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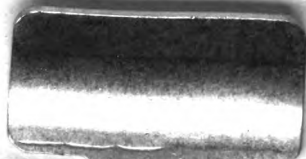


THE HEAVENLY HOPE

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JOHN XIV. 1-3

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JOHN XIV. 1—3.



THERE is another aspect in which scripture presents the coming of the Lord. It is part of that immense change intimated in the Gospel of John, when the public testimony was closed, and the Lord unbosoms Himself to the family of God, before He gave Himself up to the band led by the traitor for His apprehension and death. He had already and publicly announced His crucifixion (John xii. 32). The time was come to leave the world.

John xiii. introduces the new subject. It is a distinct transfer from earth to heaven. Messianic hopes are wholly eclipsed. The chosen nation are no more in evidence than the city or the sanctuary. It is not the Lord correcting the earthly expectations of the disciples as they drew His attention to the buildings of the temple, or predicting that not one stone should be left upon another, but be broken down. Nor is it the chief disciples coming privately to Him on Olivet and asking, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the age? Here we breathe a wholly different atmosphere; and the Lord by deed and word leads on His own

to unprecedented dealings of grace soon to dawn on them, in proper Christian privilege and responsibility, for which the cross as seen in the light of God laid the basis.

"Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus (knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,) having loved his own that were in the world loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot Simon's [son] that he should betray him, He, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and goeth to God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his upper garments, and took a linen towel and girded himself; then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel wherewith he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost *thou* wash *my* feet? Jesus answered and said to him, What *I* do *thou* knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterwards. Peter saith to him, Never shalt thou wash my feet. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean: and *ye* are clean, but not all. For he knew his betrayer: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean" (vers. 1-11).

What could be more impressive? and all the

more, if Peter who expressed what all felt had but known that the Lord's washing their feet was in view of His departure, to be with the Father in heavenly glory. This was the truth they had all to learn, the earth being henceforth left behind for things above; not of course absolutely, but now for the Christian, as for Christ. Thus to stoop was a wholly unexpected exercise of His love; and how far was it from being realised yet! *He* was conscious that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that as He came out from God He was going back to be with God, the unsullied but rejected Holy One of God. From the earth and the earthly people, about to consummate to their own ruin that rejection which their state had implied, He was passing to the Father who ever loved the Son, and now all the more because the evil was only the occasion of proving His entire devotedness at all cost to the Father's will and glory.

If He thus left this world, He would demonstrate His love to His own that were in it, after a sort beyond all thought even of those who had been learning it in every form they then needed and could bear. Associating them while here with Himself for that glory into which He was going, He must and would counteract every defilement of their way inconsistent with that association. Such stains were incompatible with heaven, whither He was going as their forerunner. Of the kingdom they had learnt not a little from the O. T., and yet more from Him who added so much that was new to the old things. But the Lord here provides for them a fellow-

ship with Him on high, transcending all previous thoughts, when He should ascend where He was before; and His love would carry them through every need, obstacle, and danger. No wonder that Peter who had confessed His personal glory, revealed to him by the Father that is in the heavens, was lost in astonishment at Christ going down so low to clear away their soils as saints. Yet was he to learn soon afterwards that the reality in heaven would enhance the wonder beyond measure.

The Lord on earth sets forth by His action on the disciples what He was about to do for them in heaven. We have an Advocate with the Father if one sin. It is expressly not for the unclean as such, but for those already washed if the feet get defiled. It is untrue that those washed all over do not need to have any subsequent impurity removed; or that, if defiled after the washing of the person, they need this to be renewed. The washing of regeneration abides in all its value, but demands the cleansing of the soiled feet.

It is the glorified Jesus who assures His own of His persistent and all-efficacious love in carrying on this most needful work at God's right hand, acting on His own here below by His Spirit and word; as it is said in Eph. v. 26, purifying by the washing of water by the word, consequent on giving Himself for the church on the cross. The restoration of our communion when interrupted by sin is as essential as the new birth or as justification. He has set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made the purification of sins; but this

finished and accepted and abiding work, instead of dispensing with further call, makes Him the more solicitous to clear away every inconsistency that would otherwise sully its lustre, displease our Father, and leave ourselves in unavailing shame and grief. It is His action of grace on high which gives us to confess the sin and prove how faithful is the God of all grace. "He that is bathed needeth not to wash except his feet." The blessed relationship of the Christian abides intact; but the Lord, even in the glories of heaven, occupies Himself with every failure to efface it holily, turning it to our needed humiliation but to fresh blessing in His infinite love.

Why is this wondrous grace here enlarged on? It is part of the characteristic blessedness of the Christian, as it was wholly new to the disciples when the Lord set forth its type before their eyes so vividly. It was a necessary provision for them during His absence, which they would soon learn is fraught with far higher privilege than could be possessed or known during the days of His flesh. It would endear Him yet more when they knew it shortly afterwards, as they did not and could not know it then. They were aware of His exceeding condescension, and deeply moved that He should do the work of the meanest slave on their behalf; but only after His death, resurrection, and ascension would they learn by the Holy Spirit what His mystic washing of their feet really meant.

But there is another and still more stupendous communication which the Lord made in this chapter.

It also is part of our Christian heritage, going far beyond any prophetic account of our Lord's atoning death in the O. T. such as Isa. liii., precious and bright as it is in itself, and as it will be to the generation to come of Israel. The going out of Judas (after Satan entered in) on his awful errand of perfidy gave the occasion. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall glorify him" (vers. 31, 32). No more pregnant revelation of the Saviour's death as made sin on the cross is anywhere found, nor one so distinctly lit up with Christian light and result for God's glory now that it is fulfilled.

As Son of God He had glorified His Father in a life of unwavering and absolute obedience: a savour of rest such as had never before risen up to heaven from man on the earth, though all in Him here below was a perfect meal offering. But the exit of Judas was the signal of death on the cross. Would the Holy One of God bow to the bearing of sin, whatever it might cost at God's hand? He had vanquished the living temptations of Satan by obeying the written word. Was He willing through death to annul him that has the might of death, and deliver all those that through fear of death were all their life subject to bondage? Would He take upon Himself the sins and iniquities of God's people, the most loathsome of burdens, to make propitiation for them? Would He by the grace of God taste death for everything, and thus break the yoke of bondage.

under which all the creation groaned, as well as bring many sons to glory as the author, or leader, of their salvation perfected through sufferings ?

The Lord here reveals the deepest and most marvellous contest ever engaged on, wherein the otherwise impossible was achieved, and the insoluble as plainly solved to God's glory and the everlasting deliverance of those that lay under guilt and judgment. Good and evil here strove for decision ; and where evil seemed to have all its way, good triumphed to all eternity. Man was seen at his worst, hating the Father and the Son, hating without a cause God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Satan here swayed, not the heathen only but most fatally God's people and above all their religious leaders, scribes, doctors, of the law, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, chief priests, and the high priest himself. Roman justice proved shamelessly unjust. Jesus was condemned for His good confession, and for the truth counted imposture and blasphemy. The disciples forsook their Master and fled, one betraying Him for the price of a slave, another and not the least denying Him repeatedly and with oaths. And in the shame and agony of the cross, God, His God, hid His face and forsook Him : the bitterest of all His sorrows, the most intolerable of His sufferings. But so it must be, if He were made sin, and bowed to what it deserved at God's hand, that the divine majesty and holiness might be perfectly vindicated, and salvation come to sinners through their judgment falling on Him, and grace issue in God's righteousness justify-

ing the ungodly who now believed. There and thus only all the attributes of God are brought into mutual harmony. Elsewhere if love pleaded, justice opposed: sin is not cancelled so. But here mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; and this not for earth only but for heaven and all eternity. In the Lord's own words, the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him, where unbelief saw nothing but failure and ignominy. And what was the result? God shall glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him. It is Christ's work seen in God's light, estimated and honoured by God Himself on high.

On this Christianity is based, while Israel passes into its long eclipse. Hence flows the gospel of grace to the lost; hence, according to God's secret purpose, the call of the church for union with Christ by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, and baptising the saints, Jew or Gentile matters not, into one body, Christ's body. Even the apostles were then and afterwards full of the earthly hope, and restoring the kingdom to Israel. Not so; instead of the unintelligent confusion of theology also, instead of the throne of David or even the dominion of the Son of man over all the peoples, nations, and languages, Christ was to be glorified, not only in heaven entirely separated from the world, but in God Himself, and this "straightway," in emphatic contrast with the future kingdom which He will by-and-by receive, and return to put down all adversaries in power and

glory. Christianity has heavenly and eternal things revealed to faith now.

With this the hope revealed in chap. xiv. 1-3 is in perfect keeping. Here the land and the city, the people and the temple, vanish into nothingness. Not a word about misleaders, false Christs, or false prophets. We hear not of wars or rumours of wars, of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, of famine, of earthquakes in places; nor yet of tribulation and murder, or of hatred from all the nations for Christ's name, nor of internal discord and treachery and hatred, as the love of the many decayed, while some would endure throughout, and God would see to it that the glad tidings of the kingdom should be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony unto all the nations. Still less is there room here for the special and awful sign, according to Daniel's prophecy, of an idol standing in the sanctuary, the harbinger of speedy desolation when the godly in Judæa must flee immediately to save their lives or yet worse. Not a hint here of the tribulation beyond parallel to fall at the close on a nation of meting on meting and of treading down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.

In our chapter we have a wholly different state. We see souls about to be severed from such anxieties, and elevated by incomparably higher associations, who have no fears of flight in winter or on sabbath, and are in no way warned for themselves against the cry of Messiah here or there, or the great signs and wonders which Satan will be let work in the hour when God retributively sends an

energy of error that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Still more complete and manifest is the difference of the Christian hope in John xiv. from the Presence of the Son of man in Matt. xxiv., "As the lightning goeth forth from the east and shineth to the west," especially with the accompanying words, "wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered." Beyond mistake this is the Lord coming in the accomplishment of His judgment, not of His love; for the earth, not for the Father's home above. The figures employed point only to His judicial dealings, with which sun, moon, and stars sympathise. For "immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land (or earth) lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Here is no gathering of saints to Christ in heavenly glory, but the Son of man to whom all judgment is committed; and His appearing is as sudden as the lightning flash: where the carcase is, there the birds of prey flock. The governing powers, supreme, derivative, and subordinate, no more do

their office; all shall be shaken. The sign is not as before of apostate religion for the godly to flee and escape, but of their Deliverer to destroy those that destroy the earth. The Son of man appearing in heaven is the sign of His speedily coming to the earth to judge the quick and the dead. Hence it is no longer those in Judæa, but "all the tribes of the land" (or earth) that lament, and see Him coming; whereas when Christians are concerned, they are manifested, neither after nor before, but in glory with Him. While He is hidden, so are they; when He is manifested, so are they, having been previously caught up. It is His elect of Israel accordingly who are gathered together when He sends forth His angels with a great sound of trumpet and comes in His kingdom.

It is plain that when the Lord presents Himself for the earth and the earthly people, these traits characterise the solemn event: the apostasy, and the man of sin usurping God's prerogatives even in His temple; the desolation and the tribulation that ensue beyond all that ever had been, or that is to be; and the Son of man appearing to take vengeance on the portentous and blasphemous lawlessness, and to deliver Israel by the destruction of their enemies.

Ours is the wholly distinct lot of His coming to receive us to Himself for the place which He is gone to prepare for us in the Father's house, that where He is (and what Christian doubts it?) we may be also. It is the consummation of the sovereign grace which has associated us with Him,

so that we are risen with Him even now, one spirit with the Lord, and can say with the beloved apostle that "as he is, so are we in this world." But we await His coming to be caught up together with the dead in Christ risen first, in clouds to meet the Lord, into the air, and thus to be ever with the Lord. We are not of the world as He is not, and we look for Him to make it good by being taken up to heaven, as He Himself ascended there, not by judicial dealing with our enemies to make the earth the scene of His righteous rule, but by giving us part with Himself in His joy and glory on high, though we shall also reign over the earth when He takes His great power and reigns.

These are the words of the Lord and they are worthy of all heed. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe on (*εις*) God, believe also on (*εις*) me. In my Father's house are many abiding-places; were it not so, I would have told you; because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where *I* am *ye* also may be." Simpler words there could hardly be; but what depth of feeling, and height of glory! Jesus was departing, despised of Israel; their beloved Lord, yet one apostle the traitor, another His denier; who could wonder if all the eleven were troubled? Let them be assured that grace would turn all for good and to God's glory. "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe on God" though ye never saw Him. "Believe on me" when I depart unto the Father, and ye cease to see Me. Let your faith rise from

its Jewish form to its Christian character and fulness. Compare John xx. 29.

Even My earthly people shall yet say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name. Meanwhile I am re-entering heaven to give you who have fore-hoped in Me the Christ a better portion, even a part with Me on high. Instead of abandoning you, I will as your divine Saviour both prepare you for the place as already set before you, and prepare the place for you by going to the Father's house. But My heart is fixed, as is the Father's will, on bringing you there. "In my Father's house are many abiding-places." No doubt you have never aspired to such a home. You have expected Me to abide for ever with you in your house, when I have purged it of all adversaries and evils by the power which I have even to subdue all things to Myself. But there is ample room for you as well as Me in that intimate home of divine love and heavenly glory. "If it were not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be."

This is a hope far beyond that of the fathers; though they waited for the city that has foundations whose artificer and demiurge is God, and were eager for a better country than Canaan, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. But to Christians, or saints now being called, He is not ashamed to be Christ's Father and our Father, His God and our God. Such since redemption is

our association with Christ. And our hope rises proportionately, however unbelief may try to level down, and contend for a monotonous unity which is at total variance with scripture, and God's ways, and above all, His counsels.

