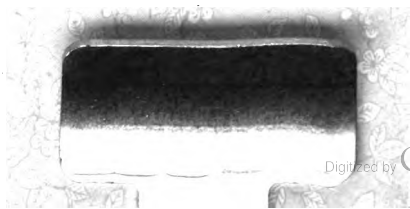

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CHRIST'S COMING AGAIN,

CHIEFLY ON THE HEAVENLY SIDE

BY

WILLIAM KELLY

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THE LORD'S PROPHECY ON OLIVET IN MATT. XXIV. XXV.

IN this discourse the Lord unfolds, first, the future of the Jewish disciples; secondly, that of the Christian profession; and thirdly, that of all the nations tested by the gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes, and He Himself reigns. Such are the simple divisions of the two chapters; and so it was or will be in fact. The discourse grew in His wisdom out of their directing His attention to the splendour of the buildings, from which their hearts were not yet weaned. They believed that Jesus was the Christ; they were born of God; but they had as yet their hearts associated with Israel's hopes, yea, even till the day that He ascended to heaven (Acts i. 6-11), though theirs was no small advance when He rose from the dead.

The Lord therefore begins with His disciples as they then were, who fittingly also represent those who are to succeed in the latter day, when the work of gathering out the Christian company for heavenly glory is complete, and God begins to prepare His people on earth for the reign of the returning Son of man. It is also the historic order. No other division of the subject matter could be so satisfactory. In this connexion were the disciples viewed not

only generally throughout the Gospel, but evidently when He sent forth the twelve in chap. x. "Depart not into a way of Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather unto the lost sheep of Israel's house. And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh." That this was superseded by the Christian testimony, as we shall see still more markedly in the discourse on Olivet, is true; but it is plain from ver. 23 that this Jewish mission will go forth again before the end: "for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come." Christianity is a parenthesis.

Again, in the chapter (xxiii) immediately preceding, the Lord says to the crowds and to His disciples, "The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatever they tell you, do and keep; but do not after their works, for they say and do not." The disciples clearly are here viewed, not as Christians, but as Jews; and this is confirmed by the pointed language of ver. 34 to the end of the chapter. For sad as the retribution must be, a change should come to the people before His return. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed [be] he that cometh in Jehovah's name." Thus the repentance of a remnant will pave the way for His return; some suffering to death for His name, others preserved to welcome the Son of Man when He comes. Of both we hear much in the Psalms and the Prophets, as well as in the Revelation.

The first part of the discourse with its various sections suitably follows in chap. xxiv. 1-44.

“And Jesus went out, and was going forth from the temple, and his disciples came to [him] to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said to them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say to you, Not a stone shall be in anywise left here on a stone, which shall not be thrown down” (1, 2). The rejected Messiah pronounces sentence: most solemn to hear for believing Jews who justly regarded the temple as the great external or public witness of the one true God and His worship on earth. It had been destroyed before, after reigning sons of David apostatised and made it the seat of Gentile idols. But had not there been a gracious return (not of Israel, it is true, but) of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to rebuild city and temple and to await Messiah? Alas! now, He whom they believed to be the anointed Son of David doomed it to another demolition which should not linger, when not the first but the last Gentile world-power should execute it; not because of idols, but because the Jews were first to refuse and then by Gentiles crucify their own Jehovah-Messiah: the two impeachments which Isaiah so long ago had predicted against the chosen people (xl.-xlviii. and xlix. -lvii.).

“And as he was sitting upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what [is] the sign of thy coming, and of the completion of the age? And Jesus answering said to them, See that

no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. And ye shall be about to hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for they must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. But all these [are the] beginning of travails. Then shall they give you up to tribulation and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be stumbled, and give up one another, and hate one another: and many false prophets shall arise, and shall mislead many. And because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall grow cool. But he that endured to [the] end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable [earth] for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come" (vers. 3-14).

From Mark xiii. 3 we learn that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were those who thus enquired, When shall these things be? *i.e.* the temple's destruction; and what the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age? In the Gospel of Luke we find the first of these questions fully answered, and the overthrow of the city involving that of the temple, and Jerusalem trodden down by Gentiles till their times be fulfilled, running on still since the sack of Titus, and very distinctly severed from the Son of Man's coming when the redemption of the godly Jews draws nigh. Here

the answer as to the impending ruin, already given in the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. xxii. 7) is passed by; and the Lord passes on to the second question, which rightly enough brings together the sign of His coming and of the completion of the age. Prophecy is not of insulated solution.

It is important to note the inexcusable error, in both the A. V. and the Revision, of confounding the end of "the age" with that of "the world." There is not a shadow of ground for it; for the coming age of a thousand years and more is after the age that still is, and before the eternal scene. Even disciples, as yet preoccupied with Jewish hopes and prejudices, and wholly unintelligent of the new and large and heavenly associations of Christianity, knew better. They did not say τοῦ κόσμου ("of the world") but τοῦ αἰῶνος ("of the age"); and the Lord in Matt. xiii. 38, 40 had amply guarded against such a confusion. The field or sowing-place was "the world"; the judgment on the darnel and the display of the wheat should be at the close of "the age." The new age will be characterised by the King reigning in righteousness, when the Father's kingdom is come on high, and the Son of Man's here below when His will is to be done on earth as in heaven.

The Lord gives first a general sketch of the ruin about to ensue. Moral amelioration, truth prevalent, peace for mankind, as yet were misleading dreams against which they should be on their guard. The rejection of Himself would open the door to many false claimants to lead astray many. Wars and their rumours should be heard. Only when He takes

His great power and reigns could it be otherwise, as Isaiah predicts. His disciples were not to be disturbed any more than deceived. Such evil things must be, as the King was rejected; and the end is not yet. For instead of learning war no more as when He comes in His kingdom, nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; nor this only but providential inflictions such as famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. Yet all these are a beginning of birth-throes. At this time should His disciples be objects of persecution, betrayed, and even killed by all the Gentiles because of His name. Worse still, stumbling should befall many; and mutual treachery and hatred among themselves. Many false prophets should rise and mislead many; and because of the lawlessness that should abound the love of the many would wax cold. But he that endured to the end should be saved.

The Lord in these verses is contemplating souls with Jewish expectations, and tried by Jewish opposition and unbelief with the hatred of all the nations; but the one that endured is specially assured. The Deliverer will come in due time; but not a word about the church, nor yet the gospel in its depth. Yet "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall come the end." It is a testimony and not without fruit everywhere, without a word of effect farther. The change for dead and for living, for heaven and for earth, is reserved for Him Who is worthy, the rejected Christ at His coming.

Now the remarkable and evident fact is that the Lord has here before Him Jewish disciples in early days with their counterpart before the end, but without reference to the Christian light and privilege which would come in. So we have plain enough proof in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle of James, that in Jerusalem there was pertinacity in this respect that has often struck Christian readers as strange, not only after the great Pentecost was fulfilled, but to the eve of the subversion of the city and sanctuary. The Epistle to the Hebrews a little before gave God's final warning and proof, that for the Christian the Jewish system was now null and void. In this way one can apprehend how the Lord provides instruction for Jewish disciples before the end is come. Still thus far all is general; but from ver. 15 we are given much that is precise, He Himself referring to the last chapter of Daniel.

“When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in [the] holy place (let the reader understand), then let those in Judæa flee unto the mountains; let not him that is upon the house come down to take the things out of the house; and let not him that is in the field return back to take his cloak. But woe to those with child and to them that suckle in those days! But pray that your flight be not in winter nor on sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from world's beginning until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been cut short, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be

cut short. Then if any one say to you, Behold, here [is] the Christ, or there, believe [him] not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you before. If therefore they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth; Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall 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 mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from [one] end of heavens to the other" (vers. 15-31).

Here we learn the awful mark of Jewish wickedness in guilty and fatal alliance with the Gentiles, as Daniel warned. It needs the more attention; for this too had been done by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes long before Messiah's first advent. An idol was then set up in the holy place which brought desolation on all who acted or submitted, as it also drew out the uncompromising opposition of the Maccabees. This was predicted fully and plainly in

Dan. xi. 31, as the pious heroism that rejected the abomination follows. For this reason it is the more distinguishable from the future of like and even more portentous apostasy. For all has been accomplished up to ver. 35, where a blank is without doubt implied leading to the "time of the end," which we have here also in the Gospel. Then "the king" of the last time appears, not "of the north" as Antiochus Epiphanes had been in his day, still less "of the south," but demonstrably distinct from both. For at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him (Dan. xi. 40). He is thus the object of hostility to both, and has for his sphere, "the goodly land" between those two powers of the future on either side of him.

But he is also more widely the great religious enemy of Jehovah and His Christ; while, reigning over the land of Israel, he will set himself forth supremely in the temple of God. For this is the man of sin whom the apostle portrays in 2 Thess. ii., citing or applying Daniel's words. And to this future abomination of desolation the Lord refers in Dan. xii. 11, with which is connected a date of 1290 days, and a supplement of 45 more, before the blessed time comes which the then faith of Israel awaits. Then the prophet himself shall rest and stand in his lot; and better still the Son of man reign over, not Israel only, but all peoples, nations, and tongues: His dominion an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This public act of apostasy the Lord makes the signal for immediate flight. That some ancients and moderns have interpreted it of Cestius Gallus or of Titus is familiarly known; but either is really out of the question. For neither the one nor the other set up an idol in the holy place; and as the one gave ample time to flee without the precipitancy here enjoined, so the other afforded none. For the city was surrounded and sacked; and the victor (far from setting there an idol) sought in vain to spare the temple from the flames of utter ruin. The error arose from not seeing that the divine design was to present us with the Roman capture of Jerusalem and its results in Luke xxi. 20-24. But here the Lord passes these over in the corresponding place of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and dwells only on the unequalled wickedness and tribulation of the future days, expressly said to be followed "immediately" by His own coming in clouds with great power and glory, closing man's evil age and opening the long-desired day of Jehovah. Luke omits that awful crisis.

As the sign for flight is unmistakable, so are those disciples contemplated by the Lord: "then let those in Judea flee unto the mountains." This in our future could not be for Christians, who, as we know from other scriptures, had been ere that translated to heaven. But God, on their disappearance, works in souls by His word and Spirit to have an earthly people also, but first and especially among the Jews, the mass of whom are then deceived by the Antichrist. The godly Jewish remnant are thus therefore in question; and the Lord here points out

that their danger is so immediate that there is no space to come down from the house-top for going into the house and taking their property out: they must flee at once. If one is in the field on the other hand, let him not turn back even to secure his cloak. It touched the Lord to think of women at such a crisis impeded personally or by their babes. And He urges prayer that the flight might not be in the rigour of winter or to the dishonour of sabbath. Can any intelligent Christian fail to see how godly Jews are here in view? From "the holy place" in ver. 15 to "sabbath" in 20, all points to disciples in that form of relationship, at that future epoch, and in that limited area.

So is the tribulation that comes next (21, 22). "In the world ye have tribulation" applies to the Christian in principle: but no specific one is ever held out for him; he should expect it always. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But the tribulation beyond parallel even for the Jews is during the last three-and-a-half years from the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary. It is a judicial dealing of God through their enemies because of their audacious apostasy, and has no point of contact with the Christian, save that merely nominal Christians fully share it. The Gentiles as such play their part in it; so we read in Rev. vii. of "the great tribulation," out of which come a crowd of faithful ones who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For the Jews and the Gentiles in the latter day will be thus visited in their respective measures, when the

Christians are no longer here but in heaven with Christ. But those days are cut short for the elect's sake: otherwise no flesh should be saved. For here the Lord speaks of Jewish disciples preserved on earth for His kingdom, not of Christians that endure suffering, and reign with Him when changed at His coming, which is not even supposed in this question.

Not less clear are the intimations in 23-26. They suppose Jewish dangers and deceits of the most trying kind, but not at all such as Christians are exposed to. For we know that when the Lord Jesus comes for us, we shall be changed, dead or living, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. This is so definitely revealed in the very first Epistle written to correct the mistake in the assembly of Thessalonians, just gathered unto the Lord's name, that it is hard to conceive a Christian that is not now apprised of it. Hence were any to tell him that the Christ was here or there, in Rome or in London, he would reject it, and treat the alleged as a false christ, and the herald as a false prophet; nor would great signs and prodigies weigh in support of so glaring a contradiction of the word of the Lord. But Jewish believers who have no such a promise did and will need the Lord's fore-warning to keep them from the snare. Whether therefore they say, He is in the desert or in the inner chambers, they were to believe neither. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man." Not so does the apostle John put His coming to receive us to Himself, but as the Bridegroom

for the bride. Whereas the lightning flash appositely describes His judicial presence for the Jewish disciples beset with Jewish and Gentile enemies animated with Satanic rage and hatred. And this is fully confirmed by the figure attached: "wherever the carcase is, there shall be gathered the eagles," the swift instruments of divine vengeance on the dead prey which ought to have been a living witness for God. What a contrast with His coming and our gathering together unto Him! the blessed motive to deliver the deceived Thessalonians from being troubled by the false assertion that His day was actually there (as in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2).

