

These are three eras in the story or progress of the dispensation, three phases which it bears successively.

I ask—Do not many things connected with Christian place and service and duty change with these changing aspects of our age, as they did in like changing eras in the story of Israel? From the simplest analogy, yea, from moral necessity, I might answer, surely. But a meditation on the two epistles to Timothy will determine this for us, and give us to know, that this is the divine good-pleasure concerning us.

The first of these two epistles contemplates the churches in the *first* of the conditions I have noticed above; that is, as under the pastoral care of the Spirit through the apostle. The second of them contemplates, I believe, the saints in the interval between the *second* and *third*; that is, between the challenge of the candlesticks and the judgment of Christendom—this assuming that the challenge has ended in conviction and dismissal or removal.

It may, however, be asked, is such an assumption warranted? Yes, I say, fully—because the challenge of His steward by the Lord, in each and every dispensation, at all times, and under all circumstances, has ever so ended; that is, in conviction and dismissal. Man in a responsible relation to God has never had an answer for his Lord. None, entrusted of Him with any deposit, have ever been found faithful, but He of whom it is written, “all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen” (2 Cor. i. 20). “Give an account of thy stewardship” has always ended in the stewardship being taken away (Luke xvi). If “God stand in the congregation of the mighty,” if “He judge among the gods,” the conviction will