No truth more sure or important than the love the Father bears the Son, and all the more, when for the glory of God He became man, and died atoningly that the salvation of the lost might be not only of grace but righteous, God's righteousness; and that the same death of Christ might be the basis for all blessing and glory for ever in His universe, His unbelieving enemies alone excepted. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my complacency" (Matt. iii. 17, &c.). "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things [to be] in his hand" (John iii. 35). But the Son Himself tells the Father later before the disciples that He loved the saints as He loved the Son (John xvii. 23). It is this accounts for their future display in the same glory. But it also accounts for that which was in His hidden purposes still deeper, more tender and intimate, the hope of Christ's coming for the Father's house, and fetching us into the place He prepared for us there, that where He is, we too might be. Thence He passed, out of this world which crucified Him, unto the Father. There God, who was glorified in Him here at infinite cost, glorified Him in Himself. There our life is hid with Him in God. There shall we be introduced when He comes and takes us unto Himself. How bright the glimpse of it we have in John xvii. 24! "Father, I will (or, desire)

that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the world's foundation." To those that love Him this far transcends the glory that He gives us and that we share along with Him before every wondering eye of man; when the very world shall know by the then display that the Father sent the Son [for how else could we be thus blessed?], and that He loved us as He loved the Lord; for we appear in the same glory as its standing demonstration.

Indeed the facts, that He deigns to prepare a place for us in the Father's house, so much above the hopes of saints and prophets, and that He personally comes into the air for the wondrous meeting there to fetch us into His heavenly house, bespeak love unmeasured. We know how to show honour to our friends, when we do not let them come to us as best they can, but send some trusty person to conduct them, or it may be a member of the family. If greater attention were called for, the wife of the busy head might go. But if the utmost were intended, the head of the family would set aside every hindrance and come to meet the beloved and honoured object. O how wondrous, that for us the Son comes thus, as we think of Himself and of ourselves! But it is here love beyond all thought or comparison for this supreme moment, and all that follows is in keeping with it. Sovereign grace, known as far as it can be revealed, in its depths for us, lays the ground. Unfailing grace in its faithfulness, notwithstanding every strain through

our weakness and unwatchfulness, exposed to the profound spite and the sleepless malice of our—of His—great enemy, guards and preserves us all the way through. Triumphant grace, in its heavenly height, at length consummates the love of Christ. “I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

Besides, there is the context which follows the hope, and confirms the essentially Christian character of these communications the Lord was then giving. For He proceeds to explain to His disciples that gift of the Spirit which is peculiar to the individual and the assembly, as says another apostle : the distinguishing privilege and power since His redemption and ascension to heaven. “For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Nowhere is the divine personality of that gift more clearly asserted or implied than in these chapters xiv. xv. and xvi. of this Gospel. It is the other Advocate whom the Father would give and send in His name, whom He Himself would send from the Father to be for ever with them and in them ; the Advocate who was to come, because Jesus went away to heaven and sent Him unto them to be abidingly with us and in us.

It is extreme prejudice which alone hinders the believer from apprehending that such is the new and characteristic provision for the Christian and the church while the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. It is in the Spirit that we cry Abba, Father, and are each guided in right dependence. By Him one enjoys the deep things of God, otherwise beyond

all comprehension. By Him we walk, witness, and worship. So it is that one is enabled to preach the gospel or teach the truth. Through Him we by faith wait for, not righteousness which we have in Christ, but the hope of righteousness in the coming glory. Again, it is by, or in virtue of, one Spirit that we were all baptised into one body; as we are also builded together for God's habitation in Spirit.

Only part of what we now owe to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit is here passingly alluded to; for in truth He covers and gives a new and divine character to every exercise of the new creation, through the word revealing and glorifying Christ to us. To put honour on Him was the Spirit now sent forth from heaven. Hence it was expedient for us that Christ should go away, great as the loss seemed to the sorrowing and troubled disciples. For if He went not away, the Advocate who was to be expressly our helper in every exigency (and this in the recall of all Jesus had said and been and done, as well as in the revelation of all His glory on high) should not come unto us. But Christ went up, and sent Him unto us: the essentials of Christianity.

When the Spirit came, it was the demonstration to the world of its sin in not believing on Jesus; of righteousness, because He is gone to the Father, rejected by the world that sees Him no more as He was, but as the Judge; and of judgment, because this world's ruler who led to His rejection has been judged. The Spirit's presence, outside this world which beholds and knows Him not, can (now that redemption is made) guide the believers into all the

truth, taking of Christ's things and reporting them to us, and also the things that are to come.

Now all this wondrous manifestation of the truth to the Christian depends on three things: the period of the Son as come in manhood here below; the accomplishment of His work of reconciliation on the cross; and His ascension as the risen accepted Man according to divine counsels, who has sent the Spirit that we might have this divine Person dwelling with and in us for ever, to make good subjectively what we behold by faith objectively in the Lord, the blessed image of the invisible God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; and now that, dead and risen, He is gone on high, we have not only the unique hope beyond all others of His coming again to receive us unto Himself, to be in the Father's house where He is, but further by the Spirit unfailing power of communion with the Father and the Son, a fountain of blessing within, fresh and perennial, and rivers of living water flowing out, through that Saviour living above for them, as they live because He lives.

All is new and Christian truth; the foundation as here made, not merely in view of our need met, but of God glorified as such to our immeasurable blessing; the necessary purifying from every defilement in our walk which Christ effects all the way through for us associated with Him for heaven; the heavenly hope for us destined to be with Him where He is, altogether outside and above the world, whatever else we may share; and meanwhile all the gracious help and power suitable for those so blessed

and with such a hope, while we wait for Him in the world which with its ruler is already judged.

It may be added that the allusions to Judas Iscariot in the middle and to Peter at the end of chap. xiii. were not without importance for the Christianity about to replace Judaism, as well as to strengthen and comfort those who were to labour, suffer, and share its privileges. The Lord made known to them, in presence of the traitor not yet indicated, the awful course he was about to take, that their faith in Himself might be more established, instead of being shaken, and followed it up with His very solemn deliverance: "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (20). No mistake was made either in His sending the guilty man or in others receiving him. He was an apostle sent by the Lord. It was a divine message heard from his lips; though he himself had neither saving faith nor life eternal, but was the son of perdition: the sad witness that the greatest external and official nearness to Christ, where that life is not, only exposes to the worst sin and ruin. And John could add at a later day, "Even now are there many antichrists."

But there was another lesson yet more widely needed by the Christian in Peter's case, not so fatal but most humbling. The Lord, in view of His going soon whither they could not as yet come, presses that new commandment which was an old commandment that they had from the beginning,

and was to become true in them as it was in Him, love, love one to another, the love not of a neighbour only, but the deeper love of God's family. Then Peter, confiding in his love, expresses his readiness to follow the Lord into the unknown, to follow Him now, to lay down his life for the Lord's sake, however others might hang back. Was it that he did not truly love Him? He loved Him well; but he was utterly wrong to confide in his love: self-confidence is the feeblest of reeds. And this he was soon after to learn, and to walk entirely dependent on Christ as a Christian. But now he must prove that flesh is no better in a saint than in a sinner. "Verily, verily, I say to thee, A cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." And so it was that night, not for his profit only but for every Christian's.

Let us turn to other scriptures, and see whether the Holy Spirit does not present the heavenly apart from earthly admixture, and distinct from the events of prophecy: a hope dependent on nothing but the secret of the Father's purpose, and the Son's faithfulness to His word and love to us. In 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52 is "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we* shall be changed."

It is not that the resurrection of the dead is "a mystery," nor even the resurrection of the righteous as a distinct act from that of men generally.

Of the latter we read in Job xiv. 1-12. "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? The waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Now the more familiar a believer may be with God's final revelation of things to come unto eternity itself, the more will he see the exact agreement of this early disclosure of resurrection with that latest one of the unjust. It is man, the prey of sorrow, decay, and death, without one ray of divine light till all ends in utter gloom, but not of actual extinction. Yet it is a sleep only broken when "the heavens are no more." How striking the coincidence with

Rev. xx. 11 ! For it is not only after the resurrection of the blessed and holy to reign with Christ, but when the thousand years of their reigning are over, after the last insurrection of released Satan's deceit shall have ended in total destruction. Then is the great white throne for the judgment of guilty unbelieving man. For the portion of men is to die, and after this judgment; in contrast with the believers' portion, which is Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, appearing a second time apart from sin to those that look for Him unto salvation. For He is the Saviour of the body also.

But the resurrection of the saints, which at the last is called "the first resurrection," was not in those early days unknown to the much enduring elder. "O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a roll! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever. For I know that my Redeemer (or Kinsman-vindicator) liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth (or dust) [while the earth and still more the heavens continue]; and after my skin hath been destroyed, yet from (or in) my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another" (Job xix. 23-27). Nor can it be denied that the orthodox Jews in N. T. times did confess that there is to be a resurrection both of just and unjust (Acts xxiv. 15).

As this was commonly believed save by the sceptical Sadducees, we may observe how properly the apostle does not speak of a mystery when he discusses the resurrection of the faithful in the

earlier part of the chapter, and proves it to be the complement of Christ's own rising from among the dead. He tells them a secret or "mystery," a N.T. truth now revealed, when he speaks of our being changed, without dying, at Christ's coming. "We shall not all be put to sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we* shall be changed." No intimation of this change of the living saints had ever been made, though now that it is, we can see a gleam preparing the way for it in the translation of Enoch in the ante-diluvian world, and in that of Elijah in the world that is now. And we can also read the words of the Lord in the days of His flesh, which were only written down in John xi. 25, 26, after the Epistles of Paul. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he have died, shall live; and everyone that liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Here we have the grand result at His coming, the dead saints raised, the living believers changed without dying; as the Lord then enunciated, but left to be written and understood at a later day.

It is observable how completely earthly objects are outside the description in 1 Cor. xv. Nothing is named but the resurrection of those that are Christ's, besides the living Christians who are changed if possible more gloriously at the same time. This last it is which involves "the mystery." It is a superficial mistake to think that the last trump has any reference to the seven trumpets of

the Revelation, which are the loud warnings of divine judgments in providence, after the seven seals of more reserved dealings have been opened. At length are poured out the last vials of God's wrath before the Saviour appears in personal display of judgment.

"The last trump" seems a figure drawn like others here and elsewhere from the familiar facts of an army at the moment of leaving its encampment. Previous soundings were the known and necessary signals usual among the military. But the Spirit of God avoids more here and concentrates anything answering to them in the "last trump," when the instant arrives for those that are Christ's to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Nor has earth the least place in the scene of heavenly glory, but the gracious power of His resurrection distinctly now proved as the resurrection of the dead saints and the life of those alive, on a scale and pattern altogether transcending the raising of Lazarus or any other, during the days of His flesh, to a life in the flesh. The unclothed will be clothed as never before, and the surviving saints clothed upon, that mortality, the mortal in them, might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. v. 1-4). There is therefore an evident contrast with the awful sound of the trumpet at Sinai, and but one plain link of connexion with "the great trumpet" of Isaiah xxvii. 13, Matt. xxiv. 31; in that the loud sound accompanies the gathering together His chosen people on the earth, "the holy mount at Jerusalem," as the trump of

God is to gather the changed to the Lord for heaven. One readily understands that the aim, when God was about to speak His ten words to Israel, was to fill sinful trembling man with overwhelming awe, not only by thunders and lightning and thick cloud, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, but Sinai altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire with blackness and darkness and tempest and a voice more terrible than all. But here it is exclusively the one fashioned, even in the body, in accordance with the likeness of Christ's glory, loved of God as He was loved, and about to be with Him in the Father's house. Solemn grandeur will be there, but not an atom of fear before His perfect love as befits God's glory and ways.

Magnificent results will follow for the earth, for Israel, for all the nations, when Jehovah will destroy "in this mountain" the face of the covering cast over all the peoples and the vail that is spread over all the Gentiles. But the resurrection of the just, the glorification of the family of God for the heavenlies, must precede even the taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. Then indeed Jehovah's hand will accomplish what His mouth promised. A woman may forget her suckling child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb; yet will not Jehovah forget Zion. Behold, He has graven her upon the palms of His hands; and her walls are continually before Him. And kings shall be Zion's nursing fathers, and princesses her nursing mothers; they shall bow

down to her with face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet.

But the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ have a place as elevated in the heavens as Israel will surely have on the earth. And this everlasting purpose of His must be made good in sight of the principalities and powers in the heavens, before the dealings of God begin to awaken and lead on into blessing the nucleus of His first-born for the earth, and to put down their Gentile foes in every form and degree. For the secret of His will, now made known to the Christian (never before), according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself is that, for the administration of the fulness of the seasons, He will sum, or head, up together in one all things in Christ, both those in the heavens, and those on earth, in Him in whom we were also allotted our inheritance. This we are to share with the Heir of all things; and the final touch He will put to fitting His joint-heirs will be done when He receives them to Himself on high for the Father's house, before the judicial measures begin to chastise the usurpers of the inheritance, and the gracious measures concurrently to prepare a people for the Lord when He with His heavenly ones appears in glory to possess Himself of the earth and fill it with the blessings of His reign.

Before entering on the examination of other testimony, I take the opportunity of noticing the blighting effect of the earthly or Jewish side of the Lord's coming on those who would thereby swamp

the heavenly. A dear brother in the Lord from a distant land (whom I have no reason to consider heterodox, only one-sided and enthusiastic and exclusive in seeing nothing higher than the kingdom) broached, when pressed with the hope as set before us in John xiv., that there is no future whatever in the opening verses of this chapter! He would have it that it reveals nothing to come, but only what we now enjoy as part of our Christian privilege. He laid stress on "many mansions," or abiding places, and argued that we have all that is there adduced by our Lord to comfort the disciples fulfilled in the precious fact that we are already *in* Christ in the heavenlies.