Then the Lord states that "immediately after the tribulation of those days" there should be a total subversion of governmental order above, the sun, the moon, the stars, "and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," signs physically of the great change in progress for the earth. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heavens." His appearing there on high is the sign of His coming to set up His kingdom and judge the quick. "And then shall all the tribes of the land" (for the context seems to favour this rendering, rather than "of the earth:" the word means either) lament: a result never expressed with His coming to translate us. "For they see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." But He acts on and by more than men. He has His angels; and these "He shall send with a great sound of trumpet; and they shall gather His elect," meaning here those of Israel as well as of Judah who

are written in the book, "from one end of the heavens to the other." We may compare it with the many references in the Psalms and the Prophets, Isaiah especially.

To interpret scripture we need a power and wisdom above our own. We cannot understand by forcing the lock : the key is wanted, and grace gives it in Christ as taught by the word and Spirit of God. If you have Christ by faith, you have already the key. In faith apply Him to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit enables you to understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning ;—for many learned men have been foolish enough in their mistakes. The simple saint who knows not beyond the mother-tongue may understand the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God : this, and only this, makes men humble, giving withal confidence in God and in His word, by taking away objects which darken, misdirect, or overpower his own mind.

Take the advice of a friend : read the scriptures prayerfully but believingly, and you will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of man. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should convince a Christian that one part of the word of God is sealed up and the other open. Once on a time it was so. When Daniel of old received those very communications to which the Lord directs the reader, he was told to seal up the book ; when John was called to have the same

communications and yet greater ones, he was told not to seal up the book. Perhaps you have seen the difference, and the reason of it. The principle lay here: Jewish saints could not enter into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came, at least until the end arrives. For then indeed, when the last days of this age are here, the godly remnant will understand. The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of God's word. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God. They are now, including the things to come, revealed fully and finally.

When the grace of God gives faith and the desire to do the will of God, then souls become able to understand both doctrine and prophecy. They learn that all the revealed mind of God centres in Christ, not in the first man. When you are not bent on finding in prophecy England or America, the cholera, the potato disease, or your own time; when you are delivered by grace from all such prepossessions, then with Him as the object of the soul you have a fit moral condition; because such absorbing ideas of men no longer govern and blind you. Hence the only way to understand any part of the Bible is just by grace to give up for Christ our own will and prejudices; thus we can face anything. We are no longer afraid of what God has to reveal; nor do we try to read anything of our own into the Bible, being then content to gather God's meaning from it.

May this be truly the temper and endeavour of our souls now.

Has it not been clearly shown that thus far the Lord Jesus speaks of disciples connected with the temple, and Judæa, and Jerusalem, but not of Christians? Take these further proofs of it. He says, "And pray that your flight be not in winter nor on a sabbath day." The Lord's day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly kept Jehovah's sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more correct than what we hear more commonly spoken around us. The Pope's tongue, the Italian, keeps up the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the sabbath day, and Sunday as the Lord's day. How curious that it should be so, where such gross darkness reigns on almost everything else!

In our own land and for a long time has been a great deal of confusion as to the sabbath and the Lord's day. Let none be offended at the remark; for its truth is certain and of importance. The Lord's day differs from the sabbath, not by a lower but by a higher degree of sanctity, not by leaving Christians free to do their own will on other days, but by calling them to do the Lord's will on that day in a complete separation to His glory, the holy services of divine honour in works of faith and labours of love. In short, the Lord's day differs essentially from the sabbath in that it is the day of grace, not of law, and the day of new creation, not of the old. The consequence of seeing this will be very important differences indeed in heart and practice.

Suppose a Christian had the strength to walk 20 miles on the Lord's day, and to preach the gospel six or seven times, would he be guilty of transgressing God's will? It is to be hoped that not a single person perhaps in this place would venture to think so; yet if really under the sabbath law, what can absolve from the obligations of that day? All under the law are bound within defined limits. Are Jews free to use the sabbath in indefinite labour even for what you know to be the active purposes of goodness? We must obey in our relationship.

Granted that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath; but are the Jewish disciples also lords of the sabbath? You cannot do freely what you count ever so good: Jews are under stringent regulations as to that day. If the sabbath were your day, you are required to keep it as such. As you, a Christian, have to do with the Lord's day, seek to understand its meaning, and be true to it. Without question the Lord's day is a day of consecration to the worship and to the work of the Lord. It is not the last day of a laborious week, a day of rest that you share with your ox or your ass. It is a day that is devoted to the Lord Jesus, especially to communion with His own in the world. Nor is there sin in the most strenuous labour for souls then; on the contrary such labour in the Lord is good and blessed wherever it is found, if He guide in it (and we need this).

But the Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor on a sabbath-day;

for the one would from its inclemency seriously impede, and on the other they could not go farther than a sabbath-day's journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are no longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of a Christian but of future Jewish disciples, subject to the law and its ritual, and animated by Jewish hopes.

Further, it is said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not even from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would be saved." All this is plain enough. It is not a question of heavenly things but of His Kingdom. They sought to live here and be the subjects of the blessed reign and glory when the Lord comes. It is glory on earth, not in heaven. "But for the elect's sake those days should be shortened."

"Then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is the Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as if possible to mislead even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth: Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe [it] not." It is clear and certain that the elect here are Jewish. Improbable for a Christian to be deceived by such rumours for an instant. But it is the fact that the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for such disciples as are here. In fact, being Jewish (not Christian), they might be deceived by the cry

that He was here or there on earth; whereas no Christian could be in danger, who awaits the Son of God from heaven. Yet the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. For looking as they were for the Lord's coming to the earth, they knew that the Lord's feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. They might thus be taken in by deceits. Not so the Christian. He knows that he is to be with the Lord in the heavens, being for this taken up out of this world into the air to meet the Lord on high. But the deceits in question are addressed to such only as expect to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord's instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judæa, and has nothing at all to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above.

Here again is the reason why even Jewish disciples should not listen. "For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Commentators have applied all this to the Roman conquest. But the army of Titus did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor did it shine unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So distinctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against the misinterpretations of men. The Son of man's coming will be quite different and surprise all like the lightning. It will be no question of going hither and thither to seek Him.

The Lord then has given these firm standing points, these landmarks as it were, in the prophecy,

which hinder us from being carried away by every wind of theory. We may see clearly what the Spirit has set before us. Nor has there been knowingly passed over anything material, nor any violence done to a word. No wish is there to give aught but a clear, distinct, and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as conveyed in His own words. The disciples furnish occasion for others in the main like themselves in Judæa at the close of the age.

Then it is said, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will be gathered together the eagles" (ver. 28). Apply this to the church or to the Christian, and what can you make of it? Is the church "the carcase"? We have heard something still more dreadful. Men have not been wanting who say that the Lord is! Such are the results of attempting to interpret the prophecy on false ground. From early days Greek and Latin Fathers taught these strange and even profane ideas; and many down to modern time have followed in their wake. These crudities ought surely to be judged irreverent as well as grossly mistaken. Can any intelligent Christian deny it to be a rash and unworthy interpretation, no matter how (according to this scheme) they take "the carcase," whether applying it to the church or to the Lord? The church united to Christ by the Holy Spirit is His body ($\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$): it is a wondrous privilege and a blessed truth; but is the church a carcase ($\pi\tau\omega\mu\alpha$)? Surely not; it is His living body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Nor is the Lord regarded as a body dead or merely alive,

but as the risen and glorified Head. The Lord a carcase! What were, or are, they dreaming about?

The whole effort is on false ground. There is no getting a consistent meaning out of the passage when interpreted of the church. The moment you refer it to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. For the mass of the Jews will then be apostate; and the eagles or vultures who flock thither are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people* by the hostile nations of the earth. Whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed at this time. If the Christians were the carcase, they must be the object of the judgment, for there the eagles, figures of those that execute judgment, are gathered together. But this is not at all the relation of the Lord's coming to the Christian. Nor can any Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcase, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints undoubtedly will go up to meet the Lord; but is He then to be the carcase, and are the church the eagles? In such a scheme, there is only the choice of one evil less or greater than another; and it is generally so with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view, and harshness disappears. This is the test of scriptural

* We see here an instance of the importance of rightly dividing the word; for Dean Alford through neglect of this lays down that the final fulfilment is "*over the whole world*, for that is the *πῶμα* now." This is to confound the Jewish part with Christendom and the Gentiles, given later and separately in the discourse. In each case too the respective judgment is of a different character, and of course differently applied and described.

truth: whenever men press a false interpretation, the general testimony of scripture is confused and dislocated or contradicted thereby.

Then the Lord adds, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (ver. 29).

Here it is that the popular view advocated by Dean Alford and others places the Lord's beginning to speak of His return personally. This however is not only to destroy the force of "Immediately after the tribulation of those days" with which the verse opens, but it breaks the connexion with the true transition to the last days in ver. 15, which introduces precise details of that epoch in their order; and it would seem, synchronising with the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in all the habitable earth as a witness to all the nations in the general history, "and then shall the end come." Thenceforward it is, what happens in the temple, Judæa, and strictly Jewish concerns at the end of the age. This is shown clearly by the reference to Dan. xii. 11. For the prophet there tells us that "from the time that the continual [holocaust] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolation set up, [there shall be] a thousand, two hundred, and ninety days," with a supplement in ver. 12 of "forty-five days" more to complete the incoming of the blessed time. Now count as men like from the siege of Titus, 1335 years for days bring in nothing of the sort.

The starting-point is wrong, and all modes of rectification are vain. It is really the last future crisis in and round Jerusalem, though it seems the gospel of the Kingdom goes on by godly Jews outside over the earth about the same time, the days in the prophet being literal days as here in ver. 22. What has misled most is confounding the very different language and truth in Matt. xxiv. 15 etc. and Mark. xiii. 14 etc. (who both give us what is entirely future) with that of Luke xxi. 20-24, which is entirely past, save the treading down of Jerusalem by Gentiles while Gentile times last, &c. Here it is unequivocally and exclusively the Roman sack and its consequences to this day; while Luke's future reference commences with ver. 25 and onward. It is an error to mix up this Roman episode in the third Gospel with the pointedly different description in the first and second Gospels which omit this, and then converge on the future only. They speak of the abomination of desolation, and of the unequalled tribulation, on which Luke is silent. But Luke tells of the Romans investing Jerusalem, and that desolation, of which Matthew and Mark say not a word; as he does not about the tribulation without parallel, but only of "days of vengeance, and great distress upon the land and wrath to this people." The other Evangelists are wholly silent on the extreme slaughter by the Roman arms, and their captivity into all the nations; with the notable prolonged fact that Jerusalem should be trodden down by Gentiles till their times are over, as they are not yet. All this is as carefully presented by Luke in exact consistency

with the Spirit's design in his Gospel, as the other two omit it, being devoted to the unprecedented horrors of the future which Luke omits.

But all three take up the closing scene, Luke not saying "Immediately after the tribulation etc.," as in fact he had not alluded to it in the least, but joining the other two about signs in sun, moon, and stars, though as usual noticing moral state beyond the others. Next all speak of the Son of man coming, as he puts it in a cloud with power and great glory; and he alone adds, "But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh." Can any Christian be so prejudiced as not to see that the heavenly saints are not here in view? For we already have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our offences; whereas those here represented have yet to enjoy it in His Kingdom.

Luke's presentation is of the more value as settling the true force of "this generation shall in no wise pass till all things have taken place" among them, the end of Gentile supremacy over Israel and Jerusalem. The desire to limit "this generation," as here employed, to the destruction of their city by the Romans, is thus certainly precluded. Further, at the consummation of the age the revived Roman Empire will not be against the apostate Jews, but rather on the side of the Antichrist or wilful king of Palestine, when the king of the north at the time of the end shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and

with many ships. But each shall perish successively and horribly under the Lord of lords and King of kings. The future (and these verses beyond just question strikingly speak of the future) still more conclusively proves, for any acquainted with the prophets, the impossibility of interpreting the eagles of the Roman armies in the past, or the still more childish fancy of their symbolising the church or Christians in the future, with the result (yet more offensive involved) of the carcase figuring the Lord of glory.

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn (ver. 30).” The Son of Man appearing in heaven is, I presume, the sign of His coming to enforce His claim on earth. It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth, or at least of the land, mourning when the sign appears. “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 a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (ver. 31).” Here too light is given of all moment to decide that the coming of the Son of man is in view of the land, Israel (or at least the chosen), and not at all to receive the heavenly ones for association with Himself in the Father’s house.

