forbids. Attention must here be limited to a single matter, of no small moment, on which it may be apprehended that a profound difference exists. We find little or nothing, in “The Plan of the Ages,” concerning the revelation of the Glorified Christ to the men whose Judge He is—nothing concerning the rapid (perhaps almost instantaneous) ripening of human character under the healing, or even in some cases scorching, rays of His Self-manifestation. Concurrently with this lack, we also miss a good deal, that ought to have been said, respecting the carrying over into the world to come of character and responsibility for sins committed in this life by the unsaved. Mr. Russell writes all through as though resurrection would wipe off all old obligations, personal as well as Adamic. He does not perhaps ever say so in precise terms, yet his whole style of reasoning appears to require this. Need we say how seriously misleading, in our judgment, such reasoning is? Still in connection no doubt with this, is that further idea of his, before alluded to, which borders, or seems to border, on ultimate salvation by works. That the Merciful and All-gracious Judge will dismiss any human being from his soul-penetrating presence, simply acquitted of old-world sins, to work out a title to eternal life by obedience to law on improved old-world conditions,—is to our mind simply unimaginable. Oh no! there is infinitely more in our Lord Christ than this comes to; and to face HIM, knowing who HE is, will be, must be, unspeakably more sharply and shortly decisive of character and destiny than comports with any such view as that which is thus respectfully declined until materially modified. The “strong Son of God” will then pre-eminently manifest Himself as the Stone of Destiny, set before every man, Which no man shall be able to pass; against Which some may even then stumble to their hurt, though perhaps not in all cases fatally; but Which shall certainly so fall on some as to “grind them to powder!” In a word, then, no scheme of Restitution can even measurably satisfy us unless the Christologic element receive therein a place greatly more commanding and decisive than in Mr. Russell’s “Plan of the Ages.”

7. *The Prophetic Word.*—While, no doubt, saying many true and good things upon and from the Prophetic Word, especially the non-symbolic portions of it, or such as *we* should regard as non-symbolic, at the same time our author’s treatment of the prophets Daniel and John,<sup>2</sup> is to a large extent unsatisfactory. He goes in the beaten track. Babylon is Rome, and all the rest of it. Nor is this all. He sees symbols where probably most unsophisticated minds would see none. But, principles of interpretation apart, the practical *result* is marred so far as guidance into the probably near future is concerned. To explain for one moment. Mr. Russell’s apprehension of the coming conflict

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<sup>2</sup> Let the fastidious reader excuse us. We really cannot bring ourselves to say (plain) “Daniel” and “*Saint* John.”

between capital and labour is, on its own merits, very shrewd, and the reading of what he says in exposition of it very profitable. But when he goes on to surmise that this very conflict, deepening into almost universal anarchy, will of itself usher in the great day of Jehovah's wrath and bring the delivering Lord from heaven; then we are confronted with an omission which, though naturally enough following from our author's principles of interpretation, strikes us as constituting a peril, from which true principles of prophetic exegesis would save us. Put it thus: Is it possible that there is yet coming, before the Millennial Dawn, a Personal Antichrist—an incarnation of Satan—who, by wiles and flatteries and superhuman power and cunning, will know how to turn the impending social conflict to his own account, bringing in upon that conflict as its Heaven-sent remedy, the ruinous commercial and political peace and prosperity of Hell? To such a conclusion the word of prophecy, in our judgment, if strictly interpreted, surely leads. But of this awful peril Mr. Russell has not one word to say; as on his mystical principles, how should he? His words to the colliding classes are, indeed, admirable; they are dignified, true and wise, and well fitted to act as oil upon the troubled waters. But his conception of the issue of that preliminary skirmish between the Classes, only serves to utterly mask the further culminating out-break of war between [sic] Earth and Heaven, in which Angels and Demons and a world of Men will be engaged, and the prelude to which will consist of that very compact with Hell, negotiated under false pretences by the Rival-Messiah, into which the distressed classes will be but too ready to fall. Against this revealed peril our author has not one word to say.

We have done our fault-finding. Only those who read dispassionately for themselves “The Plan of the Ages” will perhaps believe us when we assure them that enough in any case remains that is unimpeachable to render this volume such as is likely to repay abundantly any discreet man's perusal. The Chapter on “The Permission of Evil” is alone more than worth the price of the whole volume, and is the fullest discussion of this great mystery, and the nearest approximation to a probably correct solution of it, with which we are acquainted.

EDITOR.