To this one wholly demurs, insisting that the Lord spoke of their being *with* Him, "that where I am, ye also may be," not at all here of being *in* Him. Of this we do hear in the quite different intimation of ver. 20 where, as He said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This beyond question is realised to-day; nor need anyone contest that so it is in the context both before and after, where the Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans (or desolate), I am coming unto you" (18), and, "If one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (23). But in ver. 3 there is distinctive care to preclude the confusion, as the word is "I am coming *again*, and will receive you unto myself." It is not the spiritual coming of the Father and the Son to abide with the obedient saint here, but

Christ's personal coming again, to receive us unto Himself, that where He is (that is, in His Father's house of many mansions, in which He even then speaks of Himself, as in xvii. 11), we also may be.

Can one conceive of greater havoc done through Judaizing the hope than such an effect on one who sincerely and earnestly loves Christ's appearing? In an experience by no means short and with a heart I trust far from narrow toward the saints, poor or rich, lowly or noble, learned or unlettered in many lands, never have I known any truth as to which the least taught had more hearty communion with the most deeply instructed than in looking onward to be with Christ on high according to this promise of our Lord. What makes its denial more startling is that it came from an active partizan, though neither extreme nor virulent, of a prophetic school which more than most pleads the voice of early tradition for its shade of premillennialism, and certainly with more reason than the historicalists, such as even the late E. B. Elliott. But tradition is an echo of uncertain sound for the truth, and sure to betray its advocates into more or less of human accretion and divine loss. Both the O. T. and the N. T. revelations of God solemnly warn against the danger; as the new nature under the action of His Spirit assuredly repudiates aught but His word for our hope no less than our faith.

Nor did the mischief end with unbelief as to John xiv. 1-3. It was equally marked when Zech. xiv. 5 was cited to show that the O. T. recognises the coming of all the saints at Jehovah's advent

and day. But, admitting that the holy angels will be there, it seems strange to question what is so distinctly taught in 1 Thess. iii. 13, iv. 14, 2 Thess. i. 10, Jude 14, Rev. xvii. 14, xix. 14, in some of which texts the accompanying terms exclude angels, though elsewhere these may really be meant. Is it not sad to see how a partial apprehension of the truth works to obliterate what is heavenly? Yet Daniel the prophet does not fail to discriminate the saints of the high or heavenly places (vii. 18, 22, 25, to whom judgment was given as in Rev. xx. 4), from their "people," who have the greatness of the kingdom given them "under the whole heaven."

It would however be altogether unfair to put this great defect on a level with a horrid delusion which has lately come to light in a work called "Parousia," by Dr. J. Scott Russell, and cried up in the late Dr. R. Weymouth's Version of the N. T. in Common Speech, as well as in a volume of discourses entitled "Maranatha," by the Rev. F. B. Proctor. Whether such strange doctrine prevails beyond a small admiring circle is not known. Mr. P.'s volume fell under my eyes quite recently, and the version named still more so. But they are evidence enough, that the supposed "great book" of Dr. R. is in truth a mischievous blunder, the revival in spirit of that early imposture of which the apostle speaks in 2 Tim. ii., "that the resurrection is passed already." The assumption of these dreamers is: Christ came finally and so fully at the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, that all scripture about His "parousia" was then exhausted!

None need wonder that in this as in other systems of error, not a little truth, generally overlooked, is interspersed, so as to give a fair colour to the lie. These men, like Hymenæus and Philetus of old, overthrow the faith of some; for no lie is of the truth. And this lie denies necessarily the resurrection of the body, the triumphant rapture of the saints to Christ, our future abiding place in the Father's house, no less than the awful judgment of the quick in the day of the Lord, when the Satanic trio condignly suffer, and the displayed world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ shall come in power and glory, to the deliverance of the still groaning creation. Then the purpose of God shall be fulfilled for the administration of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and those on the earth; in Him in whom also we were given inheritance as His joint-heirs.

Take this sample from p. 116. "We believe that a great wrong is done—because it misleads—when we speak of the church of Christ as a Bride mourning her absent Lord; as is done in some of our hymns. The fact is that He is not absent; He has come 'and is here'—a Real Presence abiding with His church for ever. We are bound to believe that the Lord did come in or about the year 70, and then fulfilled all His predictions and promises concerning the second coming." Again, in p. 119, G. A. Smith on Isa. vii. 14 is cited, "God with us is the one great fact in life," with the comment, "We may add, it is the greatest fact in history. For what else has ever happened to be put in comparison with it?"

[Yet the volume opens most inconsistently, with the admission that, not the Incarnation, but the atoning death on the cross, is the true central point, whereon all turns for God's glory, man's salvation, and the reconciliation of all things, though the last needs His future revelation with His saints to give it effect. For in the cross, not before, was sin judged by God on the holy and divine Saviour]. "But if so much can be said of His first advent (*which was but temporary* !), how much is the fact intensified when we apply it to His second coming and abiding Presence, which took place within the life-time of a generation of people who heard Him speak? Which also the apostles constantly recurred to as to a point in history at which a new era would commence."

The error comes out plainly in the remarks on John xi. 25, 26 (p. 153, &c.). "Now, this great saying does not mean that resurrection is a matter of course, nor does it speak of a distinct resurrection at some indefinite last day [the very thing our Lord taught unmistakably and four times over in John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54 !] ; least of all does it allude to a graveyard resurrection such as is commonly believed in. But His words mean what they say : Jesus is Himself the resurrection and the life. They are only inherent in the race as in Him."

But this show of truth is as false as Satan can make it. For the real bearing is that Christ is the power of resurrection and life in His person, as being the Son and God ; He was therefore able to raise Lazarus there and then to life in the flesh, as

He will at the due time raise the dead believers and change the living ones: had Martha this faith? In order to do so, at the last day, consistently with God's nature and our sins, He must Himself die and be raised again. For as John xii. 24 tells us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Life in resurrection power is to have life abundantly. Hence since He rose believers are now quickened, who were dead in offences and sins, yea, quickened together with Christ, and raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him.

This in no way supersedes but is rather the ground of our being changed, even our body of humiliation transformed into conformity with His body of glory, when He comes from the heavens as Saviour in full, not of the soul only as now, but of the body also at that glorious hour. Life and resurrection are not inherent in the race. The believer has life, but it is in the Son. All depends on Him. We live because He lives; and the life as a believer I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. ii. 20). But though heavenly as of the Heavenly One, we still bear the image of Adam, the man of dust; when the body is raised in incorruption, glory, and power at His still future coming, we shall bear the image of the Second man, the last Adam.

Thus the notion, that the second coming of Christ is come, is a dream which avails itself of truth unknown

in the great or the small denominations, to destroy the truth of His next advent and of the resurrection from the dead, which flows from Christ's rising as the foundation of Christianity, and looks on to that bright consummation. The blessed hope is annulled. The kingdom no doubt is already set up in mystery; but their fond fancy, which makes what we now have to be all, annuls what we await. Satan shall then be crushed under our feet, and the power of the Lord so established that not an idol shall remain, nor a blade of grass that shall not flourish under His glory. For then God heads up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; and we shall share with Him all the inheritance, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. It is a cruel cheat of the enemy, that the day of manifested power and glory is begun, or never to be. Though the Lord is received up in glory, He is hid in God; whereas then He will be manifested, and we too in glory. The world to come is *not* come, but is surely coming.

It is all well to quote John v. 25, "Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live." This is *not* what He wanted for Martha; but it is the faith that must be now, if souls are to be quickened and not perish. But why is not the further truth added of verses 28, 29? "Wonder not at this; for an hour *is coming* [which *now is not*] in which all *that are in the tombs* shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: those that have done good unto a resurrection of life; and

those that have done ill unto a resurrection of judgment." Here in the same context is the truth to which the Lord attaches the same solemn mark of divine truth; He affirms the absolute certainty of that which this spurious Parousia school audaciously denies.

It is not that any rise again independently of Christ; for as He is the giver of life eternal, God also gives the prerogative of all judgment to Him as the despised but glorious Son of man. It is His voice that expressly calls for what is here sneeringly called "a graveyard resurrection;" for "all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice," just or unjust, well-doers or evil-doers. Hence there are to be two resurrections bodily, as we read in the prophecy of Rev. xx. 4-6, and 11-15: a resurrection of life and reigning with Christ; and a resurrection of judgment and endless woe. We need not wonder at the quickening of the spiritually dead, when the Lord will call from their tombs the actually dead to come forth, the godly and believing who have life in Him now unto a resurrection of life, and the worthless unbelievers unto a resurrection of judgment issuing in the lake of fire.

No wonder that for free thinkers "a translation of translations" should be sometimes preferred to a faithful and close version. No wonder that the Christian's belief in the apostle's warning of ever-growing failure and ruin, till Christ personally arrive for heavenly glory and earthly judgment, is treated as "pessimism," and as "the Christian's worst enemy." Christ is not on His own throne to reign

yet, but as the world's despised and crucified on the Father's throne. "In the world ye have tribulation," said the Lord; not a special one, as retributively for Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but ever and anon in our pilgrimage, the very apostles the last, though in the church the first, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. It was the volatile and worldly-minded Corinthian brethren who took the place of filled, and rich, and reigning "without us" (the apostles): "and would that ye did reign, that we might reign with you," said the large-hearted Paul. But it was a mere delusion.

If we died together with Christ, we shall also live together; if we endure (or suffer patiently), we shall also reign together. As Christians we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the now time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to usward." Christ is not reigning yet, still less is He administering the affairs of the world. It is a falsehood which these theorists share with the Papacy on the one hand, and the Mormons on the other, who both seek, and not they only, present power and glory. Even the last time or hour (1 John ii. 18-27) is marked by the prevalence, not of Christ but of many antichrists, the sad harbingers of the Antichrist, whom the Lord Jesus shall appear to destroy, as 2 Thess. ii. 8 tells us. The Father's kingdom will not arrive for the heavens, nor the Son of man's for the earth, till He shall come to judge the quick, and all lawless ones be cast out of His kingdom into the furnace of fire, and the

righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

One may not value the tradition through Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, and must incomparably prefer the living and gracious light of the inspired scriptures. But those western chiefs did not destroy either the foundations, or the hope, like these strange fanatics of the misbelieved and perverted "Parousia." For theirs is an utter misuse of precious truth which leaves nothing but decomposed fruit, the ashes of death, instead of the life, of which they write so glibly and unspiritually and unholily, without a single atom of truth rightly understood or applied. Unbelief of the truth is blind and bad; but how much worse is faith in a lie of Satan that supplants God's mind for faith and hope?

This may suffice here on so unsavoury a theme. Let us turn for one's refreshment, and it may be for the profit of others, to the Lord's words in Luke xii. 35-39.

It is not here bridesmaids outside with their torches going forth to meet the bridegroom, but servants within the house with their lamps alight. "Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning, and yourselves like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave (or return from) the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open to him. Blessed those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find on the watch. Verily I say to you, that he will gird himself about, and make these recline, and coming up will serve them." Believing merely in His second coming in

no way meets what our Lord here impresses on His bondmen, but their hearts fixed on His return as the first of their duties. Watching on their part His heart craves. Servants are not unused to seek their pleasure when their lord is away for ever so little, some without, others in distant parts of a great house. But He in the most earnest way lays it on them to be as men that wait for their own master whenever he may return from the nuptial feast, that when he comes and knocks they may without delay open to him. No delay, no hurry to reach this post, but on the look-out, by the door as it were, that, when His knock is heard, they may forthwith open to Him. "Ye," yourselves, waiting for Him, characterises their whole outlook.

On all sides it is eminently in keeping with the place assigned by the Spirit to Luke; who, as he conveys the grace in Christ, demands also the becoming answer of the heart in the saints. The return from the wedding-feast was the best possible figure on the Lord's part, the sympathetic occasion of festive joy, yet when the night might be more or less spent. His return from the wedding as a prophetic event suits not the marriage of the Lamb on high, still less the day when Zion shall be called Hephzibah, and the land Beulah. But as a figure, expressive of a duty suitable to His loving fellowship, filled with bright joy, and excluding all associations of judgment and sadness, what so appropriate? What could so well call out the warm affections of the bondmen to their own Lord? If words were to put the saints into the constancy of waiting for the

coming of Christ, surely none could more powerfully set that hope as the proximate and immediate object before their hearts.

But there is more. What could strengthen it so much as the wondrous grace in the assurance He solemnly adds, what no other lord would think of? He shall gird Himself about—yes, in the glory of heaven, and make them recline at its feast, and come up and serve them. It was the humiliation of love we only conceive faintly, that He, who subsisting in God's form deemed it no object of seizure to be on equality with God, emptied Himself when He took a slave's form and came in likeness of men. Yet He went farther, as love's need required; and when found in fashion as man, He humbled Himself in becoming obedient as far as death (and what must it have been to Him?) yea, death of the cross. It was in that divine love which would secure God's glory and man's blessing at all cost. Now glorified in heaven He continues the work of a slave in the intercession for us, which was symbolised by the washing of the defiled feet of the disciples. But here again His love is to assume a renewed form when we are there glorified; when, as His mark of honour for His bondmen that have watched for Him, He will cause them to recline at the heavenly feast, and come up to serve them.

And then let us consider the joy it is, that this the apostolic hope is ours now no less than the apostolic faith and fellowship, if one has ears to hear. "And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find [them] so, blessed are

those." It is thus evident that expecting the Lord certainly at a distant and defined moment is not in the least what He impresses. A prophecy has its own definite character, if not at a fixed time like the Seventy Weeks, and many others of less moment, yet marked by distinct circumstances which shut it up to a well understood time or season. Here it is expressly otherwise. Of purpose it is as uncertain when, as it certainly is to be; and the object is that His bondmen should be always on the watch.