For beyond controversy He is seen coming on the clouds of heaven before He sends forth His angels to gather together His elect, here in question,

from the four winds. Now it is a matter of positive revelation by the apostle Paul (Col. iii. 4) that "When Christ, our (or, your) life shall be manifested then (τότε, not εἴτα) shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." It is not the moment when we are changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, but are with Him manifested in glory. The heavenly saints are already with Him when He comes judicially as Son of man; for this is His given office as such (John v. 27), to execute judgment. They are with Him already, not then translated, called and chosen and faithful, and therefore not angels (who are not "called" nor said to be "faithful") but saints (Rev. xvii. 14).

Indeed we learn from Rev. xix. 14 that the armies that are in the heaven followed Him upon white horses clothed in white pure byss, the righteousnesses of saints as interpreted just before; whereas angelic clothing had been said to be pure bright linen (Rev. xv. 6). The elders, who represent the saints as chiefs of the royal priesthood, are seen on high from Rev. iv. to xix. Here they first appear in the quality of bride for the marriage of the Lamb above, and next accompany Him as armies when He issues from heaven to judge and war in righteousness. Hence it is in the teeth of scripture that *we* can be on the earth and see Him appear as the glorious Son of Man in heaven coming to judge the quick. On the contrary we shall be then manifested together with Him when He is manifested in glory.

The Lord had already intimated it before Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thess., 1 Cor. xv. and Col. iii. Only,

though spoken, it was long after Paul had departed to be with Christ that John xiv. was written, and still longer than Rev. iv-xix. These scriptures reveal that Christ will surely come to change and translate above the heavenly saints; as Enoch (Jude 14) and Zechariah (xiv. 5) say they come with Him: a truth repeated by the apostle in 1 Thess. iii. 13, iv. 14. Then in vers. 15-17 he proceeds in a new revelation to explain that this will be by His coming for them by His descent from heaven with a shout of command which gathers them in a moment to Himself. Clearly then "the elect," subsequently gathered after the Lord appears, are not heavenly, but rather His restored people, the nucleus of godly Israel, in harmony with the context.

Too many lay great stress upon gathering "His elect." Be not too quick, my friends. The "elect" may not necessarily mean Christians. If one speak of elect now, it is so; but had God no heavenly "elect" before there were Christians? And after these are taken to heaven, will there be no elect on earth? Was the Lord to make a solitude and call it peace? Was God precluded from mercy on earth, because His sovereign grace had given us and the O. T. saints our respective places in heaven? There were elect Gentiles in patriarchal days and later too. Take Job for one, and his friends no doubt also the same; were they not elect men? Melchisedek, Jethro, and others; were not they elect? Need one enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We find clearly elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read of Christianity, then the

elect must be so explained; if we read about a Jewish state, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election; and so with the nations too. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is simply speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have "his elect" named, He means the elect of those described, that is, of Israel. This is not at all to bring in arbitrary rules. Is it not in fact a very plain and necessary principle of exposition?

The Lord in all the context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently "his elect" must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered "from one end of heaven to the other," yet not for heaven but on earth. (Compare Isaiah xxvii., lxx., Rom. xi. 5, 7, 28.)

"Now learn the parable from the fig-tree." The fig-tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. This confirms what has been already said. In the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord takes a view of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, He employs this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says "the fig tree, and all the trees." The latter are not spoken of in Matthew, because this part only looks at the Jew; but in Luke referring to the Gentile as well as the Jew, He hence adds, "and all the trees." (Compare Luke xxi. 29.)

"Now learn the parable from the fig-tree. When its branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know that it (or, he) is near, at the doors. Verily I say to

you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass " (vers. 32-34). Mark the phrase "all these things," from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly here "this generation" cannot mean, what some impute to it, a mere period of thirty years, or a man's life. The phrase signifies, what it frequently does in scripture, a line characterised by certain moral tokens entirely independent of a brief limit of time. Hence we find, in the Psalms very particularly, this use of "generation." One text is enough to prove it in the most convincing manner. In Psalm xii. 7 we read "Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." "This generation" is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn and Christ-rejecting generation. "This generation," or the non-believing race of the Jews, is not to pass away till all these things have taken place. Thus the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will, till He comes again in the clouds of heaven.

Some of you probably have read in a respectable Review an article of no small notoriety; which boasts that the Jews of the present day are really what they were in the days of our Saviour—a noble-hearted generous race (though they made that mistake!) as compared with their rude forefathers in the days of Moses, &c. Alas for the judgment of man! What a confession that "this generation" has not passed away! They *are* still the same

proud, self-righteous, Christ-rejecting race as they were then.

But the grace of God will make them anew, "a generation to come." The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteously after His immense long-suffering, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Messiah has great things in store for Israel. There will be this double action indeed, that the mass of them will fill up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began; whilst the remnant will become the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. Of the former He speaks when saying that "this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass. "The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of the heavens, but the Father only" (vers. 35, 36).

The next comparison (vers. 37-41) is not to the fig-tree or anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament. "But as the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man; for as in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women [shall be] grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left." Had heavenly saints been in question, Enoch would be the

appropriate type ; but as the Lord meant saints, not caught up, but carried through the waters of judgment, He justly chose Noah as the pattern for the remnant to be on the earth.

Again, instead of such an indiscriminate slaughter or such a captivity as the Jews had executed upon them by the Romans, there is a direct and plain contrast. Here is unfailing discrimination : one man taken and one left ; one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case : not so did the Romans, nor any army that ever took a city. Notoriously if not necessarily at such a time, there is scarce thought of, or leisure for, discrimination. The rule is wholesale bloodshed, and often slavery. It was especially so when Titus sacked the city. So alas ! it may be to this day. But when the Lord Jesus comes in judgment of the quick, it will be quite otherwise. One, whether of men or of women, is taken for judgment, one left for blessing in the land.

The Lord winds up this part of His prophecy by saying, " Watch therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the house-master had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be digged through. Therefore, be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh " (vers. 42-44). There closes the portion of the prophecy which refers to the Jews. It began by referring to the Jewish remnant, because such the disciples as yet were really, though believers. Christ took them up

just as they were; though we know they subsequently became Christians. They then passed into a new relationship. Faith in Him they had already; but, instead of His reigning and blessing them on the earth, another order of things was founded in connexion with His ascension to heaven. Hence the same disciples merged into a new form of relationship with God, of which the Holy Spirit sent forth was the power. They were taught no longer to expect the Lord's restoration of the kingdom as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself, and take them to the Father's home in heaven. This is the Christian's hope; this is what they await. The Lord calls them out from everything on earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up to send down the Holy Ghost.

Christianity thus comes in, as if a drawbridge had been opened and let them into an entirely new circle. The disciples at the beginning were on one side of the bridge, the disciples at the end would be on the other side. The drawbridge opens, and the new thing, the church, passes through. It is the calling of Christians out of the world, of those called in one body, waiting till Christ comes to receive them to Himself and take them where He is. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven. Thus the disciples become heavenly (1 Cor. xv. 48) and are being transformed spiritually (2 Cor. iii. 18). Finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take

them completely out of their natural environment, conformed in body to His own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption, till He come to take us to be with Him on high, is then well enough called Christianity.

It is not denied that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they too will shine in the likeness of Christ. Only there is an enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into salvation, with new relationships in union with Himself. Then the Holy Spirit gives a fresh and incomparably greater power to those who are now gathered to His name. It is possible that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were more faithful than many, perhaps than most of us. For ourselves we cannot take high ground; but we boast in God and of what Christ has given us. He it is really brings in "grace and truth," which makes our unfaithfulness more manifest; for the greater the Christian privileges, the more strictly is our unfaithfulness measured. But the hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Very striking is the fact that "the Son of man" is here dropt, only to be resumed in the third section where all the nations come into review. For it will be shown that the clause containing that title in the Christian portion (xxv. 13) is spurious. So in Dan. vii. we see this title used when He comes to deal with the Gentile powers (the last in particular), to the deliverance of the Jewish people, and His universal dominion over all peoples and tongues.

It has to do with His presence for the earth, but does not rise to His heavenly glory nor to our association with Him there. Hence the need of the intermediate part of the great discourse, in which the Lord communicated as much as those addressed could then bear, leaving it to the Holy Spirit when sent from heaven to lead into all the truth. It is here that failure in faith and hope is found even among unquestionable saints, especially when they lean on that frail reed, human tradition, against which the Lord directed the keenest arrow.

THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

MATT. XXIV. 45—XXV. 50.



FROM this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing, namely, what the disciples were going to enter. Evidently this was the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were soon to become, with the new relationships to Christ dead and risen, when fresh power would be given by the Holy Spirit. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judæa, and any reference to the temple, the prophets, and the sabbath. The Lord widens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature, which would be equally as true at Timbuctoo as at Jerusalem—it does not matter where. They bear upon Christianity. What Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit is not one of the narrow systems of men, nor of their broad worldly associations. Christianity is exclusive of nothing but sin; it is the practical expression of Christ, not only in grace and truth but in resulting practice. The Lord definitely marks this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all Christian disciples, wherever they might be in this world, and at any time

till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply thereto characteristically.

The first parable is the prudent servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of the excellent activity with variety of spiritual endowment in each for trading with his lord's goods as given in the parable of the Talents (chap. xxv). The form is very striking. We have, seen as one, a profession carried out and ending very differently; and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before. "Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that evil bondman shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and shall eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (vers. 45-51).

It was another case with the nation. In Judaism there was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times falling into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, and hence persecuting the faithful brethren. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely; and it is therefore presented here as one

whole strikingly. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and prudent servant shall be made ruler over all His goods. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. It is the responsibility of all in the house. Hence He goes on to say, "But if that evil servant" etc. They are surprisingly joined thus. On what does his ruin turn? "In his heart" the evil servant says, "My lord delayeth." His coming is not a mere idea: man likes to have his notions; and nobody is the better for them. But this refers to what is deep and real, the heart's indifference to the coming of the Master. The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth." He believes what he likes; and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming.

Most affecting it is to see that the Lord treats the heart's putting off His return as leading to assumption within and laxity without. That evil servant, when he says in his heart (for so it is), My lord delayeth, shall begin also to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken. What a contrast with Christ, and a practical denial of Him! It led back the professor to the world in self-exalting oppression, and in allowed intimacy with the ungodly and immoral. He is therefore appointed, when the Lord is come, to have his part with the hypocrites. The Lord does not treat him as a Jew or a Greek, but according to his responsibility.

How different it is with the faithful and prudent servant! He waits and longs for the Lord because he loves Him who first loved us. Hence the hope

of Christ is quite distinct from prophecy. One might be greatly versed in the prophetic word, and wholly lack that hope; one might have the heart filled with the hope, and be altogether unacquainted with prophecy. No one could rightly deprecate those solemn warnings of what will burst unexpectedly on the world. But, next to believing in Christ for life and redemption, with worship and service and walk following, the Christian needs and is called to wait for the Son of God from heaven. Now if you love anyone, you delight to see him. The absence of the person beloved is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience; and the hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to the heart.

The Lord gives this feeling, and strengthens it, toward Himself. It is the proper hope of the Christian, not the kingdom but Christ. Grant that it may be hindered by the influence of prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a genuine desire for the coming of Christ. But when the soul is not in peace through a full gospel, one is afraid. Those who give them an uncertain gospel are responsible for it; as they thus keep souls in dread, they do the greatest injury to the grace of God. One does not speak of such as quite falsify Christ or His work, but of those who do preach it partially, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ, in the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer. The result of this defect in teaching is that Chris-

tians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the immediate hope of Christ's coming.

They do not own that the acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of a Christian ; they have not learnt the truth that the Lord by His death has not only effaced their sins but had their sinful nature condemned completely ; and this, in order to their walking now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ's image in resurrection at His coming (Rom. viii. 1-4, 11, 29).

Who can exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer ? If you rest on His redemption, all difficulties Godward are taken away. Then there is nothing left but the need of daily self-judgment for every inconsistency, the duty of serving Him now, and the delight of being with Him and seeing Him then, as also of worshipping both now and for ever by grace. He has done all for each to bring us to God, taking us out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this and in Him ? Therefore all Christians, wherever or whoever they may be, are entitled to have joy and delight, though for many dimmed unhappily, in the prospect of His coming.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, it is certain that all Christians love Christ here, and in principle await Him too. To say this may not please some zealous pre-millennialist friends ; but surely this hope belongs to every Christian heart. Would you doubt it of S. Rutherford ? or of the late S. Waldegrave ? Yet the system of the latter in his Modern Millennarianism was wildly unscriptural. For he believed the First Resurrection reign over,

and that we are now in the little space, before Christ sits on the great white throne; and this he made His coming, when heaven and earth shall have fled!