If now the teaching of the apostles is sought, none can find a more direct supply than in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. From 1 Thess. i. we learn that the great apostle of the Gentiles instructed those saints from their conversion to God, not only to serve Him as a living and true God, but to await His Son from the heavens whom He raised from out of the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath. This waiting is no doubt quite general; and it was wisely so as a first outline for souls just brought out of heathenism. Enough it was for them from the start to be put into this happy condition of waiting for Him who so loved them and had wrought so efficaciously for them now and for ever. Details they would have in due time; and not a little in these early letters.

Nor was it less on Paul's side (ii.), who, as he wished no selfish advantage nor present power nor worldly honour, but to be the ready servant of Christ's love and will, looked for his reward in no object of earth's vain glory. "For what is our hope or joy, or crown of boasting? Are not ye, too, before

our Lord Jesus at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy." But he also most carefully (iii.) urged them to love toward one another and toward all, as was his own affection toward them; in order to confirm their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. The proud unbelieving fancy of any members of Christ being absent then he would thus efface from every heart.

Disallowing another old fancy, that a saint's death is Christ's coming for him, the apostle seals on the scene of bereavement the joyful certainty (iv.), that God will bring *with* Christ those put to sleep through Jesus. And he explains, as a new revelation, that the Lord Himself will come *for* His saints, the dead in Christ, and ourselves then alive and remaining, in order to be all thenceforth for ever with Him.

He also points out (v.) the awful character of His day, when sudden destruction comes on the sons of night and darkness whom that day shall overtake as a thief. Every Christian ought to see the distinctness of the Lord's coming to gather His own unto Himself above, from His day of judicial dealing with His and their adversaries: the one a quite fresh revelation of sovereign grace in its triumphant close, the other a well-known theme of all prophecy.

The second Epistle follows up the same truth, but particularly to guard from the delusion, which some palmed on the saints, that the day of the Lord had actually come. Hence it is shown them that the persecution, which seems to have been thus perverted, is not at all the feature of that day. For

then the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, awarding both tribulation to their troublers, and rest to His saints. It will be His vengeance in flaming fire on the evil; while He shall have come, not to receive the saints to Himself for the Father's house, but to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that believed, before the world. Therefore in chap. ii. he begs them, for the sake of (or by) His coming and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken by the false cry that the day of the Lord was present. For before *that day* (not before His coming for us) two fearful evils must be: *the* apostasy, and the man of sin revealed who is to be annulled by the appearing of His coming in that day. Lastly, in chap. iii. he prays the Lord to direct their hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ. He waits patiently; and so should we, instead of the idle selfish folly of some.

We may see how the blessed hope is meant to cheer, elevate, and strengthen all the practical life; as the other Epistles still more apply it! No wonder Satan labours incessantly to dim, weaken, and destroy its light and power. Take 1 Corinthians as an instance. Thus in chap. i. 7 we have in strict propriety not exactly the "coming" but the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in ver. 8 "the day"; because only then will be manifested how the saints acquitted themselves as to the use of each gift of grace entrusted to their charge. Whereas in the Lord's Supper (chap. xi. 26) they were to announce His death until He come, bringing the affections into the deepest play between the termini of

Christian existence and pilgrimage, Christ's death and His coming.

Nor should we omit to note the words of another apostle, bearing on our theme, especially as they are generally and utterly misunderstood. The scene on the holy mount Peter counts as confirming "the prophetic word, to which ye do well in taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a squalid place, until day dawn and [the] day-star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. i. 19). "Ye" were the same Christian Jews of the dispersion whom he had addressed in his first Epistle, already familiar with the law. They did well in paying attention to the prophetic word, which he compares to a lamp shining in a squalid place (as this world truly is), over which hang the unsparing judgments of God soon to fall. Like the Hebrews to whom Paul wrote, they were slow in appropriating the fuller light and better hope of Christianity. Who can wonder that can intelligently estimate the less excusable shortcoming of Christians in this respect among (not Romanists, Greeks, Lutherans and Anglicans only, but) the boastful "Free Churches" of Protestants in Britain or the U. S. of America?

How few know of themselves, that "the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins"! How many premillennialists feel, as the late distinguished E. B. Elliott wrote to me a little before his death, that, if he believed the Lord was coming to-morrow, he himself would be much tried to-night. Where then the constant joyful hope? How fallen from grace and truth are even such leaders as that evangelical man! The apostle

accordingly adds, "until day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts"; *i.e.* till in your hearts shall have dawned heavenly gospel light, and Christ as morning star arisen there in hope, as now made known by the apostles.

The believing Jews were prone to rest satisfied with "the word of the beginning of Christ"—that Jesus in truth was the Messiah, God's Anointed. They believed the fact of His death, resurrection, ascension, and return; but they feebly apprehended the blessed results both for God and man, and especially for the saints. They were truly born of God and converted; but how little they entered, if at all, by the new and living way into their own nearness, far beyond that even of the Aaronic priesthood! How slow also to cry Abba, Father! With the light of day in the gospel goes also the hope of Christ as morning-star; it is not merely His rising in the day of Jehovah with healing in His wings for Israel, and with treading down as ashes for the wicked.

Here it is the hearts of the saints receiving fully heavenly light as well as the proper Christian hope. But men, and none more than Israelites, were proud of the old wine and unwilling to believe in the superior value of the new; they said, "The old is good." Hence (as this was a serious wrong to Him who was infinitely more than Messiah, and fresh grace was henceforth brought into the view of faith after His people's rejection of Him) the painstaking by the apostles to lead them onward from the elements into the depths of God now revealed; by Paul elaborately in the Epistle to the Hebrews; by

John in the mystic way of his Gospel and the Revelation; and by Peter in the fervent appeals of both his Epistles.

Many dear Christians unconsciously betray their total misapprehension of the apostle's drift by stopping short of what he says, and quoting only "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise," as if the words "in our hearts" had never been written, or had no meaning, whereas they are essential to the true sense. For the apostle does not here speak of the day of glory come for the earth, and especially Zion's light arrived. On the contrary he desires for the believing remnant of Jews to whom he writes again, that they should not rest content with the lamp of prophecy, good as it is for the murky place of a world under judgment with divine wrath impending, but have gospel daylight dawning, and the morning-star arising, in their hearts. For this is the special Christian privilege, as to which they might be quite unexercised, like too many saints in our day and for many centuries, who never rise in their anticipations beyond the kingdom and reigning with Christ. It is the realisation in their hearts of what Christ entitles to, both as regards present standing and the hope of His coming, which he could not take for granted, but urges on them. If any were possessed of this privilege already, they would know the vantage ground it gave them; if not, he would have them seek it from Him who blesses by faith according to the word of His grace.

It was the lack of understanding the apostle, which led two men of learning in our day to subject

his language to a violence repudiated by all the versions ancient and modern of any worth at all known. Both boldly strove to cut the connection of the words which have been specified as giving the true force, but each in a different way: one, by a parenthesis, so as to bring "ye take heed" into line with "in your hearts"; the other, by joining "in your hearts" with "knowing this first." There is no need to expose particularly the absurdity of either device, which most readers of intelligence will not fail to judge as equally unfounded, as they are due to inability in their authors to enter into the mind of the Spirit in the passage. Nor was that inability confined to those who invented their respective beds of Procrustes for torturing the text into the sense of their preference. One has only to glance over the conflict of opinion among the commentators of note to convince any enquirer that the key was quickly lost; and that neither hoary tradition nor modern pretension offers any satisfactory solution. Loss of the distinctive hope of the Christian was yet wider and more rapid than of the faith; and who can wonder at this who knows the heart, so easily slipping from the marvellous light of God, so dull to suspect its loss, so slow to return with humiliation of spirit to the unfailing source?

A confirmation of no little weight appears in other references. Thus Rev. ii. 28 holds out to the overcomer the precious promise of the Lord Jesus, "I will give to him the morning star." It is presented with the most marked distinctness from the authority the Lord will also give to him over the nations,

"and he shall tend them with an iron rod; as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also received of my Father." On the one hand there is the public display of association with Christ when the nations are shattered like potter's ware; on the other our receiving from Him the privilege of having Him before that day of glory breaks, when He is compared to the star that precedes the dawn, and none see save those that wait for Him and watch in the night before the morn.

It is of the more interest when we view the context more closely. For it occurs in what was written to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, the first of the letters which speak of the Lord's coming again, and therefore in principle go on till then. Here it is that the change takes place when "He that hath an ear," instead of preceding the promise, follows it, and thus gives the more emphasis to the individual that overcomes. In what is written here one cannot but discern the prefiguration of the mediæval state, not only the adulterous and haughty iniquity of Jezebel, or extreme Popery with its claim of infallibility ("who calleth herself prophetess"), but others also of wholly different mind, "My servants," whom she misled into uncleanness and communion with idol sacrifices, as notably the worship of the host, &c. There is also the striking intimation of a distinct remnant, "to you I say, the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, such as know not the depths of Satan as they say," that seem to designate witnesses of the pre-Reformation era, like the Waldenses remarkable

for their endurance and works of faith : a people singularly simple, devoted, and suffering.

Can we not discern the fitness of such a quasi-prophetic picture drawn by Him who knew the end from the beginning? The great corruptress, with her children, that sat a queen and should in no wise see grief, is to be cast into a bed, and with her the paramours into great tribulation, to be killed with death. She, by the claim of His name falsely and flagitiously, usurped authority over the nations in His absence, and reigned where and when the true church was called to suffer, yea unto blood, wrestling against sin. For faith follows Christ as He walked here, content and bound to wait till He takes His world-kingdom (Rev. xi. 15) and it refuses, as He did, Satan's offer of the habitable world, the reward of paying him homage, and of waiting to share all with Him at His coming. For it is not only that she will reign with Him over the earth, but that He will come to have her with Himself, before (as the sun of righteousness) He shall arise with healing in His wings for those that fear His name, when as an oven the day comes to burn the proud and the wicked as stubble, and to leave them neither root nor branch. This honour in a certain sense have all His saints, the risen reigning with Him, those on earth reigned over.

But for the overcomer that keeps His works to the end there is another privilege yet more precious, if not such a display of power. "And I will give to him the morning star." It is actual association with Himself on high before that day. What else renders

definite the meaning of His giving to His own the morning star? It is quite an advance on what the apostle desired in his second Epistle (i. 19) for the Christian Jews of the Dispersion. There he distinguishes the lamp of prophecy shining in the world's squalid place, over which judgments impend, from the superior day-light of the gospel, and the morning star of Christ as the heavenly hope arising within. It was well to heed that lamp; but they should not rest satisfied till they had what was far better even now in their hearts. In Rev. ii. it is not merely realising the Christian hope as in 2 Peter i., but the positively fulfilled promise, when Christ will "give" the morning star. Then shall we that watch be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and so also shall it be manifested in due time. But as yet the world will slumber and sleep, for it is still night; and they that sleep sleep by night, and they that drink drink by night. But we being of day, let us watch and be sober.

In the last chapter of the same book is another application of the same figure when a similar distinction reappears with great power and plainness in the closing words of our Lord. "*I* Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches." For it is our privilege to have the Spirit reporting to us what is coming, as well as what glorifies Christ now both here and on high, guiding us in short into all the truth. "*I* am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." Here we have the witness of His twofold glory. The O. T. bears clear witness as in Isa. ix., xi., &c.,

that He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the Mighty God, and the Child born, the Son given. The N. T. alone tells us of Him, whether in hope or in possession, as the Morning star. It is not the sun rising and calling the sons of men to their functions, in the day when all shall be ordered aright under the great King, Israel at the head of the nations, and they in their place of subjection as Jehovah ordains for the world to come whereof we speak; no more men that know not God or His designs for peace, and righteousness, and glory here below.

But the passage conveys much more, and of surpassing interest. It is not only the all-important distinction of heavenly glory as well as of earthly attached to the divine person of our Lord. The declaration from His lips that He is the bright, the "Morning Star," elicits the prompt answer of the bride, the Lamb's wife in title; and not her's only, but that of the Holy Spirit who had anointed and sealed, and here fittingly guides her. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

Evangelicalism,* afraid of going too far and disposed to humanise the truth, and thus enfeebling its intrinsic force, would address this cry to man, that he might be brought to Christ for new birth and the remission of his sins. But this is to mis-

* See the confusion of dear E. B. Elliott's *Horæ Apoc.* iv. 273 (fifth edition): "The voice of mercy and love is also yet to be heard, inviting sinners to salvation:—'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come'" &c. The vagueness is so great that the solemn announcement of the time when we are fixed for judgment or blessing is taken with Vitringa to import the prolonging of probation; and the Morning Star is passed over without a thought, it would seem. The late Mr. Newton seems no less in a muddle in his "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," applying it to the call of grace from us, "when standing in our glory." Not so; it is, now and here, our standing in grace.

apply, darken, and lose what the scripture here imports. For it is Christ announcing Himself as the Morning Star which draws out the heart's answer. His bride, the church animated and directed by the Spirit, thus responds to His love, and bids Him come according to His promise. Long had she waited for Him, and watched earnestly more than those that long for the morning. This in nature is indeed but a passing relief; whereas His coming will be the crowning joy of love and the instant change into glory for ever, though not yet the appearing before the world.

At the beginning He had said, I am coming again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye also shall be. For He departed, crucified by the world, but on the cross glorifying God as He never had been and never so needs again, glorifying God even as to sin, and thus furnishing to Him, as this only could inaugurate, a new glory. He was therefore glorified by God and in God, and this straightway, as the basis of the gospel at its fullest as well as of the church of God, Christ's body. In order to do this with other purposes pertaining to the heavenly and new state of things, He departed out of this world unto the Father. But far from abandoning the feeble objects of His grace, it is there and then strenuously declared (John xiii. 1) that having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. His love was out-and-out. Besides, the Father sends, and He too sends, the Advocate meanwhile, the Holy Spirit of truth, to abide with and in them for ever. But He also

assures them of His own coming again to fetch them into the Father's house: there and no less; that they may be with Himself in those many mansions.

When the Lord predicates of Himself "the bright, the morning Star," it is no mere wish or enthusiastic emotion of nature that bursts forth. The Spirit Himself takes the initiative in the heart of the church. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The earthly bride does not receive the Spirit till the Lord shall have appeared in glory. There will be true conversion in a godly remnant of Jews long before, in days of sore trial and ever growing evil and danger; some slain for righteousness' sake, and for truth as far as known; others preserved to be the nucleus of the generation to come. But the great privilege of the out-poured Spirit from on high is when the King is come, and the wilderness becomes a garden, and a garden is counted a forest. It is the day of Israel's full blessing and of the restitution of all things concurrently. But here every solid reason points to that heavenly bride, who alone has the privilege of the indwelling Spirit* to give her present communion with Christ in all things before He comes, and here in His coming for her. The form simple as it is has striking beauty, and is as characteristically suitable as full of grace. For He speaks, and she replies intelligently in the love that at once answers to His love.

* Hence we see in the parable of the ten bridesmaids, that the five wise who represent the faithful (in contrast with the foolish, or mere professors) have oil in their vessels, the possession of the Holy Spirit given to them and indwelling. In the Spirit they live, walk, worship, and wait for the Bridegroom. The Spirit in them is a spirit of communion. The godly Jewish remnant till the Lord appears do not rise beyond the Spirit of prophecy. Power inward and outward is in prospect only.

First there is the normal relation recognised, and the Spirit as competent and graciously prompting the bride. But next many a child of God is quite uninformed and unconscious of his proper association with Christ after this intimate pattern. Yet he does hear His voice, and knows not the voice of strangers. The reality of his divine birth is thus fully owned, while ignorance of the bridal relation is graciously provided against up to (we may say) the last moment that intervenes: "and let him that heareth say, Come." What is there to fear in His coming, Who for us died and rose and comes again? What love, joy, and honour are couched in His coming again to receive us unto Himself, and set us with and like Himself now in the Father's house! Therefore "let him that heareth say, Come." Is there not everything possible to preclude fear, to fill with delight and confidence?

But to the last the outflow of divinely given compassion for the wretched and lost has its place. The gospel has its glad and urgent message for souls, after Christ and His coming as the nearest of all to the church and to the Christian. Hence the quite distinct turn in the closing half of the verse. The difference is made clear by the necessary and plain omission of "say." It would be out of the question for any but the bride and the Christian to bid Christ come; those who know Him by faith and are assured of His love can and are called to say so. But it would be madness for any others to join in such a call. Because of their ruin and for their sins they need Him first to save their souls. Till

they believe, He could only be their judge. But it is still the day of grace. The word for such accordingly is, "And let him that is athirst come"; nor this only, but "let him that will take life's water freely."

The thirsty one is indeed invited to come. The church has the spring within, and rivers flowing without; but she calls to Christ. It is *His* name that avails for all the sinner's need before God. There is no obstacle on His side in the way: God gave and sent His Son for this express purpose. His death, however wicked and destructive might be man's part, only the more met his wants in God's surpassing grace. Let him in all his need "come," not say, "Come." Yea "he that will," however feebly he as yet feels his evil state, shall the more truly feel it, as he by faith apprehends divine love; "let him take life's water freely." God's grace gives it to him that is only willing, to him that comes just as he is. Is it not indeed a wondrous verse? And it emphatically applies till Christ comes.

It has already been pointed out how ill 2 Pet. i. 19 has fared at the hands of the erudite, and how the only real sense is lost by those who either unconsciously or wilfully sever "in your heart" from the immediate context. "The morning star" in Rev. ii. 28, xxii. 16, has been put to like torture, through ignorance of the heavenly hope which it figures, and by none more strangely than by the author of "Thoughts on the Apocalypse" (pp. 150, 151). "The glory of the star belongs to distant and unknown worlds; but the sun is a part of our own system, and is set specially to nourish and enlighten

it. Consequently when Christ first appears in the fulness of divine glory, in the glory of the Father, His own glory, and the glory of the holy angels, He is symbolized by the star. 'I am the bright and morning star.' To him that overcometh I will give the morning star, *i.e.* association with Himself in this high character of glory. It is to flesh and blood terrible glory (!) and in it he will exercise the destructive judgment whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in (!!). But when He brings in that gracious and benign display of glory, whereby Israel and the earth is to be abidingly blessed, we find Him symbolized by the sun."

Can one conceive more entire surrender to speculation without an attempt at scriptural proof? It is allowed that the morning star (not "the star" as he puts the case) differs from the sun; but where in the Bible is it ever represented as belonging "to distant and unknown worlds?" Where is Christ symbolised by the star when He "first appears in the fulness of divine glory," and of His other glories? When Christ in Rev. ii. 28 associates the overcomer with Himself in that high character of glory, what ground is there to assume that it is "to flesh and blood terrible glory?" or that "in it He will exercise the destructive judgments whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in?" If "the star" distinctively points to "distant and unknown worlds," is it consistent to make it the emblem of glory to flesh and blood? is it not incongruous with his own definition to say that in the star glory Christ will exercise "the destructive judgment

whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in"? And while the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings for those that fear His name, is he entitled to omit that they shall tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet in that day, for it is to burn as a furnace; and the proud and all that work wickedness shall be as stubble; and that day shall leave them neither root nor branch. This is hardly "gracious and benign," though He will fully be so for His own.

Nor is it a casual slip, but deliberate and systematic error. For in pp. 322, 323, the author returns to the same mischievous absurdity on Rev. xxii. 16. "He has other essential glories of His own. 'Before Abraham was, I AM.' He is the root and offspring of David, AND the bright and morning star. I have already spoken of the star, as the symbol of distant and unearthly glories derived from high and unknown spheres, into which the eye of man, as man, can never penetrate. It is in such glory, strictly and divine, that Jesus will come. It will be the true light of God's own glory and holiness arising suddenly on the deep darkness of the world's night. It will not be at first the sun arising with healing on His wings (for the day-star precedes the sun), but it will be the sudden visitation of strange and distant glory, suddenly breaking upon the abyss of darkness beneath. He will come as the Son of God in His own glory and in His Father's glory, and in the glory of the holy angels, and it is into such glory that they who are His at His coming are to be taken; for His promise is,

‘To him that overcometh will I give the morning star.’”

Now the simple fact is that the sole use *scripture* makes of the morning or day star is as the figure of Christ Himself coming for us to make good the heavenly blessedness with Himself promised to the overcomer (as in Rev. ii. 28); and the heart getting hold of this hope (as in 2 Pet. i. 19). There is not the faintest token of “distant and unknown worlds,” any more than of “destructive judgment” associated with it. The truth of God is as plain as the fiction of Mr. N.’s prophetic system; and even he was compelled, and not here only, to allow that “the day-star precedes the sun,” as of course it does, and that it means taking those that are His at His coming into a glory divine and heavenly far above the earth.

But it may surprise some enamoured with this incoherent scheme, that its author has elsewhere to allow that somehow the risen saints “are evidently recognised in the commencement of this chapter [Rev. xix.] as being with the Lord in glory.” This witness is true, but incompatible with his most cherished views. He seems to connect it with Rev. xvi. 15; yet this has no relation with the saints’ translation to heaven, but with the Lord’s coming judicially. His idea is that there are *two* distinct acts of Christ’s coming *for judgment*! the unearthly star-like one, in which He deals with the tares and gathers up to heaven the wheat; and the earthly one, when the saints follow Him out of heaven, and He destroys the Beast, the False Prophet, and the apostate hosts.

The whole idea is utterly false. For 2 Thess. ii. 8 is sure and plain that when the Lord appears with His saints, His first act is to destroy the lawless one and of course his followers; which Rev. xix. 19-21 confirms as well as Rev. xvii. 14.

O the darkness which fails to see that the bright morning star is His coming in fulness of grace to associate the heavenly saints with Himself, without the smallest sign of judgment if we accept the word of God! How sweet a hope now to arise in our hearts! How glorious and what joy of love when He thus comes to receive us unto Himself for the Father's house! Yes, He announces Himself as the bright, the morning star; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Destructive judgments! unknown worlds! Nay, but the consummation of His love and ours as one with Him; and this realised in the Father's house: were it not so, He had never raised our hope so high. Did He not say that the Father Himself dearly loves us, because we have dearly loved the Son and have believed that He came from God, yea the Father?

He will do more than display us before every eye in the same glory with our Lord, that the world may know that He loved us as He loved Him; He will gratify His own desire that we shall be with Him, and above the world where no earthly eye can penetrate, that we may behold Christ's glory, for the Father loved Him before the world's foundation. Is not this so light a thing to many saints that they never hear or speak of it? Yet is its spiritual joy far beyond any manifestation before

the world however glorious. Weigh it, brethren, that you may learn how much your earthly pre-occupation robs you of what should be your proper portion in fellowship with Him above.

Nothing has been said here as yet of what is a great bugbear to certain minds. They regard the "secret rapture" as enough without further proof to condemn the notion when stated. Those who have learnt its truth and its importance are content to speak of the rapture of the saints without further adjunct. Yet the morning star, unseen save by those who spiritually watch, lends itself in the readiest way to what other scriptures point. Let us consider these a little more.

In John xiv. 1-3 it is implied in our Lord's coming again and receiving us unto Himself. Neither time nor season, neither contingent change nor prophetic date, neither general state of the earth nor specific sign of any sort, finds the least place. Infinite love of the Son in communion with the Father elevates us above all such thoughts into an incomparable blessedness above with Christ. Is it conceivable that any Christian mind could doubt that the very manner of it is what the apostle Paul was given to announce in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, and 2 Thess. ii. 1, and 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, with details as to the dead saints and the living ones? Phil. iii. 20, 21, and Jude 24 sustain the same heavenly truth. In all it is the same translation of the saints to be with the Lord.

Not one word in these different scriptures teaches visibility to the world. It is the full making

good of that sovereign grace which without a displayed signal to the saints, still less to those who are not concerned, has given us the promise of heavenly association with Christ. Here we shall have the hope blessedly accomplished. In all these intimations there is the most marked absence of others then beholding what the Lord is effecting. It flows from that special love of His for His own, which excludes strangers from intermeddling with His joy. But the day of the Lord duly follows when the world shall see both Him and them appearing in glory (John xvii. 24).

What has misled people is the confounding of the revelation with the rapture. That as distinctly calls for "every eye" to see it, as this excludes it. The Lord will come for His own, will raise those that were put to sleep through Him, will change us the living that remain until then, both in an eye's twinkling at the last trumpet, and thus gather us together to Him, not only into the air to meet Him, but so received to set us in the Father's house before the presence of His glory with exultation. All this is quite above and apart from the ken of man. But the public vindication of Christ and His own before the universe is when He will come forth after the bridals of the Lamb on high, as well as the final judgment on earth of Babylon the great harlot to which God under the seventh vial gave the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath (Rev. xvii. xix.).

Then and not till then is the visible display of the Lord and of the glorified saints that follow Him out of the opened heavens, when He smites the

nations, shepherds them with iron rod, and treads the winepress of His wrath. It is fittingly and with precision called, not His presence merely, but "the appearing of His presence" (compare 2 Thess. ii. 1 with 8), by which the Lord Jesus shall annul the lawless one then revealed as well as the apostate imperial chief, who shall both be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Thus does God render tribulation to the troublers of the saints and repose to the troubled, not at the rapture of the saints, but at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This would have been quite incongruous with all that is said of His coming to change His saints and translate them to heaven. But it is in entire keeping with His appearing, His glorified being with Him, for the double purpose of their enemies paying penalty of everlasting destruction from the Lord's face and from the glory of His might, and of His coming (not to receive but) to be glorified in His saints and marvelled at in all that believed in that day. For it will be the day of the Lord then truly present, the saints having been gathered to Him previously.

With this perfectly agrees such a scripture as Rev. xvii. 14. It is ignored by those who oppose what they call the "secret rapture"; and no wonder, for it is utterly incompatible with their hypothesis. Those with the Lamb, when the Beast and the vassal kings make war with Him, are called

and chosen and faithful, the first and last of which terms can describe only His accompanying saints, not angels. This is confirmed irrefragably by the later description in Rev. xix. 14, where the symbolic clothing points to the saints, not to angels (compare ver. 8 before); and yet more by the previous marriage of the Lamb above. All concur in proving that the rapture of the saints, unseen by the world, whatever the astonishment produced by the disappearance of the living saints, must have preceded that revelation of the Lord and His saints glorified which is associated with the manifest and awful judgments He will execute on their enemies.

It has already been shown that Col. iii. 4 beyond doubt connects the manifestation, not the rapture, of the saints, with the Lord's manifestation in glory, not with His coming or presence simply. They are then, and not before, manifested in glory. Christ is therefore not seen in glory before they are caught up. They shall be manifested together. The scriptures on which men have thought differently refer to the Jews, not to Christians. But these godly Jews will be gathered in the land to Him as their glorious King, instead of being first caught up, and then at a later epoch appearing with Him in the same glory. Compare Matt. xxiv. 31-41, Mark xiii. 27-31, Luke xxi. 27-36; also Isa. xxiv. 21-23, xxv., xxvi., xxvii.