There are false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature goes out toward Christ, so it longs for the time when we shall be for ever with the Lord. Waiting for Christ supposes waiting for His coming; but if put into precise forms and logical propositions, damage may easily ensue. If the object be to prove that many Christians do not look for Christ's coming, abundant grounds appear for working on. But if, on the other hand, you are child-like, God gives sufficient evidence that those who are Christ's, notwithstanding obstacles, do look and at bottom long for His coming.

Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapours that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its shade of desolation. They are the mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile

a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that the church must go through so dreadful a crisis.

Be assured, my brethren, that the scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well: for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those that ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God.

What connection is there between this and the Christian looking for Christ? Here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything peculiar to Israel. His coming will surely be for the solemn judgment of all who pervert grace and indulge in unrighteousness, receiving a sentence so much the more stern, because the gospel reveals God perfectly in light and love, which they abuse to fleshly licence. As to this the Fathers taught falsehood and unholiness. But scripture teaches

the Christian not only to wait for Christ as his proper and dearest hope, but also for His appearing and kingdom when wrong will be redressed and righteousness rewarded and evil too put down for ever to His honour and glory. Yes, we love His appearing and His kingdom when the proud shall be abased, the meek inherit the earth, Satan be set aside, and the Lord exalted publicly without a rival or a foe. It is a blessed hope ; but we have the still better and higher of being with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory, which the Father gave Him because He loved Him before the world's foundation.

Then comes the parable of the ten Virgins. It is essential to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this discourse is about him : such an idea completely perverts his judgment. For it presents, as we have seen, the Jewish people distinctively. Here we have a then future comparison of the kingdom of the heavens.

"Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins, the which took their torches and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For the foolish took their torches and took no oil with them ; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches. Now, the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight a cry was made, Behold, the bridegroom ! go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches. And the foolish said to

the prudent, Give us of your oil; for our torches are going out. But the prudent answered, saying, Peradventure there be not enough for us and you. Go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those ready went in with him to the marriage-feast; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering, said, Verily I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

Now we have also in our day to do with another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the virgins from properly applying to the Christian. We may affirm, on the contrary, that it has nothing to do with the Jewish remnant directly; who, as they are not called to go out to meet the Bridegroom, could not have oil in their vessels, and lastly will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. The Jews ought to abide where they are, or only flee to escape death in their refusal of idolatry. And those who survive, for the Lord's appearing and their own deliverance, only receive the Holy Spirit after He appears. All is in contrast with the Christian position. But many a one who had been a Jewish disciple became a Christian, in the true sense of the term, as Peter uses the word in his First Epistle, and Luke in the Acts. In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven will be likened to ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ as the torch was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world. Each virgin tak-

ing her lamp, they went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

Now this is characteristic of the Christian. The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ, who is gone to heaven. If he had been a Jew, he leaves his ancient associations and hopes behind. Again, if the greatest grandee in the Gentile world, or if of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can arrest or fascinate the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ; and Christ in heavenly joy and blessedness. It is not the Judge coming to deal with the wicked. If the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable fitly bring an image of terror? Well he knows that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom will be the Judge; he knows well that Jesus will put down all those who oppose Him; but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom to the same persons, any more than both will be at the same precise time. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to Christians who are waiting for Him.

But there are other elements of moment. Here are persons true or false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the bride*

* It is a strange fact, however, that two uncial MSS. (DX), eight cursives, several ancient versions, including the Itala and the Vulgate, and fathers Greek and Latin, endorse this addition, and represent the virgins as going to meet the "Bridegroom and the bride." Of course, it is a mere gloss. Had a bride been named, it would have detracted from the perfect finish of the parable and brought in confusion, as Christians real or in name are meant by the ten who go forth to meet the Lord.

is not the expressed aim. When we talk about Christians, real or nominal, we do not fix our mind on unity; we think of individuals who go forth. Christ was about to present profession, and so introduces foolish as well as wise virgins. He therefore looks at Christians professing His name truly or falsely, not at the bride of the Lamb. The Christians are here characterised by quitting every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast an antiquity before which all others grow pale), when become a Christian, leaves all to go forth unto Him, as we read in Hebrews xiii. 13, "bearing His reproach."

Here you have the same great principle. As the Christian, even though once a Jew, was called to leave the old order behind, so the virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their torches but no oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches.

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age could have oil in their vessels? They will never have such an unction till the Lord Jesus comes and sheds the Spirit on them. For it is well known that oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit, however vital; for beyond doubt the Jewish remnant will have this. They will be really cleansed in the heart by the word. The Jewish disciples found at the end of the age do not receive the outpouring of the Spirit till the Lord appears; they

wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom comes that the power of the Holy Spirit will be upon them. They will when converted welcome Him in their heart, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. They will go through a serious inward process next; as we are told, when they see the Lord Jesus, they mourn as for an only Son. They have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness; but the power of the Holy Ghost will be given only after they have seen the Lord. There is this difference with the Christian, that he receives the oil or unction from the Holy One while the Lord is unseen and on high. The Jewish remnant will only receive it when the Lord comes back.

Again, there is at no time in their case, what we see in these virgins, a class that goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish disciples will not disappear from Jerusalem until the idol is set up and the tribulation is at hand. Then they flee from the enemy's power and its dread consequences from God. It is a flight from the overflowing scourge in retribution and judgment for the people's iniquity. It is no going forth to meet the Bridegroom in joyful hope as here.

The Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed in, from, and for heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One whose grace has been proved, and whose coming one awaits: hence he goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Not so the

Jewish remnant; they expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by the putting down of their enemies. As Christ ascended, so the Christian waits to be caught up out of the world; the Jewish saint waits for the Lord to come judicially into the world, which is no doubt our expectation also. The parable speaks solely of the Christian, and in no way refers to the Jewish remnant.

We shall see other proofs of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. This meets another error. Not a few have supposed that the foolish virgins mean Christians who are not pre-millennarians. This gives a very undue value to correct notions of prophecy. Granted entirely that those who look for the Lord to come before that reign are right in their judgment. Those who put the millennium before the Lord's coming are quite mistaken. But how can one sympathise with those who put a slight upon such Christians as have not been taught as you and I? These are self-flattering delusions, and are empty manifestations that bear the brand of sect or school written on them. The best blessings we have are those which God confers on His children, on the body of Christ, in other words on all those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, who rest on Christ and His redemption. These are the persons spoken of as wise. The Holy Ghost is a divine spring for sustaining testimony, as well as a divine power of understanding the word of God, and for communion with the Father and the Son.

The foolish virgins never had oil in their vessels.

Some ask how they can have had their torches burning. The answer is easy. They could light the torch: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian as well as the strongest has the oil. The apostle John so tells not the fathers, nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest that they have an unction from the Holy One. For those who had no oil could not be Christians, in any real, full, or divine sense of the name. Hence a greater evil is in question than thinking the millennium to be before Christ's second coming or after it. The heart was a stranger to the Lord's grace: a thing more momentous than right notions about the word of prophecy.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Saviour, you surely have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. Their folly consisted in a want very much deeper than in a right or wrong prophetic scheme. The foolish lived a life of religious levity, not of necessity hypocritical but of self-deception, ignoring God and His grace; and consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His. The foolish virgins have not the Holy Spirit dwelling in them; so the Lord means and deals with them.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages; we see that, many of the scriptures applying to them fully, we can only get the principle of them. But your attention is called here to the fact that there are other scriptures which

apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what one may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had tongues and other miraculous powers among them. It is plain that we have not ; and only a few enthusiasts pretend to have them. Alas ! wherever there are pretensions to sign gifts, their falsity or worse is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The present condition of the church would make it to be a moral impossibility that God should at present bestow these extraordinary virtues. For if the Lord were to restore them now, one might ask, Where ? Most people would begin with themselves. Were the Lord to confer these powers upon the various sects of Christendom, it would be putting His seal upon what His word says is wrong as if all were right. How could He thus contradict Himself ? How could He thus sanction the broken fragments of His house or put honour upon its fallen condition ? Without this we are ready to be self-satisfied ; we are too prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought ; and the Lord will not help us to be more so.

But He has left what is infinitely better ; He continues everything due to Christ and good for the soul in every true want. He has taken away nothing needful for edification. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He puts this inward power in the church ; but He marked it of old with a brilliant signature before the world. Those who look for

the restoration of these powers are not alive to what befits our fallen condition. It is morally most important for the Christian to know what the church was at first and what it is now, grieving before God at the difference. What sympathy ought there to be with the Christian who is not a mourner because of the state of the church? It is well to have joy in the Lord; but we should be humbled about ourselves and the church. Ought we not for the Lord's sake to feel deeply the actual condition of ruin?

In the parable, you will observe, the Lord points out the failure from the original calling. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all nodded and went asleep." What a state of departure, from forgetfulness of the Lord's return! It was a general and total insensibility to the hope. When sleepy, they haply turned in here or there to take repose. It was no longer true that they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The wise who had the oil in their vessels slept like the foolish who had none.

But now mark another thing. It is midnight, and there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him." Has this been fulfilled? In measure it has, or rather it is being fulfilled now. It is a cry made by divine grace. No sign appeared, no outward warning, no seeing of a prophecy accomplished, as for the Jewish remnant in chap. xxiv. In us God works invisibly by His word and Spirit. The Lord is interposing to break the long slumbering condition of Christendom, and this not only for the wise but for the foolish.

Have there not been times when men were im-

pressed with the fear that judgment-day was coming, when they yielded to sore panic at the cry that "the end of the world" was at hand? In the year 600 they were sure it would be then. But time passed on, and the end of the world did not come. They slumbered again. Then, in the year 1000 (surely 1000 was the fatal number!) there was yet greater alarm all over western Christendom; and the clergy took advantage of this, and got the barons and people to give their gold and their labour, lands and possessions, to build grand cathedrals and religious houses some of which, as is well-known, exist to the present day. This fear passed away, and the end of the world did not come. Then followed a long, a deep slumber indeed.

Further there have been partial awakenings at various times since, but they were of the same character. At the period of the great rebellion, when the Puritans got into power in England, there was a momentary shaking in this country; and bold men rose up, who tried to establish the Fifth Monarchy, or present power in the world in the name of the Lord Jesus. Movements such as this took place at various epochs; but where was the going forth to meet the Bridegroom? There was not even a resemblance to it.

In past ages then there was alarm, sometimes to the utmost degree; and this state is represented in the well known mediæval hymn or dirge, "Dies Irae," the extreme expression of Catholic terror. Such was the feeling of the middle ages. Since then, in later times, Protestant fanatics tried to get

power into their hands. But this means seizing the earth at the present, not quitting all to meet Christ.

The momentous fact is that two spiritual characteristics, very distinct from ancient or mediæval or modern views, mark off truth from error as to this. Are we not to be humbled because of the evil that has been done in Christendom? And are we not practically to take our stand on what was the Lord's will from the first? If the Lord at the outset called all Christians to go out to meet Him, they should ever cherish this as their calling and joy of heart. The consequence of a revival of the Christian hope of meeting the Lord is resumption of the original position, that of going forth to meet the Bridegroom. How could believers honestly continue in what they know to be false and unscriptural, if they look for the Lord to come back any day? Thus the practical effect is immediate and immense where heart and conscience are true to Him. Compare Luke xii. 35-37 for the proper posture morally.

Awe-stricken come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, "Give us of your oil;" but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them "Go, buy oil for yourselves." There is One who sells,* but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling to the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the

* Which is farthest from the truth?—Chrysostom's notion that those who sell are the poor, the indirect occasion of good to such as walk in love; or Alford's, who deduces from it "a mean" enough argument for an appointed and paid ministry.

wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish: who but One could give what they wanted?

What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. It is the foolish virgins in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful—taking every way except the right way. There is only one means of procuring the oil: solely can it be through Christ Himself, without money and without price. I remember the time when men bearing the name of the Lord's ministers spent their time in fishing, hunting, shooting, and dancing. Clergymen joined in worldly pleasures without shame. You rarely hear of such things now: the Oxford delusion has altered the form. The same sort of men now-a-days look very demure: they are in general busy everywhere about religion. Do you believe they are any better than the men who used to hunt and dance? They have great zeal; but is it according to knowledge? Is it Christ, or is it not what they call the church without Him? Form deceives most.

All the fashionable millinery or machinery in religion, does it change people's state or suppose real renewal? The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, processions, and stations, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in a fit state to meet the Lord, and fear it themselves. They are troubled with the rumour of they know not what. The consequence,

then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His grace, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth.