It may be, as it has been, alleged that though none of the scriptures which certainly apply to this subject speak of visibility to men, we do hear of the Lord's "shout," of the archangel's voice, of the

trump. But why should any attach loudness of sound to these expressions, solemn and impressive as they undoubtedly are? Why foist in that which appeals to the senses of outside mankind or of the world, when the language employed avoids it? It fully bespeaks the personal and gracious intervention of the Lord Jesus for His own, the faithful summons of God, the acclaim of the archangel, and in 1 Cor. xv. the immediate and final notice to depart; but none of these goes necessarily beyond the persons interested. They directly concern the household of faith, and only the glorified.

Men have compared the Lord's descent for us with Exod xix., but with singular infelicity. For thunder and lightnings were then, and the voice of a trumpet "exceeding loud," so that all the people trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, and Jehovah descended upon it in fire, and the smoke from it ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole region quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder. All thus was of set purpose minatory, alarming, and awful, as became the ministry of death and condemnation.

Even when the Lord comes in restoring mercy for Israel by-and-by, we read in the prophet that in that day a "great" trumpet shall be blown, and in the evangelist His angels will be sent with a great trumpet, or a great sound of trumpet. This does express what is wholly absent, where scripture tells of His coming in love and majesty to make good His love to the heavenly saints. For His

appearing to Israel is bound up with the infliction of judgments on the apostates, Jewish and Gentile, and the punishment of the enemies of His people and of the wicked in general. As with His own ascension, our rapture will be the triumph of grace which leaves the world unmolested for the moment, though the providential inflictions of God soon begin to follow in measured order and increasing degree, till all culminates in the day of the Lord at their close, as detailed in the Book of Revelation.

We have seen that one of the most able and accepted and determined to refuse discrimination between the Lord's coming *for us* and our coming *with Him*, between His presence and the appearing of His presence, was compelled to own that the glorified saints must be caught up to heaven for some time before they with Him emerge from it. For they follow the King of kings who descends to smite the nations with a sharp sword and to shepherd them with iron rod, as well as to tread the winepress of God's exceeding wrath. By B.W.N. they are allowed to have been there from the destruction of Babylon under the seventh vial. This however clashes with his fundamental principle, that God acts for Christ till He appears in person. Now, as all God's vials precede Christ's appearing, He cannot appear before they are poured out. If therefore Christ destroys Babylon and takes up the saints then or before its destruction, so that God is praised above for His judgment of the great harlot, He must have come for them before the day of His revelation from heaven in chap. xix. for His still

more awful judgment of the Beast, &c. This clearly overthrows the system *du fond en comble*; not only the arguments of others, but his own long considered statement and published defence.

The main question for those who value the truth is, Where or when according to scripture are the saints translated to heaven? Now it is beyond just question that the book of Revelation opens with the Lord seen in the prophet's vision judging the seven churches in Asia (proconsular). This (1) was what John saw; then (2) "the things which are," a very notable description of the seven churches as judged by the Lord in His letters to each respectively; and lastly, (3) "the things about to be after these," or the visions of the future to follow up even into eternity itself.

The third division is the strict prophecy, consisting of two portions (iv.-xi., and xii.-xxii. 5); for each opens with a prefatory introduction, and goes on to the end.

Here then may be found adequate evidence, before each series of prophetic visions, when the rapture of the saints takes place. The church-state is adumbrated in the seven churches, "the things that are": not the actual Asiatic assemblies only, but what they prefigured successively as the things would be to the hearing ear by what the Spirit says. In Rev. iv. v. are indicated the glorified saints already symbolised as in heaven, twenty-four elders, chief-priests of the fully numbered courses, crowned and enthroned around God's central throne. This is definite; and they are no longer

souls disembodied but changed. Any saints, Jewish or Gentile, called afterwards as very many are, add nothing to them : they are complete. During the period that follows no church-state is seen.

In chap. vii. is a numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and after that a countless crowd of Gentiles, objects of divine choice and blessing ; but they are separate. There is no fusion into one, as the nature of the church requires. God keeps each distinct throughout from first to last. So far it resembles His work in the O.T. Only grace largely works outside Israel and so far like the N.T. But church-state is closed. It is a new condition with abundant mercy ; and in the face of idolatry, apostasy, persecution, tribulation, and divine judgments, a people is prepared for the earth under the reign of the Lord personally present and His glorified saints : a reign of righteousness and peace, Satan wholly excluded, and the Holy Spirit poured on all flesh for 1000 years.

That the existing church-state closes on earth at the end of Rev. iii. on the protracted view is as demonstrable, as that the overcomers out of it, with all that were Christ's before them, are thenceforth seen as glorified in heaven from Rev. iv. v. Nothing but the coming of Christ to gather those that believed to Himself can account for the new company above, the disappearance of recognised churches here below, and the formation of separate companies out of Israel, and the Gentiles thenceforward for the earthly purposes of God during the crisis of evil and His judgments, till the Lord comes

from heaven to put down Satan and his agents, and to establish His world-kingdom. It is therefore between Rev. iii. and iv. that the true epoch for the saints' translation best suits; and a transition period ensues, when the church disappears, and grace works, in presence of solemn chastenings of men, to get ready a nucleus for the Lord's appearing and for the millennial earth, as well as for martyrdom meanwhile.

This conveys the general prefiguration of the steps God takes in judgment, though with dealings of concurrent mercy, to chastise the world, and especially its more favoured parts, and to pave the way for investing the Lamb at the fitting time with its direct and supreme government. This ends with Rev. xi. 18 for the earthly and the eternal kingdom.

In the fresh section it is not a central throne with enthroned heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs around, but the temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of His covenant seen, not on earth but still above, and yet with added signs of present displeasure. The first great sign seen there is of God's sure promise for Israel's glory. It is not the bride, but the travailing mother of Him who is to tend all the nations with iron rod, arrayed with the sun, the moon under feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Supreme authority is to be her's, the sun that rules the day; the changing and reflected light of the old covenant, no longer guiding but under her feet; but also the fulness of human subordinate authority. Meanwhile the child that was born, the Son of might,

was caught up to God and to His throne. For the great dragon, another sign, was seen there, having seven heads and ten horns, emblematic of the Roman empire, in deadly opposition to both. War in heaven ensues. The dragon, the devil, is cast out with his angels; woe to the earth and to the sea, if the heavens and those that dwell there (for so it will then be) rejoice greatly! The devil has great rage, knowing he has a short time; and he vents it against the woman and the rest of her seed, the godly remnant.

But these conflicts are regarded in a far deeper way than in the earlier visions. For there are brought to view the counsels of God centering in His Son, and the hostility of Satan in his last efforts during the half-week which has still to run out, before the Lord in person crushes him and his lawless instruments as in Rev. xix. xx. It is the import of the woman's seed caught up on high that is insinuated. For in the manner of the prophetic word the apostle intimates in mystic style the translation to heaven of the saints before the dates begin.

We are thus viewed as in Christ who was caught up there, while the woman and the remnant of her seed are objects, not only of Satan's hate, but of God's providential care on the earth. As we shall share Christ's authority when He takes His great power and reigns (Rev. ii. 26, 27), so we are symbolically wrapped up in Him in His being caught up out of Satan's way. We are one with Him in this foreseen rapture, as the apostle Paul in Rom. viii. 33, 34, applies to the Christian what Isa. l. 8, 9, says

of Christ. Thus we again, and in a very different form suited to this part of the prophecy, come round to the still higher promise in Rev. ii. 28. We are associated with Christ as the morning Star before the Sun of righteousness introduces the day for all the world, and we too share the glorious reign with Him. If, instead of groundless fancy, we listen to scripture, the bright, the morning star shines not for the slumbering world, but for those who watch during the dark night. It is essentially spiritual, visible to saints only, not to the world which will have to do rather with the Sun of righteousness.

No sober person of intelligence doubts that the Holy Spirit had first to be poured out, and the gospel to be preached to all the creation. But the N. T. attests that this *was* done during that first generation, and that the saints were then taught by the apostles to wait for Christ habitually and constantly with no revealed event between to precede or intercept. This is what some daring men venture to ridicule as "any-momentism."

The misapprehension of *ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα* in Rev. i. 10 is nothing but a senseless incubus, with the still worse absurdity that the seven churches of Rev. ii. iii., "the things that are," are seven future groups of a Jewish character. They are alike a fanatical folly without a shred of truth. But no trick of controversy can to any effect legitimately attach such nonsense to the heavenly hope of the N. T., or get rid of the undeniable facts, that churches thenceforward in the book of Revelation disappear from the earth; that a new sight of

glorified saints was given in heaven; and that the fresh action of God follows, concurrently here below, of a secured complement of Israel, and a blessed and far larger crowd out of all the nations; and this keeping them apart, instead of being baptised in the power of the Spirit into one body as we are, and as the nature of God's church characteristically demands.

Rev. xxii. 16 is no exception: only an ignoramus could argue so. For from ver. 6 to the end we have simply appeals to John and the churches that then existed, however permanent the profit might be, as the suited conclusion to the visions previously revealed, as well as its introduction. The Lord would have all that preceded testified in the churches, which was soon utterly forgotten and is generally to our day. But this affords no ground for imagining "churches" in the N. T. sense during the entire period of the crisis, or any part of it, from Rev. vi. to xix., or indeed any longer as on the earth.

I presume that in the strange error of the Rev. James Kelly and of Dr. Bullinger, which they got from the Tractarian Drs. Maitland and J. H. Todd, (as they perhaps from the blunder of the famous critic, J. C. Wetstein, in his N. T. Gr. ii. 750,) they wanted Jewish churches for the days of the great tribulation; as their opponents, like Dr. West and a crowd of others, interpolate churches during that period by a still more groundless error, if this be possible. At any rate, if we bow to "the words of the book of this prophecy," there is no basis of revelation for either. Those who contend on scripture alone for the hea-

venly hope have ever rejected such notions; nor have these errors any real connexion with that truth.

But the closing words of the last chapter of the book are to the last degree impressive, as they corroborate the essential difference between the Christian hope, and the wondrous communication that comprises the unfolded visions of what is to befall the earth in judgment as well as mercy from Rev. vi. to xix. inclusively. This latter is in the richest way the prophetic word, as became in God's wisdom and goodness the winding up of the N. T. But, as elsewhere, so the Lord here carefully guards His own from the mistake of confounding it with what is so distinct.

There are to be two successive series of judgment, of a general and of a special character, as in the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. A general securing to Himself out of Israel, and from among all the nations, accompanies the one; and if the Jews in unbelief seek to establish their polity and religion, God begins within the other to recognise a godly remnant during those days of sin and sorrow, with an adequate testimony like that of Moses and Elijah, which none can hinder till their work is done. And the Beast is first seen in his deadly antagonism. Martyrdom ensues; and the merry triumph of the enemy is answered, not only by His power in raising the slain and taking them up to heaven in view of their foes, but by a defined overthrow of man's pride on earth. Then follows the end of man left to himself, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ is come.

Next, we go back, to let in details of the deepest moment, of which enough has been said. And the kingdom of glory follows, the great white throne, and the eternal scene.

Now none can be so prejudiced as to think that all this can unroll into facts before the Lord comes, though the unbelief of man approaches such an extreme. Yet many saints contend, as we know, for a certain part to intervene before He comes for us. This, however, is what none can show on any legitimate grounds of scriptural evidence. Proof on the contrary has already been given, that the only consistent point for the removal of the saints to heaven is when the churches are no longer seen or heard of on earth, and a new symbolic company is presented in heaven. After this the steps are revealed by which God chastises the guilty world. In the midst of the great tribulation He calls and forms, not in one body as now, but separately, a twofold nucleus of blessed men, Jews and Gentiles, for the earth *under* the Lord's future reign; as He had already taken to Himself on high those destined to reign *with* Him when that glorious time arrives, as we see in Rev. xx.-xxii. 5.

The fulfilment of the prophecy awaits its sure and varied application when the time arrives for the earthly question to be answered. *Now* the Lord is occupied with a heavenly work, wherein is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is the all, and in all, quite independently of earthly change, because the end of that work is to be with

Him where He is. And thus He concludes, "He that testifies these things saith, Yea, I come quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus," is the divinely supplied reply. The constant waiting, apart from times and seasons, is kept up to the last for him that has an ear to hear.

It is striking to see how careful the Lord is to exclude prophetic events from mingling with our proper portion in His coming for us; and all the more, because the Revelation is in the main the great Christian book of prophecy. Hence, while giving solemn warnings in these concluding appeals, He fixes our hearts on His coming in sovereign grace without a revealed earthly event to intercept it. He precludes any delay on the score of governmental dealings with men on the earth. He allows no room for confusion with intervening changes in the world. "He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly," to which our graciously provided answer is, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus." Can any words be simpler, or more effective, for the heart?

No intelligent believer denies that the hopes prevalent in Christendom are baseless, vain, and presumptuous. The gospel was sent to save sinners, and to associate them when saved with Christ, the glorified Head, and thus to constitute them a heavenly body, His body. Its aim is not to gather into one the world, but the children of God that were scattered abroad. The gospel was to be preached everywhere as a testimony, but with no such thought as winning all Israel or the nations while He is on high. It is reserved for the Lord, not for the church, in judicial authority, to take His

great power and reign, when His world-kingdom is come: a future and total change from His present seat on His Father's throne. That, not this, coalesces with His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. iv. 1). It is "the blessed hope" of what God will do for man and the world; and we rejoice anticipatively. There will be no general amelioration for the race till then; and we await it with assurance, love it as redounding not to the blessing of man only but to the glory of our Saviour God, and in our measure and place testify to its truth and solemnity. In the Pastoral Epistles, His appearing alone is pressed, because responsibility all round is the point, rather than distinctive privilege; and then, not before, "in that day," will the issues appear of fidelity or of failure. This in its own time the blessed and only Potentate shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship.

Before that day of manifestation must be the awful apostasy, and the audacious uprising against God of the man of sin, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by His appearing, as in 2 Thess. ii. Before that day, as is made evident in Rev. xix., must be fulfilled the predicted blows of divine chastisement, as revealed from the seals of Rev. vi. to the last vials of God's wrath in Rev. xvi., of which the judgment of Babylon in the descriptive appendix of xvii. xviii. is a concluding part and explanation. Then follows the day of the Lord in Rev. xix., when the glorified follow Him out of heaven to the destruction of His enemies, the binding of Satan,

and the thousand years' reign of Christ and the risen saints over the earth, as in Rev. xx. All this is as clear as God's word makes it, whatever be the doubts and difficulties of the learned, or the unbelief of worldly-minded men.

But the still more intimate and proper hope of the Christian is His coming for those that love Him and watch during the night with eyes undimmed by hope deferred, for Him the Morning Star, before the day. And as the apostle corrected the errors of the Thessalonian saints, yet confirmed the constant waiting for Him, carefully joining himself with them and all saints in the same attitude, so here does the Lord guard us all from confounding His coming with that day, and God's necessary antecedent dealings of infliction or of mercy on Israel or the nations.

Meanwhile may "the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

THE SO-CALLED APOSTOLICAL FATHERS

ON THE LORD'S SECOND COMING.



A BRIEF survey will suffice to test the worth of these scanty remains of Christian antiquity for the truth in question. The marvel is that any man of spiritual judgment who has read them with care should count them of the least weight, especially on such a matter. They have indeed a sorrowful interest, as they attest the rapid departure and profound downfall from apostolic teaching. Can anything be conceived more evident or striking than the immeasurable distance which severs these earliest writings from the scriptures? The Apocrypha, merely human as it is, does not so startlingly differ from the O.T. as do Barnabas, Clemens Rom., and Hermas from the apostles Paul, Peter, and John. Yet these productions were read like the scriptures to Christian congregations in early days; and Clemens Alex. quotes the most heterodox and nonsensical of the three as scripture! Even the Sinaitic Uncial has appended to the N. T. Barnabas and Hermas, as the Alexandrian has Clemens Rom. What a contrast these and all the rest from the dignity, holiness, love, and authority

of the inspired Epistles! These early relics are merely the word of man, betraying not only weakness but trumpery. If able and learned men have lauded them to the skies, it only proves that tradition has blinding power, and that all have not faith.

Yet a pious man of our day ventures to say that "in God's gracious providence we possess such early writings." To what can one attribute infatuation like this in an evangelical clergyman but to his passionate zeal for the Jewish hope against the Christian one? Judaizing in any form tends always to strife and bitterness. How strange to be directed first to the "Didache" or "Teaching of the twelve Apostles"! Here then are the editio princeps of Bryennius (Constantinople, 1883), that of Hitchcock and Brown (New York, 1884), moreover that of H. de Roumestin (Parker and Co., Oxford and London, 1884), and Dr. C. Bigg's little volume with at least equal discernment critically as any.

The fuller title is daring enough, "*The Lord's Teaching through the twelve Apostles to the nations.*"

But it is a meagre compilation, beginning with the Two Ways of life and of death, which occupy six chapters, or nearly half of the little treatise, without one word to show how life is given or guilt removed.

Then follows an inept chapter on baptism, prescribing a fast to precede; and another chapter on fasting in general. The great difference from "the hypocrites" seems to be that they fast on the second and the fifth days of the week, whereas the right fast is on the fourth and sixth (or preparation)! They are also not to pray as "the hypocrites," but as the

Lord commanded, and thrice a day! In chapter ix. about the Eucharist, take the following flight: "As this broken [bread] was scattered over the hills and gathered together became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom." Can any thought be poorer?

The notable fact is that the Twelve apostles are made to forget the all-importance of Christ's death in both baptism and the Lord's Supper. Again, the name of David figures strangely in ix.* and x. where we have "the four winds." After eccentric talk in xi.—xiii. we have in xiv. Mal. i. 10, 14 utterly perverted, as do the Papists notoriously to the mass. It is the old unbelief of substituting the Church for Israel. Does our brother fancy that from east to west the name of Jehovah is yet great among the nations, or ever will be till the Lord returns in glory? Is he not as assured as those to whom he foolishly ascribes "the modern theory," that only then, never before, "in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure oblation; for My name shall be great among the nations, saith Jehovah of hosts."

Hence no apostle ever applied this prediction to Christianity in the N.T. It is the misinterpretation of the spurious Didache; for the true Twelve never really sanctioned it. But it suited the pride and the ignorance of the Catholic church even before Popery. Matthew Henry perhaps well skipt the verse, for the nonconformists give scant heed to prophecy;

*The equivalent appears in Clem. Alex., and Origen, all referring, as Dr. Bigg judges, not to the Lord, but to the Eucharistic cup! It really seems so; but how incongruous the mixture of Jewish figure with a strictly Christian institution!

but W. Lowth, T. Scott, and perhaps all other commentators boldly follow the antiquated delusion in full chorus. The late Dr. Pusey of course laboured to prove it, looking only at the Jews of the past and present. But his argument defeats itself; for the prophet speaks of *no* "new revelation of Himself," but rather of the old promise made good in grace and power, not for Jews only but among the nations, when Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, one Jehovah and His Name one in that day. There is no excuse for misreading this bright prospect, still future, into the truly new and deeper revelation of His name as Father, which the Lord Jesus made known (John iv. 21-23) for the hour that "now is," when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth.

But let us turn to the last chapter of the Didache, "still more apposite" it is said. No one can doubt that Matt. xxiv. is therein mixed up with other scriptures which speak of the Lord's coming, whether to mankind invisible or visible. "And then shall appear the signs of *the truth* (!): first a sign of an opening in heaven; then a sign of trumpet's voice (or, sound); and the third, resurrection of the dead. Yet not of all, but as it was said, The Lord will come, and all the saints with him."

Now Matt. xxiv. 30 speaks, not of the sign of "an opening in heaven" appearing, but of the Son of man in the heaven as a sign of His coming to the earth, which causes all the tribes of the earth (or, land) to lament. But even the Didache cites Zech. xiv. 5 for all the saints coming *with* Him at this

very epoch. Now this is our thesis, and it necessarily implies their previous change in order to come suitably to His appearing in glory. The mission of His angels (in ver. 31) with a great sound of trumpet cannot be for the gathering together unto Him of the glorified who all come with Him, but for the *subsequent* act of gathering together, after He appears, the elect of Israel from the four winds, scattered till then all over the earth. There is not a trace here of "the last trumpet" when the dead saints shall rise and we are changed, in order to come with Him in due time to gather the elect of Israel to the great King in Zion. For we must have been caught up before, that when He shall be manifested in glory, we too may then be manifested together with Him in it. There is no catching up in Matt. xxiv. Nor does it speak of the third sign of the resurrection of the saintly dead. Indeed no scripture treats it as "a sign." They were raised to appear with Him when He appears and "the world sees the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven."

If it be argued that Rev. xx. 4 speaks of the First Resurrection (after His appearing and the judgment of the Beast and the False Prophet with the kings of the earth and their armies, as well as the binding of Satan), not only is this admitted but its importance is insisted on. For it proves that there are stages in that resurrection as well as in Christ's presence. We learn from that verse that the general company of the glorified (all the saints of O. T. and New, till Christ come for them) compose those who emerge from heaven as the Lamb's followers. They were seen

now seated on thrones, and judgment given to them ; thereon two special classes of saints succeed, martyred in the earlier and later periods of the Apocalyptic crisis, who, as yet disembodied, were made to live, in order to reign with Christ for the thousand years, no less than the general company already enthroned. These all make up the First Resurrection. It is false and directly contradictory to this scripture that those Apocalyptic sufferers rose at the same time with the first company.

Is it too much to say that of the truth here revealed, as the Didache, so Christians at large are still wholly ignorant ? Why should that be incredible which the Revelation makes known in the clearest terms ? These early writings are most defective and, through ignorance of the scriptures, often opposed to the truth ; and so are moderns. Scripture alone is the standard ; and the Christian is not left without a divine Guide dwelling in him to lead into all the truth. Let us believe God's word as a whole, and not accept one part while we omit another.

But what we thus learn scatters into thin air the assumption that there were not to be distinct and different objects, both for blessing and for judgment, which unpractised eyes, merge in one. Matt. xxiv. of course practically coalesces with 1 Thess. v. and 2 Thess. i. and many other intimations of the day of the Lord *i.e.* His coming judicially. But no one is entitled therefore to take for granted that the promised comfort and heavenly joy of the saints in John xiv. and in 1 Thess. iv. 15-17 will be at that same time, any more than that the Lord's "Parousia" in

2 Thess. i. synchronises with "the appearing of His Parousia" in ver. 8. If these be equally seen by man, where would be the propriety of the change of phrase? The connexion too is so different that the Parousia in ver. 1 is with sovereign grace, the epiphany of His Parousia is with signal vengeance. It is equally His presence in either case, but absurd to assume that they must happen together.

As the Lord's character of Son of man in that day will be judicial (John v. 22), the Parousia of the Son of man goes with His appearing. Thus He comes for Israel and the nations (Matt. xxiv. 30, xxv. 31), but not so receives us to Himself for the Father's house. It is not that we deny in a general way what these brethren advance about "that day." In 2 Thess. i. we have, as simultaneous effects of the Lord's revelation from heaven, the relief and vindication of the troubled saints, and the trouble and punishment of the wicked. But these are alike the exercise of righteous judgment, and not of sovereign grace; and hence neither can be till He appears in glory. Why should any be so absorbed in the earthly side of the Lord's Parousia as to be bitter against such as see and firmly hold the heavenly side also? We believe the heavenly hope to be an immense gain for the Christian, having already known what it is to be ignorant of it, as almost all thus begin. But growth in the truth, or elevation above the visible sphere, if sound and spiritual, is a boon beyond price; yet God's word and Spirit alone can safely lead on.

The Didache then may have interest as being

rather ancient, though of no doctrinal importance. It departs from the truth, even as to the saints choosing bishops (chap. xv.); whereas scripture speaks only of apostles, or their delegate, choosing elders *for them* (Acts xiv. 23, Titus i. 5). This was a radical change. Yet we need not suppose that it purposely left out elders, but (like Clem. Rom.) identified them with bishops, as scripture does: compare Acts xx. 17 with 28; Phil. i. 1; and Titus i. 5, 7.

But with the earliest age how strange to hear of the "Apostolic Constitutions," betraying as it does internal evidence of being centuries later? What evidence can it afford of "the first century belief"? The Didache just lets us see the growing decay a little earlier; the Apostolic Constitutions came after that. Both misapplied Matt. xxiv. to Christendom.

The Epistle of Barnabas was long before those spurious "Apostolic Constitutions." Who this Barnabas was we know not. It dishonours the apostle's early friend and fellow-labourer, "a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith," to attribute to him a document so childish in its mystical reveries. Yet it stands favourably contrasted with the probably interpolated Epistles of Ignatius, which too evidently evince the desire to cry up the clerical order. The Barnabas before us appears to have had at heart to counteract the judaising of that early day. But a mighty chasm separates his work from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which with divine energy really translates the Levitical types as the figures of heavenly things. Tertullian, &c. show lack of discernment by assigning

the inspired Epistle to the companion of the apostle (himself too without doubt the man whom the Holy Spirit calls an apostle). Yet *this* author sets up no such pretension, but had a due sense of his humble position. The true hope of the Christian is nowhere seen. All is vague and earthly, as with others far abler down to our own day. Spiritual intelligence in this respect is of the rarest.

Again, it is surprising that anyone who has the least regard for orthodoxy or even decency should cite from "The Shepherd" of Hermas. Besides, the Muratorian Canon has convinced all scholars, that this Hermas lived at about the middle of the second century, a brother of Pope Pius the first, and not therefore "the brother" mentioned by the apostle. Far be it from my wish to expose the mere trash of a weak and fanciful mind in its Visions, Commands, and Similitudes. But it is a far graver case, when Hermas talks of God's holy angel filling a man with the blessed Spirit! of men's having all their offences blotted out because they suffered death for the name of the Son of God! and, worse still if possible, of the Holy Spirit being created first of all! Think of citing such a one on the question of our having to pass through the great tribulation! and of the comment on all this worse than nonsense, "Such was the belief of the Apostolic Christian." But let us draw a veil over the addendum on the false prophets who branded Jeremiah, and on Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah. Such vituperation must injure those that indulge in so acrimonious a spirit on a question that needs the quiet and holy guidance of the Spirit of God.

It is singular that the Epistle from the Church in Rome to that in Corinth (assigned to Clement, perhaps the earliest of these extra-scriptural remains) is passed by; for it is comparatively sober and grave, earnest and affectionate. Yet it seems inconceivable that the Clement (a name then of frequent occurrence), to whom the apostle alludes as "my fellow-labourer," could have written, as this Epistle does, of Danaïdes and Dirces* (chap. vi.), or of the fabulous phœnix. This last first appears in the Fragments of Hesiod (Loesner, p. 450), and swells into the legend that Herodotus relates in his garrulous way (ii. 73). See also Tacitus (Ann. vi. 28), and the elder Pliny (Hist. Nat. x. 2). Is it not humbling that what the old pagan historian found incredible was accepted by Clement of Rome, with a whole cluster of later Fathers assenting, such as the Latins, Tertullian and Ambrose, and the Greeks, Origen, Epiphanius, Cyril Hier., Greg. Naz., &c.? Archbp. Wake and Mr. Chevallier were influenced by P. Young (Junius) to omit the heathen reference in chap. vi. as an interpolation; but the discovery since of added MS. evidence corroborates the insertion, however discreditable it must be to those who drew up the letter to Corinth. For Clement does not claim the Epistle as his own. It was probably a composite communication, like the letter from the apostles and elder brethren to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and elsewhere (Acts xv.), Clement taking the part in Rome that James had done before in Jerusa-

*To say that those heathen women "attained the firm centre of faith" and that they "weak in body received a noble reward" is to surrender the gospel, unconsciously but really. It is inexcusable error, not to say downright folly.

lem. But what a wide difference between the brief and authoritative wisdom divine in the one, and the prolix elaboration, with faulty and compromising details, in the other !