Utterly ignorant of the grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called "earnestness." They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins: their superstitious trust in baptismal regeneration blinds them. So they think, or hope, that being "earnest" they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless? If you ask them whether their sins are blotted out, and they are saved by grace, they count it presumption. They are as ignorant of the true power and privilege of redemption as the heathen or the Jew. They have no Spirit-taught certainty that the Son of man came down to save the lost. If there be such a thing as a present salvation, their occupation is evidently gone. Neither grace nor truth admits of all this religious self-importance, bustle, and vain show. As sinners, we need a Saviour, and a divine salvation; as saints, let us seek a calm but complete devotedness to the name, word, and work of the Lord Jesus. But man prefers his own works; and to win the world he finds that scenic representations of Christian facts or forms act most on the masses, and attract the light, sentimental, despairing, and even profane. Individuals in the midst of such histrionic religion may seek

with a certain measure of the gospel to win souls; yet they subject Christ Himself to the church. But the movement as a whole is just the activity of the foolish virgins, who have not the oil and in vain try to get it as best they can.

At length the Bridegroom comes, and "they that were ready went in to the marriage; and the door was shut."

Afterwards come the foolish virgins. Now they cry, but it is with horror and despair. Their religious energy is at length seen to be of the old man. In an agony they say, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, has only to tell them, "I know you not." Do not fancy that this is said to faulty believers. It is said of the foolish virgins who had no oil; of those who bore the name of the Lord, but had not the Spirit of Christ. Of and to them it was declared that the Lord knew them not. "Watch, therefore," says He, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour."

There is no authority for what follows ("wherein the Son of man cometh"). You have heard the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, T. S. Green, Scrivener, Drs. Tregelles, Westcott and Hort in this country. It is no peculiar thought in the least; for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from chap. xxiv. 42 and bring in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite incongruous with what He here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet, Him the

Bridegroom. Man as such, must be judged; all the guilty tribes mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations: and this, spite of their unfaithfulness during the night whilst He tarried, for *all* slumbered and slept.

The middle parable is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. There only is found an historic or dispensational view of the state of things among those professedly Christ's on earth while He is on high. There accordingly the constant expectation of those who took the place of entering into the interests of His love is treated, with the issue at the end for such as were "foolish" and had no share in the unction of the Spirit; for this alone could enable any to be "ready" for going in with Christ to the marriage. The "then" of the comparison (Matt. xxv. 1), when judgment is executed on the evil servant of chap. xxiv., carries us up to the foolish virgins shut out and disowned by Him as known to Him: a complete disproof of the strange notion that they could be saints. Indeed the theory, if it deserves such a name, that any member of Christ's body will be left behind when He comes to receive His own to Himself and translate them to the Father's house, is not only baseless as opposed to the clearest testimony of scripture, but quite unworthy of a spiritual mind. Think of Christ's body without an ear or an eye, a finger or a toe! The bride of the Lamb mutilated and deformed in glory!

But even worse is that extreme form of the speculation, which supposes persons possessed of

eternal life, the knowledge of and communion with the Father and the Son, yet condemned to be tormented in the flame of Hades during the thousand years' reign of Christ and the glorified saints. And why? Because they were not immersed as professing believers in the water of baptism, and were not intelligent enough to accept premillennialism! For who does not know that there are thousands of saints, neither premillennials nor immersed, yet far more intelligent, devoted, and spiritual than multitudes of such Anabaptists, even if they fully accept premillennialism? No, "they that are Christ's at His coming," not some who plume themselves on this or that external mark or of truth quite subordinate to what they have and love, will be raised to share the kingdom when He reigns and to be with Him before the kingdom and during it and after it, having His presence and love in a glory deeper and higher. The scheme that denies this revealed certainty as in John xvii. 24, Rom. v. 17, 1 Thess. iv. 17 (last clause), and Rev. xxii. 5, is not only anti-scriptural but repulsive, yea destructive of all sound judgment and of the best affections.

In the third parable (of the Talents) it is not the collective responsibility so strikingly depicted in the first, nor the heavenly hope separating from other objects and attaching to the Bridegroom's coming, but a kind of pendant on it. "For [it is] as [if] a man going abroad called his own bondmen and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each

according to his several ability, and went his way. Straightway he that received the five talents proceeded, and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise also he [that received] the two, and he gained other two. But he that received the one went off, and dug in the earth, and hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen cometh and settleth account with them. And he that received the five talents came forward and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents: behold, I gained five other talents [besides them]. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that [received] the two talents said, Lord, two talents thou deliveredst to me: behold, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came forward and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering whence thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went off, and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. But his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather whence I scattered not. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have got mine own with interest. Take away therefore the talent

from him, and give [it] to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall be in abundance; but from him that hath not, even what he hath shall be taken away [from him]. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth " (vers. 14-30).

Here it is the Lord working by diversity of gifts; and as He is sovereign, so confidence in Him is what severs the "good and faithful" bondmen from the wicked and slothful one, as it was in Matt. xxiv. a question of prudent or wise fidelity. Zeal according to that confidence was followed by blessing and fruit. Here we have marked variety, and individual responsibility in faith, in contrast with unbelief and blindness to grace. When we know Christ (and the unprofitable one professed this), it is profound wickedness, and none in general worse than such a nominal Christian. When confidence in Him is wanting, all is wrong, though this may be shewn in fear to use what He had given for profit. Had he truly known the Lord, he would have served Him gladly, especially as he had a gift of power; but he knew Him not from God, and was judged according to his distrust and the falsehood which unbelief readily yields to. Unbelief receives what flesh says, according to what the evil heart suggests when it listens to Satan's lie. And the Lord deals with the wicked man as his slander deserved. While such as work on in confidence of His grace enter into the joy of their Lord, those who would not in distrust of Him, shall be consigned to the outer darkness with all

its horrors and misery. Bliss with Christ is beyond rewards, though this too has its place of moment.

Here the Parable of the Ten Pounds (or, Minas) in Luke xix. 12-27 is also instructive. It is peculiar to his Gospel and given before the last visit to Jerusalem; whereas that of the Talents was when the visit was drawing to a close. In Luke there is the same gift entrusted to each of the servants, and their responsibility and right use in some was strongly in evidence, yet to have authority over so many cities is the reward in the Kingdom, not entrance into their Lord's joy. But how profound the mistake to set a place of outward honour above sharing the Lord's joy with Himself! The good and faithful will receive that also, both being in the Kingdom. There is responsibility in active service.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with "that evil servant," set forth the general place in the house, faithful or the contrary, the parable of the Talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that blessing in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace.

THE GENTILE PORTION.

MATT. XXV. 31—46.

THIS is the third and concluding section of the Lord's prophetic word. No part of it has been less understood ; yet it is clearly defined, as distinct from the other two, by internal marks which ought to have carried conviction to every believer. But such has been the fate of scripture ; not that God's word fails in plainness of speech and certainty of meaning, but because it crosses man's will, who therefore seeks to interpret it according to his own thoughts. Every scripture is for us, and, being of God, is also profitable for man ; but it is not all about us. We can only learn surely from itself concerning whom it speaks.

1. We have had a Jewish remnant believing, but without the full privileges of Christians, as the Lord addressed those who then represented it down to the end of the age. Then He appears as the Son of man, and in that day delivers not only such, but all the elect of the nation, the "all Israel that shall be saved," immediately after unparalleled tribulation.

2. Then (without a vestige of allusion to Judæa, the city, the temple, or any association local or temporal) the discourse takes up what applies directly and exclusively to the Christian profession, sound and un-

sound, in the three intermediate parables which were therefore couched in terms of altogether general import. Here "the Son of man" disappears according to the overwhelming testimony of the best MSS, Vv., and early citations for xxv 13.

3. There remained accordingly only to tell and hear of the Gentiles. For every reader or enquirer is aware that the mass of mankind, devoted to idols and impostures, has to this day resisted the Christian testimony. But the Lord had given in the first part (xxiv. 14) the remarkable intimation that "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable world* for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come." Here He lets us know the fruit of this preaching, of course (if we are caught up) by the believing Jews of that day, as its place intimates, just before the end comes.

Hence the last section has its suited peculiarity which differentiates it from both the preceding ones, that pertaining to it alone and characteristically. For the specific ground for the King's decision turns on a preaching of the glad news of the kingdom which only came through His brethren (evidently converted Jews) before "the end," and is here shown to result among all the nations in some heeding the message and in others despising it. It is therefore unique in its circumstances as a whole ;

* Even those who try to limit "the inhabited world" to the Roman Empire are obliged here to abandon it ; for they admit that at this very time the Beast and the False Prophet will have banished it thence. We can understand the term employed by the Romans in pride of power, and so cited in scripture as in profane historians, and loosely used by the speakers in Acts xvii. 6, xxiv. 5. But it is not possible so to confine it in Acts xvii. 81, Rom. x. 18, Heb. i. 6, Rev. iii. 10, xvi. 14, any more than in Matt. xxiv. 14. Compare also Matt. iv. 8 with Luke iv. 5.

though no principle is involved which cannot be justified from other scriptures.

“ But when the Son of man shall have come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before him; and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats (or, kids); and he will set the sheep on his right but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to those on his right, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? and when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? and when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did [it] to me. Then shall he say also to those on the left, Go from me, accursed, into the everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also

answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered not to thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, ye did [it] not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting" (xxv. 31-46).

The Son of man will have already come. His war-judgments are over, as it seems, not only what He executed by the appearing of His presence (2 Thess. ii. 8), but when He put Himself at the head of His people, as in Isa. lxiii., Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix., Micah vi. and Zech. xiv. Now the "King" (found here only) enters on the sessional judgment of His throne, before which all the nations must appear; for then all the peoples, nations, and languages must serve Him. It is part of that judgment of the quick and of the habitable earth by the risen Man whom God appointed, as the apostle proclaimed to the Athenians. The judgment of living man on the earth, in the midst of his busy and selfish (not to say, sordid and sinful) life was much pressed by the Lord and the apostles, as it is largely in O. and N. T. prophecy; but it has been lost to the living faith even of saints in Christendom, alike nationalists and nonconformists. Yet even the creeds confess it, however little it was realised when they were written, and even increasingly less since. As the Jews let slip the judgment of the dead, save to hurl it at the head of the Gentiles; so Christendom practically forgets the judgment of the quick.

Here we have it applied by the Son of man judicially when He enters on the exercise of His world-kingdom. Hence it is a question of men at large, not Jews, and of course not Christians (both of whom we have already had), but of "all the nations," when the Lord is come and sits down on the throne of His glory, as here.

It is the fullest and plainest contrast with "the judgment before the great white throne"; for then the earth and the heaven flee from His gaze, and no place is found for them. And "*the dead*," the great and the small, stand before the throne. There "the dead" (none else are spoken of) are judged according to their works out of the record of all done in the body, the book of life sealing it by its silence. This is not the coming of the Son of man to reign over the earth (as in Matthew); for the nations are destroyed, and the earth fled, and even the heavens. Our Gospel on the contrary shows the Son of man come to the earth, and all the nations gathered before Him. Here they are all living, to whom alone "nations" could apply; there not dead only, but the wicked dead alone, for the righteous dead had been raised long before for the first resurrection, the righteous thence not dying.

With all the nations then alive agrees the character of the test applied. There is no such scrutiny as Rom. ii. speaks of for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by our Lord Jesus, as before the great white throne. Then it will be that as many as sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as sinned under law

shall be judged by law ; and still more terrible will be the doom of those that rejected the gospel or even neglected so great salvation, as other scriptures declare. But here it is a simple and sole issue, which applies only to that living generation of all the nations : how did you treat the King's messengers when they preached this gospel of the kingdom before the end came? The end was now evidently come. The test was an open undeniable fact ; but it proved whether they had, or had not, faith in the coming King. Those who honoured the heralds of the kingdom showed their faith by their works ; and so did those who despised them manifest their unbelief. The test was not only just but gracious. And " the King " pronounced accordingly. The form was new, as the circumstances were ; but the foundation is the same for all the objects of God's mercy on the one hand, and for the objects of wrath on the other. So it was before the deluge, so it will be when the Son of man on His throne of glory on earth shall deal with all the nations. Apart from faith it is impossible to be acceptable ; for he that approaches God must believe that He is, and becomes a rewarder of those that seek Him out.

So it will be with the blessed of these nations. Their conduct to those who preached the coming kingdom evinced their faith, and the King's grace accepted to their astonishment what they did to His brethren, even the least, as done to Himself. The trials and sufferings of these " brethren " gave the Gentiles occasion to faith working by love, or to the total absence of it. It was so that Rahab the harlot

was justified by works when she received the messengers; but her faith is as carefully stated by the apostle Paul: without faith indeed her works would have been evil. But she rightly judged that Jehovah and His people were above king and country; and this was a turning point for her not then only but to eternity. So it was with the sheep; and the sad reverse was no less true for the goats.

There is another element overlooked by those who confound Matt. xxv. 31-46 with Rev. xx. 11-15. In the judgment of the dead but one class is stated, the dead who were not in the resurrection of the just. Hence only the unjust appear; and they are judged according to their works in all their life. Here appear not only the sheep and the goats, but the King's brethren, a third and highly honoured class; none of them dead or risen, but all alive. Can there be conceived a more striking contrast? The traditional view is nothing but ignorant though unwitting contempt of this scripture, which many Christians do not really believe in simplicity, and therefore cannot understand. The resurrection state must exclude what we find herein. With the judgment of the quick, and in particular of "all the nations," all here is harmonious. At the end "of the age" He comes; at the end "of the world" He does not. There is then no world to come to. It is all gone, to appear afterwards made new for eternity.

The decision is final, which led many to gloss over the marked distinctions, and mix it up with the close of Rev. xx. which is final too. But the one was at the beginning of the thousand years' reign,

and the other at its end, when there could be no coming of the Lord to surprise the careless world, as He Himself teaches, but earth and heaven had fled away. To interpret the two (yea, and the three!) as the same is in effect to lose each, if not all, of these grand and solemn revelations.

Let it be observed that the righteous, though they had faith in the kingdom and therefore treated its preachers as became the truth, were evidently little instructed. For we see how little their intelligence rose above that of their unbelieving countrymen. But their heart was right by grace, as the King knew perfectly, who from the first separated these to the right and the others to the left. He allowed this ignorance to come out that He might give to all a profound lesson never to be forgotten. This is quite compatible with the righteous as they were alive in their natural bodies. But is such lack of intelligence consistent with the risen condition? When that which is perfect is come (and it surely comes at the resurrection of the just), that which is in part shall be done away. This was not at all the state as yet of these sheep, the righteous Gentiles; and the King only communicates to them before His throne what every Christian may be assumed now to know, with a vast deal more quite beyond them. Yet was the kingdom prepared for these, as for the righteous generally, from the world's foundation.

Notice also that the everlasting fire to which the unbelieving Gentiles of that epoch are consigned is said to have been "*prepared* for the devil and his

angels," not for the goats, save that they fitted themselves for it by their evil ways. Compare also Rom. ix. 22. The devil and his angels were not yet cast into the lake of fire. This will only be after Satan's last effort at the end of the millennium, as Rev. xx. 10 tells us. But here the goats have now their portion, as the Beast and the False Prophet had a little before them, as we read in Rev. xix. 20, and that while alive too.

Premillennialists like Alford, Birks, and almost all, are nearly as confused as the postmillennialists. The cause is evident: the ancient and general error which connects the scrutiny of "all the nations" in our chapter with the judgment of "the dead" in Rev. xx. 11, &c. Resurrection is not nor could be predicated of "the nations" in the one; whereas it is the positive and essential statement in the other. When they are jumbled, dimness reigns, and alas! irreparably for distinctness and power of truth.

It must be borne in mind that stupendous facts had just taken place before all the nations are gathered here; facts ignored by most, yet all-important for understanding the position. The vast hosts of the west will have been destroyed from above at a stroke when the Beast and the False Prophet meet their doom. Soon after the eastern hordes led by the Assyrian of the prophets (Daniel's king of the north) will have been dissipated like the chaff. Edom will have met its final judgment (Isa. lxiii.); and so will Gog with his numerous allies (Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix.). The Jews, and Christendom, will have been already judged, as we see in this discourse. Hence "all the

nations " here summoned are composed of what remains after these executions of judgment; and, from the nature of the case, they must needs be exclusively living men who were quite lately placed under the responsibility of having heard " this gospel of the kingdom " preached by God-fearing Jews, whom the Lord will have sent for the express purpose before the end come.

This alone explains the peculiar criterion by which " the righteous " were marked off from their unbelieving fellows. It was His grace that blessed those who received these glad tidings; and now they hear of their blessed portion from the lips of the King. They were as amazed to learn His estimate of their faith working by love, as the hardened in their incredulity were to meet their awful end. We have no ground to believe that either the sheep or the goats ever heard the full gospel of God such as was preached by the Christian witnesses, any more than that the converted Jews themselves knew it as we do. We must leave room for the sovereign ways of God, dealing variously in His wisdom with the future quite as much as with the past. But for every sinful soul there must be faith for life eternal; and faith is from a report, and the report through God's word. Thus only can any fallen man be brought into living relation with Him. The measure has differed greatly at different times, as it will; but the principle is the same. This of course applies only to those who hear.

We may further and particularly note that there is not the least allusion to the resurrection here for

either "the righteous" or "the accursed." On both sides they were Gentiles living in their natural bodies; for they are expressly said to be "all the nations" when they were gathered before the glorious throne of the Son of man. It is not, as in Rev. xx. 11-15, impenitent sinners of every age and nation, and of mankind before there was a nation as in the ante-diluvian world. These had all died, and are at last raised at the resurrection of the unjust, to be judged each according to his works. In Matt. xxv. 31, &c., all the Gentiles there find their doom decided by the way they treated the King's brethren, the messengers of "this gospel of the kingdom."

He had said that it should go forth "in all the habitable world for a witness to all the nations." And now comes out the solemn issue. Some had shewn, not merely benevolence, or self denial, or moral excellence in any marked degree, but love in varied ways to the servants who preached in the King's name the same truth which He had preached at the beginning of His public ministry. But it was faith which wrought in their love. If the King and His coming kingdom had been but a myth in their eyes, they would have at least ignored His messengers as impostors. They believed the message, contrary to all appearances, to be of God, and therefore treated its preachers with kindness; and are to enjoy the gracious result. Ancients and moderns lower, deprave, and destroy the true force of Christ's words by taking it as kindness to "the poor." Thus Chrysostom, for instance, one of the best of the Fathers, makes this lack of giving to the poor

to be the fatal evil, even in the parables which set forth Christendom, of course with more appearance there, but everywhere wrong. It was not good done even to the sheep, but specifically to "My brethren," even the least of them.

So the King puts the difference of the two classes on the only right ground that could apply to "all the nations" then before His throne, after such a preaching as had by grace reached them before the end. Now it had come: the new age was begun. The King had done what none else could; for He separated them all, and, as it is evident, individually with unfailing discernment. Instead of their giving account to Him, He recounts to them why He set some on His right and some on the left. The ground for it He lays down with a majesty and a touching yet righteous character, appropriate and peculiar to Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet it turned on faith that it might be according to grace, or alas! on unbelief where no grace was but only self. Hence He said to the wondering righteous, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren [whatever the living work to His despised and suffering messengers], ye did it to me." How awful on the other hand for the unjust to hear, in answer to their more hurried summary, "Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, neither did ye [it] to me." Yet was it altogether righteous.

Thus all at bottom rests on Christ, though His grace makes the most of what to others might seem trivial. But the point is lost when the special cir-

cumstances of these Gentiles is ignored, and men generalise, oblivious of the principle. Take Alford's note on "my brethren" as a sample (and he is far from the least intelligent): "Not necessarily the saints with Him in glory—though primarily those—but also any of the great family of man (!). Many of those here judged may never have had opportunity of doing these things to the saints of Christ properly so called (!!).” Yet here God took care that the preaching did reach them; and that the circumstances of its messengers should give opportunity to all the Gentiles here gathered for this manifestation of faith and love, or also of total indifference, to say the least. The faith working by love in the one class, and the utter unconcern of the other, laid bare respectively their fitness or unfitness for inheriting the kingdom. In all cases of saints, works are the evidence, faith of the word the instrument, Christ's work the ground, and God's grace the source.

It is well also to observe that the King does not call them adopted sons, as is the portion of Christians (Gal. iii. 26), nor do they exhibit the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is characteristic of such, any more than either can be predicated of the O. T. saints. He calls them "blessed" of *His* Father, but does not add of "yours"; for this was not their privilege to know as it is ours. Nor does He speak of the blessings according to God's counsels for us in the heavenlies, to which He chose us in Christ *before* the world's foundation. Even Bengel like others before and since made this strange confusion. The King bade them inherit the king-

dom prepared for them *from* the world's foundation. They are elect and born of God, as all saints must be; but they do not reign with Christ in that day, any more than even "His brethren" among the Jews who survived this last crisis before the kingdom; whereas such as had been at that "time of the end" slain for His name will be raised to reign with Him as shewn in Rev. xx. 4. But those saved of Gentiles like the saved of Israel will have a distinctive place of honour over those born during the millennial reign, as we may gather from Rev. vii. and xiv. As elect Jews will have known "flesh saved" from the tribulation which is to befall the rebellious people, so elect Gentiles emerge out of "the great tribulation" in their own quarters: contra-distinguished from the church, whom the Lord declares He will keep out of the hour of trial that is about to come on the whole habitable world to try those that dwell on the earth.

If there were the slightest value in "universal consent," it would be hard to find a clearer sample than in the traditional interpretation of the sheep and the goats gathered before the King. Is there a single commentator of note who does not educe from it what they call "the greatest judgment of all mankind" at the end of the world? The postmillennialists are at least more consistent than most premillennialists; because the former are entirely in error, whereas the latter know enough truth to make their system incoherent and themselves without excuse. Let us seek to realise what the hypothesis means. If the terms admitted of all the dead being

then raised from the grave, how do the criteria apply to the ante-diluvians? Had they the opportunity of receiving the King's brethren in their varied trials, or of neglecting them to His dishonour?

No such mission of old can be sustained for a moment. Noah alone preached to warn in his day of coming ruin through the deluge; but it was only to that generation, and not at all "this gospel of the Kingdom." Again, how or where were His brethren? And how can it be shewn in "the world that now is" since the deluge? In due time Jehovah gave Israel His law; but this was as far as possible from "this gospel of the kingdom." Where comes in at that time the preaching of "this gospel?" Now the law and the prophets were till John, who first preached that the kingdom had drawn nigh, because Messiah the King was there. And so the Lord preached, and the Twelve. But His rejection interrupted this, and the cross postponed it, giving meanwhile a new and mysterious form to it during His absence on high (Matt. xiii.) till Israel's heart turn to the Lord, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. A righteous remnant takes up the word before the end comes, whom the Lord will convert and send forth, and preaches it as a testimony to all the nations, before the Son of man appears to establish it in power.

During the many years that precede this extraordinary mission to all the habitable world, the ground of statement as stated in Rom. ii. 12 is for mankind generally wholly different. For there is no respect of persons with God, who will then

judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, which can scarce apply to this scene. Hence, while there is a resurrection of life for such as (hearing the word of Jesus and believing God that sent Him) have life, eternal life, there will be at length also a resurrection of judgment for those who, believing not, produced only evil works. This is the judgment in Rev. xx. 11., &c., where all had been dead but raised, and judged according to their works, and are therefore lost. But it is an evident and total contrast with the King's decision about the living Gentiles, to whom His brethren (the converted of the Jews) are to preach before the end, and proved righteous or reprobate as they behaved to the bearers of "this gospel of the kingdom." Clearly the test here employed by the King suits only the living Gentiles who had treated well or ill His brethren with whom they are confronted, because of their faith or unbelief in the King who pronounces on both. The character is peculiar and necessarily determined by the brief mission of "this gospel of the kingdom" before the end. It was in no sense the end of the *world* (κόσμος), but of the *age* (αἰῶν), when the King had not yet come to reign over the earth. This appraisal of all the Gentiles is when He shall have come in His glory, and shall sit on His throne. It will thus be plain that Rev. xx. in the two resurrections exactly agrees with the Lord's discourse in John v. 21-29; whilst Matt. xxv. 31-46, though equally true, widely differs from both.

We may see an interesting link between Matt. xxiv. 14 and Matt. xxv. 40, 45. "His brethren"

were those who at the time of the end carried "this gospel of the kingdom" to all the nations, which are blessed or cursed by the King's decree according to their behaviour toward those who thus and then brought the word of God. It was not brethren of the intervening Christian character, but of the converted Jews to the Gentiles. And as these brethren are thus honoured by the King, so are the Gentiles blessed who received and entreated them well, the Son of man being come and reigning over both. It is the age to come, not the judgment of the dead; and the ground on which the solemn decision depended fits into no time or circumstances of the Gentiles, save the eventful mission by a future remnant of godly Jews who preach the gospel of the kingdom just before the Son of man comes to enforce and establish it.

It is well to take note that the appraisal of "all the nations" takes place, not only after the rapture of the heavenly saints, but, after the dealing with Israel in Matt. xxiv. It is when the Son of man shall have come in His glory and is exercising His Kingly authority over the earth: a wholly different state of things from the white throne which ushers in the new heavens and new earth for eternity, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God.