How again could Christian saints of intelligence cite Isa. lxiv. 4, and 1 Cor. ii. 9, and stop short, as ignorant souls do to-day, of the apostolic addition, "But unto us God revealed [them] through the Spirit" ? (See chap. xxxiv.) For this is just the wondrous favour we enjoy above the O. T. saints by Christ's redemption, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It means unwittingly, that one ignores the vantage ground of Christianity in the presence of the Spirit, that we are no better off as to this than Israel of old.

This Epistle is also exceedingly reticent as to the Lord's return, and hence precarious in its quotation of prophecy. Take that from Isa. lx. 17 in chap. xlii. This is the application. "Preaching therefore through countries and cities, they [the apostles] used to appoint their first-fruits [a hazardous statement] to be bishops and deacons over those who should believe, after having proved them by the Spirit. Nor this in any new way; *for in truth it had in long past times been written concerning bishops and deacons !* For the scripture somewhere saith, I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith." Now a Christian has only to read the prophet in order to be convinced of the outrageous mistake. The chapter as a whole supposes the day of glory come for earthly Jerusalem, the city of Jehovah, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel ; when the afflicted but

spared people shall become a strong nation, and, what is better still, shall all be righteous. It is a picture quite different from the glorified church, the holy Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God. The force of ver. 17 is that in the day of restored Israel Jehovah will make their rulers peace, and their officers righteousness. Neither war nor exaction shall be any more. Is this fulfilled as yet?

There is here absolutely no room for an allusion to bishops and deacons in the churches; it is pure hallucination. But it is worse by far. It indicates, like the Epistle of Barnabas, that which soon overran Christendom like a flood, the sprouting of the Gentile conceit, of which the apostle warned the saints in Rome. The promises abide for Israel, who are yet to be blessed as a people under Messiah and the new covenant. Branches of the olive-tree by their unbelief were broken off, and Gentiles meanwhile grafted in; but the Gentile tenure is by faith, and contingent on their continuance in goodness: *otherwise they also shall be cut off*. Nothing is more certain than that the professing Gentiles have utterly failed, are unbelieving to excess, and must end in the apostasy as the apostle predicted.

Equally certain is it (even from this chapter and all the prophets) that Israel will not continue in their present unbelief, but shall be grafted in again. Their hardening is only till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; "and so all Israel shall be saved." These are enemies in the gospel days which will soon end. God has not forgotten His promises, or His election of the fathers; He only awaits the

right moment, when the Gentile complement is made up, to prove His faithful love to Israel. For His gifts and calling do not admit of change of mind. Christendom from early days assumed on the contrary that He had cast off Israel, and given the church an indefeasible title: a false, proud and ruinous delusion. Here in these apostolic fathers the germ grows and spreads apace as it were flag-weed, till judgment destroys it for ever.

Are these the men or the writings to produce as of value to interpret the scriptures which reveal a truth incompatible with this vain conceit? For their denial of Israel's hopes led to the transfer of earthly glory to the church now, and the consequent refusal of present suffering, forgetful of future glory on high: the abandonment of the true portion of God's church. These early fathers had lost the truth of our calling upwards, and took more and more the glowing visions announced to Israel as meant for us, and not for them. To maintain the heavenly privilege in its power and purity we must own that to Israel God destined the earth, with the Gentiles rejoicing in willing subjection. But we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies even now *in* Christ, and to be *with* Him there in the day of glory. To seek earthly power and glory now is for the church high treason to Christ.

But the principle of looking to "the early belief" is a false one, the *ignis fatuus* of the Tractarian movement, and the fully developed lie of Popery; which, if there is to be an interpreter, demands and professes to have an infallible one in

itself, the Holy Catholic church, and now indeed the Pope. This of course when plainly stated the Protestant abjures. The Christian, the church, believing in the ever abiding presence and operation of the Holy Spirit sent forth on and since Pentecost, has what the latter confessedly lacks, what the former vainly and madly professes. The Spirit dwells here below to guide into all the truth, and makes this good in the measure of our faith and spiritual state. For He is here to glorify Christ, not the saint or the church; who are only right in awaiting Christ's coming for our glory with Him. Now is the time for lowly service, unworldly devotedness, and self-renunciation, yea for sharing His rejection and suffering. It is no time for reigning without the apostles, and without Christ; it is the time for entire dependence on Him in separation from the world, content ourselves to be meanwhile reviled, persecuted, and defamed like our betters for Christ's sake. The scripture is the standard; in no way what the Christians may have believed, thought, said, or done, even in apostolic days.

Hence the saints in Rome are warned not to be high-minded but fear; and we have already seen why. It was the very snare which misled them and all Christendom to deny God's faithfulness to Israel, and to claim the succession to Jewish power and honour now on earth, which could not be without forfeiting present rejection and future glory on high with Christ.

Still more manifest and manifold is the care to correct the church in Corinth (with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

theirs and ours) from their aberrations. There were internal divisions and carnal strifes ; clashing schools of thought with chiefs (however themselves unwilling) dragged in to accentuate the rival parties. What more opposed to the one Head and the one body ? They were puffed up, instead of mourning at the horrible leaven unjudged in their midst. They were not ashamed that anyone of them should prosecute his suit before the world, and not before the saints as the Lord had laid down. They were loose as to personal purity, the known prevalent immorality of the place. They needed to have the marriage relation &c. cleared and defined. They were admonished against their levity as to heathen temples and sacrifices. They were reminded authoritatively that those who labour in the gospel are entitled to live of the gospel, whilst it was the apostle's own joy to make it without charge, in the Spirit of Christ not using his right. They were warned that preaching to others without personal self-abnegation is an awful peril. Nor is it only preachers that need to take heed ; but any Christian if unwary will fall, as is seen in the wilderness history of Israel, types of us. Open disorders too are reprov'd, not only in women forgetting their place of subjection, but in scandalous dishonour to the Lord, even at His supper, it would seem through mixing the love-feast with it, but really through their bad state of soul. Further, the principle and practice flowing from the Spirit's action individually and congregationally were fully stated to guide them and us, in chaps. xii.-xiv. with the deeply needed intervening

chapter calling for love to enforce and characterise both. Most pointed too in the bearing on our subject is chapter xv., which proves how little "early christian belief" can be trusted; for some among them questioned a resurrection, though it does not seem that they doubted the immortality of the soul.

It is the scripture that we accept, not only as the source of divinely given truth but as its criterion. The Holy Spirit is the sole unfailing interpreter, just so far as we look to Christ's glory. If we seek our own things, calling them perhaps the church's glory or right, we have no promise from God and no security for ourselves; but on the contrary we shall have to learn our folly. One might similarly apply several more of the Epistles, besides the greatest for general Christian doctrine, and the no less great for ecclesiastical truth and order.

Notably again the Epistle to the Galatians calls for a few words in proof that what the early Christians held is not the smallest guarantee for the truth. For the apostle writes to the assemblies of that considerable region in Asia Minor, where he had himself planted the gospel, to reproach them sadly and solemnly with having so quickly changed from him that called them in Christ's grace to a *different gospel* which is not another. It was truly a perversion of the gospel of Christ. If saints, after the best of all preaching in that early day, could so soon follow judaizers, and fall from grace into legalism as the apostle affirms, can any thoughtful mind be surprised that they might soon slip into defective views and even error about the Second Advent?

But we need not assume this. The Epistles to the Thessalonians prove doubly the fact, and not the danger only. For the apostle, in instructing them more on that glorious truth, had in the First to correct, at least as soon, their mistake about their deceased brethren, and in the Second to expose a still wider and worse error about the day of the Lord for living saints. How plainly the mystery of lawlessness was already at work!

It is not for any one to minimise the incalculable moment of the proper hope of the Christian. But nothing is easier to understand than the difficulty it presented to the Jews that became Christians, accustomed only to the Lord's coming as predicted in the O. T. to deliver the godly remnant of Jews at the last gasp, as it were, from the apostate mass of their fellow-Jews with the Antichrist at their head and the Roman Beast his patron and ally, and from the vast assemblage of the Eastern nations, their embattled or besieging enemies under the King of the North, and the Russian Gog behind the latter. The remnant justly look for Christ's advent in displayed power and glory to overwhelm both their internal and external foes, and thus deliver themselves on the earth. Also Gentile believers, again, were slow to enter into the blessed wonder of Christ's coming to translate on high all real Christians, in its grandeur far beyond what Enoch or Elijah experienced of old: so completely was it beyond even saintly men's expectation or conception. Only Christ's promise and God's new revelation could account to our souls for such surpassing glory. Hence

to the inspired word of the N.T. we confidently appeal, as it only is here entitled to convince any.

But we specially invite the attention of our opposing brethren to a consideration which escaped all the Patristic remains, and every theologian till our day. For we love them, and mind not overmuch froth and fury signifying nothing, due also to their zeal for the little which fills their vision, having most of us passed through similar objections and prejudices. Scripture we found far larger and higher than a scheme based on the O.T. hope, confirmed as it is by N.T. revelation. For we frankly acknowledge its truth and its importance, if rightly applied. Yet the N.T. also reveals what was of old hidden but now manifested, that Christ, on His total rejection by Jew and Gentile, was to sit raised from the dead at God's right hand; and this, not merely to be Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, as He intercedes too for His friends, and by-and-by to strike through kings in the day of His wrath when His enemies are made His footstool. He was to be there now for a new order of things, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. For God put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. This is the great secret now revealed.

It is not my aim to trace the means which the apostle unfolds, in pursuance of the exalted Head, that we may know God's operation in associating us

who now believe with Christ in the heavenlies, as we read in Eph. ii.-iv., but to direct renewed and closer attention to the counsels of God who made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him (or, Himself) for administration of the fulness of the seasons. These seasons will only be full when Christ comes again, to carry out to God's glory as the Second man all the trusts in which the first man has so conspicuously failed. In Christ will be then displayed the obedient Man, the Governor, the Depositary of the promises, the One to make the law great and glorious, the Priest, the Prophet, the King of Israel and Son of Man, Ruler of all peoples, nations, and languages, the Head over all things to the church. For Satan is still the prince of the world, and the god of this age. And the Lord, though crowned with the chaplet of victory and King of kings in title, is not yet seated on His own throne but His Father's, till He appears with His many diadems and establishes His world-kingdom. Then only will all things be summed up in Christ as the centre of the universe in the day of manifested glory, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him in whom we also were given (or, obtained) inheritance, being predestined according to His purpose that works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

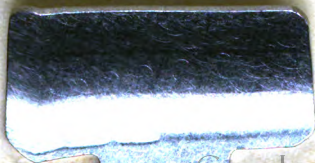
The heading up of the universe in Christ as in Eph. i. 10 must be carefully distinguished from the gathering together into one of the scattered children of God, of which John xi. 52 speaks. For Christ died that there might be now the holy

gathering into one of God's *children*, for which He also made request in chap. xvii. 20, 21. But that heading up is of *all things* in God's creation, "the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth," now so long severed, and the earthly at least made subject to vanity through man's fall. But all things groaning below shall be freed from the bondage of corruption when the coming glory is revealed, with Christ the Heir of all things at its head. At present it is an operation of divine grace to call out and together from Jews and Gentiles God's children (and if children, heirs also: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ), if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified with [Him]. This is the day of grace, and an indisputably elective process; that, a gathering of the whole creation both heavenly and earthly; which is so far from meaning the church either now or then, that we His members are expressly here distinguished from "all things." The inheritance we, God's heirs, are to share with Christ in that day. For this we have the Holy Spirit as earnest, who has also sealed us already for redemption's day.

This then is the revealed purpose of God for the glory of Christ and the church, His body and bride. Tradition furnishes not an echo of it. Universal consent, if we can speak of such a thing in presence of the Babel of Christendom, rises not above the earth. First, such writers as Justin Martyr and Irenæus looked for a glorious metamorphosis of nature, for a grander Jerusalem on earth, and vines bearing prodigiously, not for Israel, but for the

glorified saints (c. Haer. v. 333, ed. Massuet)! Then later Eusebius (V. C. iii. 15, 33, iv. 40, &c.), in a re-action from such grotesque stuff, treated the prophetic visions as fulfilled in Constantine's victory over Paganism, with worldly ease and honour for the Christian profession! Along with this came in souls blessed after death as an alternative interpretation; so that the resurrection as well as Christ's coming well nigh vanished, save for judgment; and the sheep and the goats were confounded with the great white-throne-judgment of the dead.

Yet the Lord had intimated even to Nicodemus that God's kingdom has "heavenly things" as well as "earthly." Again He pointed out to the disciples the distinction of the Father's kingdom on high for the glorified saints, from the Son of man's kingdom below out of which are to be cleared those that practise lawlessness. These truths paved the way for the Spirit to reveal that purpose of God for the heavens and all the things in them, and for the earth and all the things on it, to be set under Christ as the Head over all things to the church. Had this truth been received, it would have guarded saints from setting the one against the other, the common source of manifold error and evil. Here our brethren, like ourselves, have to take heed and learn.



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