Thus we have here a deeply interesting and momentous judgment which the Lord is to execute over all the nations who only hear "this gospel of the kingdom" before the end comes, and He returns to bring in His kingdom. Applied as it is by

the theologians ancient and modern, Catholic or Protestant, it enfeebles and darkens what scripture declares of the judgment before the great White Throne in Rev. xx. And its own true application is effaced. A gap is thus created in the revelation of God, which no other in scripture can fill; whilst the attempt to fit it into the last judgment after the millennium is over, and the subsequent destruction of the insurgent rebels, causes nothing but confusion. Give this judgment its place at the beginning of the millennium; a fresh light shines without obstruction.

THE FUTURE TRIBULATION.

It is as clear to the Christian that he is to expect suffering, scorn, injury, persecution, and in short tribulation of every sort in and from the world, as that grace has given him the richest privileges in Christ. "These things I have spoken to you," says our Lord, "that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye have (not merely "ye shall have," as in inferior witnesses) tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). Also in Acts xiv. 22, for establishing the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to abide in the faith, the word is that "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." So the great apostle could say on the one hand, "I ask that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory" (Eph. iii. 13), and, on the other, "to you it was granted in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me and now hear of in me" (Phil. i. 29, 30). "Faithful the word [is]; for if we died with [him], we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together" (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12). We may not all be

called to suffer *for* Him, but if we suffer not *with* Him, can we look to be glorified together? Rom. viii. 17. It is here that we differ essentially from the saints born in the millennial age, who therefore are reigned over, instead of reigning with Christ.

But it is quite another question, Who are the saints that pass through and come out of the great tribulation? The answer cannot be given by human feeling, nor by good men undertaking to prophesy, but by the light God has given us in the prophetic word. Vehement accusation of wresting the scriptures, of claims to infallibility, of a self-elected minority who are too privileged to be subjects of persecution, of the madness of exaggerated self-conceit, nay even of "seducing spirits," only betrays extreme party spirit, and ignorance of the true enquiry, "What saith the scripture?"

The answer is plain not only on the positive side, but even on the negative.

First, and chiefly, the O.T. is explicit that "at the time of the end," when "Michael shall stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people," "there shall be a time of trouble (or, tribulation) such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." It will far exceed even what accompanied the idolatrous effort of Antiochus Epiphanes, of which Dan. xi. 31, 32 speaks. We do hear of an "abomination that maketh desolate" then set up, but not of the tribulation without parallel which Dan. xii. predicts for the end, when the abomination that maketh desolate will be set up again and for the last time. Here it

is incontestable that we hear only of Daniel's people, the Jews, who "at that time shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book," that is, the future elect and godly remnant.*

It is no less indisputable that our Lord refers (Matt. xxiv.) to this abomination standing in a holy place *for those in Judæa* to flee to the mountains, and to the great trouble that is to follow, in even stronger terms than Daniel was given to employ. The context is just as plain and certain as that of the prophet of the captivity, that He too contemplates Jewish disciples, at that time, whom He will deliver by appearing in glory as the Son of man to the discomfiture of their enemies, but also to the discriminating judgment of Israel. For the elect, not merely of the Jews (22) but of His entire people Israel (31), shall be gathered together from the four winds (where are still scattered these of the ten tribes undiscerned), from one end of the heavens to the other. The Lord addresses His disciples here in a personal way, which does not apply to the intermediate part, still less to what He tells us of "all the nations" in Matt. xxv. 31-46.

The same fact is no less observable in Mark xiii. which gives in substance the first section of our Lord's prophecy as in Matthew's Gospel, but with those characteristic additions of his on the service of His name. See vers. 9-12, and 34. But there

* Nor is it to my mind doubtful that in Dan. xii. 2 the like figure is employed, as in Isa. xxvi. 14-20, Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14, Hos. vi. 1, 2, xiii. 14, to describe the resuscitation of the nation, not the Jews proper already so deeply tried, but Israel dead as it were among the nations, who will then awake, some for life everlasting, others to everlasting contempt. As this however may be contested, I merely notice the matter in this brief note.

is no difference in the relevant intimation that in the future crisis only "those in Judæa" are concerned, and that it is a question here of "flesh" being saved, and of "this generation," etc., not of resurrection and rapture on high. Jewish disciples only are in question, and deliverance coming down to the earth in displayed power and glory, instead of saints caught up by the Lord and to be with Him as in 1 Thess. iv.

But in Luke xxi. 20-24 there is, what we have in neither Matthew nor Mark (tradition notwithstanding), an explicit prediction of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and great distress upon the land and upon this people. Their being led captive into all the nations only he mentions, as also the remarkable and still continued sentence of Jerusalem to be trodden down by Gentiles until their assigned times be fulfilled. He speaks of "days of vengeance," as' indeed such they were then; and he leaves room for more at the close where in fact he speaks of distress of nations, and men fainting for fear. This is quite in character with the design of the third Gospel, which entirely omits the abomination of desolation and the unequalled tribulation, so prominent in the two preceding Gospels. Those who have (and they are legion from ancients to moderns) attempted to identify his special part with theirs destroy their true bearing. It is from ver. 25 that Luke coalesces with his predecessors in what evidently belongs to the time of the end. Verses 20-24 are special to him.

Secondly, Rev. vii. 9-17 presents the vision of a

great crowd which none could number (distinguished from the 144,000 sealed out of the twelve tribes of Israel), as it was out of every nation, and of tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They have a wholly different position from the crowned and enthroned elders and the four living creatures; so much so that one of the elders explains to the prophet who they are, and whence they came. "And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here then we have clear evidence that grace will deliver a vast crowd of believing Gentiles out of "the great tribulation" at the time of the end. The traditional notion that it figures the church is refuted by the very phrase which limits these to Gentiles saved out of that great tribulation which is to come. They are therefore, as a special gathering out at the close, quite distinct from those heavenly saints of all times symbolised in the same scene. It would seem that the extreme severity of the future tribulation will fall in and round Jerusalem, for the Lord declares it unparalleled; but there is no reason to doubt that it then awaits all nations, if in lesser measure. It is "*the* great tribulation," perhaps implied in Luke's description of "distress of nations" at that very time. There are Gentile saints, as well as Jews, to emerge from it in that day, not forming one body as now in the church, but expressly distinct from it and from one another, as Rev. vii. itself plainly attests.

Thirdly, there is the promise, most appropriate to the overcomers of the church in Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 10), though surely not for them exclusively, "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee (not during, but) out of the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole habitable earth, to try those that dwell upon the earth." That hour may include more than "the great tribulation"; but one knows no intelligent Christian who thinks it covers less. The faithful, the Christian saints, are here then promised to be kept out of that hour. Any geographical refuge, as was taught by B. W. N. and others, is vain; for it will befall the whole habitable world. The heavenly saints (1 Cor. xv. 43) will be caught up before that crisis comes, which is retributive for the lawlessness of the Jews and the Gentiles—a wholly different kind of trouble from what is our portion as Christians.

Thus it is plain and sure that, if we are subject to scripture, no evidence appears that the church, the Christian body, passes through the great coming tribulation before this age ends. The proof-texts apply expressly and exclusively to Jews and Gentiles, with the striking exemption from that hour of those who keep the patience of Christ. This, though pledged to the Philadelphian overcomers, no saint of sound judgment would limit to such, any more than other words of comfort similarly vouchsafed to the various seven churches.

But this is not all. With that lack of spiritual discernment, which is now and has been for ages characteristic of Christendom, the absurd error pre-

vails, even among many earnest students of prophecy, that because all scripture is *for* us, our edification and use, it is therefore *about* us. Any serious consideration must assuredly shatter such an assumption. Is it then left to uncertainty or guesswork? In no way. Nor is time the great interpreter, or history, as sages have said. Not so, but as for all scripture, so for its prophetic part, it is the Holy Spirit. Inasmuch as He inspired to write it, so does He give understanding of God's mind in it to those who wait in dependence on the Lord for it, and thus weigh well not only the text but the context, and other scriptures converging on the same point.

Those, however, who hastily take for granted that the future tribulation must be shared by the members of Christ, have gone farther astray in their zeal, and yield to random invective and rash abuse. This we may leave, and seek to help them in and by the truth, as we give heed to all they argue.

Is it said "that it is from a blend of impatience and cowardice" people look for saints to be caught up before the last tribulation? Also, "that it is by this very persecution that ALL saints in all places shall be brought to be made simultaneously ready for the Lord at His appearing?" Such thoughts, if we prefer silence on their spirit, betray a total want of divinely given intelligence. Suffering for righteousness' sake, and yet more for Christ's name, is a high privilege; and God has given it in the fullest measure to the members of Christ, though in spirit to all saints from the beginning. Our Lord was here as in all else supreme; and as He said, The disciple is not

above his Master, but every one perfected shall be as his Master. Yea, rejoins the great apostle, and all that will live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted. Hence the faithful, not of the world as Christ is not, should be prepared for it beyond all throughout their pilgrimage.

But the future tribulation has a quite different source and character. In its most terrible form it will be a penal infliction of God on the consummation of Jewish apostasy, when the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place. Those who rejected and by hand of lawless men crucified their own Messiah, the Son of God, will worship the Antichrist in the temple of God, showing that he himself is God. If without parallel for severity of judicial woe, it is because of his unparalleled audacity of lawlessness, and Satan's power in the Beast of the west joining the False Prophet of the east in contempt of Jehovah and His Christ. What has this specific crisis to do with our being granted to suffer for Christ's sake?

Indeed the Lord Jesus (instead of calling on the godly Jews to stay and suffer when God is thus visiting His guilty people, not only for their final apostasy but at last bowing down to the man of sin as the true God in His house) bids the godly remnant flee forthwith, regardless even of clothes or any thing else, to save their lives. So in the minor case of the days of vengeance that befell Jerusalem, when the murderers were destroyed and their city burnt, it was no question of suffering as a privilege, but of a retributive dealing of God; and the Lord therefore

directed those that heeded His words to escape when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies. Was this "a blend of impatience and cowardice"? Shame on the false system, which thus misleads saints to slight Christ and ignore God's word.

Undoubtedly it will be a short time of unexampled trial. And we know too that there will be martyrdom once more, and a later group answering to a former one, as Rev. xx. 4 concisely assures us. Those who died for rejecting the Beast, like the earlier faithful (cf. Rev. vi. 9-11), shall rise in the blessed resurrection and reign with Christ; as those whose life was spared shall enjoy the kingdom under Christ. Daniel (vii. 18, 27) had already pointed out the distinction of the saints of the high places (or, the heavenlies) from "the people" of those saints: the one receiving the kingdom in an absolute way, and possessing the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever; the other having simply the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom "under the whole heaven" given to them. They both consist of the godly Jews, with converted Gentiles also, at the time of the end; but there is no union in one body like the church, which at this time, the completion of the age, is only seen symbolically, and on high, as the book of Revelation teaches.

THE COMING. AND THE DAY, OF THE LORD.

2 THESSALONIANS II.

THE Jewish, Christian, and Gentile portions have already been shown in the Lord's prophecy on Olivet. Let us now see what the word of God reveals as to those (of course not born of God) who may bear the Christian name for the present, but will abandon it, as we learn from the scripture before us. No doubt the world comprehends more than those who outwardly profess the Lord's name. Besides Christendom, it embraces the Gentiles or all the nations that are heathen, besides Israel. Scripture is silent about none of these; and the light of God is as bright and sure on the future as on the past.

This is an immense principle to hold fast in reading the written word. Men are apt to judge of God by themselves. To speak with certainty of the future being to us impossible, man forthwith imagines that, although God speak about it, even then it must be somewhat uncertain. If we only consider a moment, we cannot but learn that this is the principle of infidelity. What difference does it make to God whether He is speaking about the past, the present, or the future? He assuredly

2 THE COMING, AND THE DAY, OF THE LORD.

does not "think" in the sense of having to reflect, nor does He merely give an opinion. On the contrary, He knows all things. The only real question can be (as to some a question it is), whether God communicates what He knows, or how far He has been pleased to do so. Does not the prophetic word profess this? Is it well founded? If God has communicated His mind about the future, as evidently the scriptures not only assume but openly assert, it is simply faith to accept all. The moment our faith rests upon His word, the light shines. What seemed confusion, when we did not believe, turns to order before our minds when we do. The light was really there in Christ. It was our unbelief that made the dimness and confusion.

The word of God is the perfect revelation of His mind, no matter of what He spoke, or when; and God has been pleased to speak about the future. It is the special mark of His confidence. He told Abraham what He was going to do, what concerned not merely himself but others, even the cities of the plain. With them Abraham had no direct relation, though Lot had; yet not Lot but Abraham was told of the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot only learned it just in time to be saved, as he was, so as by fire. But Abraham, though not in the scene, knew it in peace beforehand, and interceded with God for righteous Lot before his heart. Our portion ought to be that of Abraham rather than of Lot. So there are those of the future who will be saved just in time to escape destruction. They will be in the sphere of judg-

ment, and will pass through it in a measure, but will nevertheless be preserved. The mass will be destroyed for their lawless evil; others too who are unbelieving: "remember Lot's wife." But a remnant will be delivered, as the angels rescued Lot and his daughters. Theirs, however, will not be the happier portion; it is for those on high.

God in fact will have provided some better thing for us in every respect. He has given us the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Accordingly says Paul writing (not to the Ephesians or Philippians, but even) to the Corinthians, "We have the mind of Christ," the intelligence of Christ, the capacity of spiritual understanding. Not, of course, that even the apostles had the same measure as the Lord, who had and was Himself the wisdom of God, and this absolutely. We have nothing save in and by Him, and hence only in dependence on Him. However, we have not the mere mind of man only but of Christ, as Christians having the Holy Spirit.

The intelligence of Christ is given; and this shows why what was true in principle of Abraham is distinctly and characteristically true of the Christian; for it could not be said, in the full force of the terms, that Abraham or any O.T. saint had the mind of Christ. The Holy Ghost was not yet come, for Jesus was not yet glorified. Now that the Lord Jesus has accomplished redemption, and gone up on high, He has sent down the Holy Spirit to dwell in His saints, to make them the temple of God. Even the body of each believer is the temple

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of the Holy Ghost, just as His own body was: He on earth having His body perfectly holy, and ever fit for the Spirit without redemption; we only in virtue of His blood. Hence never till the blood of Christ was shed could any saint here below become the temple of the Holy Ghost. Jesus was the living temple of God; we, let us repeat, are only so because our sin is judged in His cross, our guilt blotted out by His blood. Therefore the Spirit of God comes down to dwell in us, putting honour on Christ Jesus for the redemption that is in Him; but because of this we, Christians, receive a divine power, by the Spirit opening in our measure into all that God communicates.

This, though a digression, is of immense importance on the subject which we are examining; for few things more evince divine intelligence than profiting by the communication of the future. The Old Testament makes, in the main, this challenge to the false gods: a challenge which could only strike them dumb, even if they had pretended ever so loudly before to give out oracles. As long as it was merely a question of baffling inquirers, they might deceive by equivocal answers; but Isaiah, in the most trenchant and severe style, shows their utter impotence to disclose the future. Now a very large part of the Old Testament consists of revelations of the future, not only of what was future then, but of what is future still. And the historical part from the first book is cast into typical forms of prophetic character, exhibiting throughout one and the same mind of God. So

does the intermediate poetical portion in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

The prophets inspired by Jehovah expand largely, and in the most blessed terms, on the bright future that yet awaits the world. Isaiah depicts the day of Jehovah, when all that now obstructs the light of glory shall be removed; when all that thwarts the honour of the only true God shall fall; when Satan must lose his delusive power; when the nations of the earth, long groaning under oppression, shall be set free; and when the Jews themselves (who ought to have been the leaders of all that is good and true, but alas! abound with teachers of the infidelity that now poisons the world) shall be delivered from unbelief's most withering thralldom, and rise for ever to the place that God's promise assigns them as the head of the nations then blessed, the priests of the world. They, converted and restored to Canaan, are destined to fill the foremost place when the earth itself is raised out of its actual and long degradation. Jehovah has spoken it, and His hand will accomplish all in due time. It is these prospects of the world on which the Old Testament prophets descant at great length, and with graphic minuteness.

When the Lord Jesus came, on whom the accomplishment of prophecy depends for the realisation of the kingdom of God—for in truth He was the King who brought in the kingdom in His person, and presented it with final responsibility to Israel—He was rejected. Then came a mighty change of all consequence to the world, when every bright

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hope seemed blasted, when all expectation of glory for Israel set in clouds and a deeper darkness than before. God made use of that moment of fallen hopes for the earth and the earthly people, and the nations of the world, for "some better thing." He made the cross of Christ to bring in a wholly new state, when Israel vanished for a season—a state distinct from that which prophets prepared the minds of men of old to expect. For their great testimony is to Israel restored and repentant under the Messiah reigning over the earth, blessed itself beyond example, and all creatures, and the nations, in happy subjection. The reason for a change so unexpected is simple, and the ground when once taken was plain. The rejected Christ is raised from the dead, and, having ascended to heaven, took His seat there to begin another and heavenly order of blessing. He is seated there until a moment unknown and undisclosed, before which God effects altogether new things. This is Christianity, which is therefore essentially of heaven. The prophets did not speak of heaven, save incidentally. Prophecy refers to the earth. No doubt there are here and there allusions to heaven; but by no prophet and in no prophecy is there any real, still less detailed, opening out of what the Lord Jesus is doing now as Head of the church at the right hand of God.

It was not the object of prophecy to do so. Prophecy, the prophetic word, is a lamp, and very useful, to which those who love the Lord do well to pay attention, for that lamp shines in a dark or

squalid place; and the earth for the present is so. Such is the revealed use of prophecy; and Christianity recognises it fully. But there is a brighter light, not *the* day but day-light, as the apostle says, "Till day dawn and a day-star arise in your hearts."* What does he mean by this? The accomplishment of prophecy? Not so, but more and better. Till the day of Jehovah comes for the world? In no wise.

* It seems due to truth to guard the unsuspecting reader, that he cannot trust the text of this important scripture (2 Pet. i. 19), given as that of Scholz either in the beautifully printed English Hexapla, Bagster's, 1841, or in their Critical New Testament, Greek and English, without date. Here lies Dr. F. M. A. Scholz's own edition, 4to Lipsiae, 1836, which presents the words of the apostle Peter, as they are in every other Greek Testament known to me from Erasmus and the Complutensian down to the Critical Edition of Westcott & Hort, and the manual of Dr. Sanday's Lloyd, and of Eberhard Nestle. The punctuation is the same in all. Scholz's text is wholly departed from by parenthetical marks, which force a meaning strange to every editor save him who invented it. For he thus compels the sense, if it has any sense, of a parenthesis beginning with *ὡς* and ending with *ἀνατείλῃ*. The consequence is to dislocate the immediate link of "in your hearts" with the day star "arising" there. This is destructive, as others have judged, to the express aim of the Holy Spirit, and completely mars the feeling so eminently in keeping with the writer's fervour. Every spiritual mind, one might think, must answer to the apostle's meaning as usually read, and as it is explained above. What at present could move the affections like the gospel's daylight dawning, and the heavenly hope, Christ as day star arising in the heart? What a bright object to win and fix the soul on! What is the effect of the violence done to this passage? To substitute the heart's attention to the prophetic word, distracting it from the gospel daylight, and from the Lord Himself as our hope. Now the saints do well in paying heed to prophecy; but the heart's allegiance and love are due to Christ Himself; and this is exactly annulled by the strange severance here perpetrated. The doer of it falsified, in my judgment, the truth of God, as decidedly as he played false by giving a turn to Scholz's text quite foreign to it. He might at his own peril so deal with his own Edition of the Epistle; but he had no honest title to falsify another man's.

Another, who naturally seemed dissatisfied with this effort, suggested a different manipulation, and would join "in our hearts" with the words that follow. His sense therefore runs, "in your hearts knowing this first, that no prophecy," &c. But who does not perceive the incongruity of the connection, especially in giving this emphasis from so unusual a collocation to "in our hearts" for such an object? Both went out of the plain path of truth to a ditch on either side, and, in equal insensibility to what they did not appreciate, give us nothing but barrenness instead of the rich fruit of the Spirit to fill our hearts with food and gladness.

Presumably either change sprang from the desire to divert the passage from the heart's enjoyment now, which was not understood, to the actual fulfilment of the day of the Lord. But this is to alienate its real character and aim, and to lose what God has given: the heavenly light in general and the Christian's hope meanwhile, truths which had never been learnt from God.

He speaks of day dawning and a day-star arising *in the heart*, not of the day arising upon Zion and the world. This would be the accomplishment of prophecy ; but he is intimating what the Spirit of God delights to bring into the heart of the Christian now. The Jewish believer was encouraged still to use and value the prophetic lamp. Yea, more : the word of prophecy derived confirmation from what was seen on the holy mountain. Yet there ought to be through the gospel a far clearer light—the light of day, the brightness of heaven, not of the lamp. They as Christians were already to enjoy its effect. But it might now be so with those slow to learn more. Not only were Christians born of God, as all saints are ; they were all sons of light and sons of day (1 Thess. v. 5), and are exhorted not to sleep but to watch and be sober, and here to have their heavenly portion made good in their souls. For the person of our Lord Jesus is our hope, the day-star, not merely the general light of heavenly dawn, but the day-star arising in the heart. This is, as I understand it, the dawn of the proper Christian hope on the new affections. Many then, as now, were lukewarm and came short.

The actual arrival of the day of the Lord is another matter, and this will be in its own time. It was, however, a good thing to hold fast the prophetic lamp, until one gets a better light. There are far brighter associations into which the Christian is introduced now through Christ Jesus ; but of these prophecy does not treat. The prophetic word does not contemplate the arising of the day-star in

the heart. There it is the very reverse of Christ. The day-star of prophecy is rather the title of the Lord's enemy, as you may see in Isaiah xiv. The day-star that the Christian ought to have arising within is Christ, while He is outside the world in heaven, before He shines as Sun of Righteousness upon the earth. Day by the gospel dawns, and the day-star or heavenly hope of Christ arises in the heart while he is here, as he enters into Christian privilege by the truth.

In consequence of this present privilege we stand in a wondrous position. Believing in the Lord Jesus, we have a Saviour who is already come, and has accomplished the redemption of our souls, and given us remission of sins. We have life eternal, and the knowledge of our absolute cleansing by the blood of Jesus in the sight of God through the Holy Ghost that is given to us. Yet the condition of the world is no better, but far worse in some respects of the greatest moment. The world has been led on by its prince to reject its only true King, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Son of God. We are in the secret of it; we know that the Anointed King has been refused; and our hearts enlightened from above are with Him. We can afford to wait for the great day; but meanwhile we have day-light in the gospel before the day comes. The light cannot yet shine on the world, but in our hearts; so that it is evident we have more than the lamp of prophecy, even the day-light and a heavenly hope in Christ. And who can wonder if indeed we are sons of the light and of the day ourselves?

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Hence therefore it is the part of the Christian to judge what is passing around, through communications God-inspired. According to the word it belongs to our proper heritage. The Lord reproached the Jewish chiefs because they were unable to discern the signs of the times. We ought to be able not only to read what is before us according to God, but also to speak of the future with calm confidence, because we believe the word of God. With all that God has communicated we may humbly concern ourselves, as having at heart the family interests; for, if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. It would be unbecoming that the heirs should not make themselves acquainted with the inheritance; and how strange, if Christians indwelt by the Spirit of God could not understand! For this reason then, if we only knew our own privileges and depended on the Lord for it in living faith, we should be led into an immense field of blessedness entirely outside the natural ken of man. This is what one may endeavour a little to expound and apply, in looking also at a few of the principal passages that bear upon the prospects of the world according to the scriptures.

Now the Lord, when He was here below, showed clearly what was to befall the earth. He says, "The field is the world;" and He has told us what will become of the world, where men would be Christianised. From the first, He has shown us clearly what would be the result and why so. Good seed was sown; but there was an enemy who sowed bad seed. He does not give us the smallest

idea that the bad seed would be ameliorated. He intimates that the servants were zealous enough to remove the bad effects, but He reproves them. He warns that their effort to correct the evils brought into the field, the attempt to use the name of the Lord, for reforming the Christianised or at most christened world, only issues in rooting up the good as well as the bad, if not more so.

This has been seen habitually in Popery. It is the principle of the reprovèd servants ; but, instead of making the world better, in effect it ends on the contrary in destroying the wheat, rather than the darnel. Babylon, above all evil-doers that ever were, has killed the saints, and made herself drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. This is a matter of divine revelation to every one ; and history verifies it as a fact of Rome, not pagan only but papal far more. Scripture had said so long ago ; he would be a bold man who would dare to deny it. Yet as of old so now, there are men who live to deny the Bible, and talk of making the world better ! This goes along with another fundamental error found in Popery (and far beyond it too), the notion of men getting better themselves. The two delusions go together. The fact is, that Christianity denies both ; one's very baptism indeed, rightly understood, denies it, particularly as to man. To be saved one must take the ground of death with Christ to the first man, not of improving him ; and he who sees and knows what man is ought never to be drawn into the delusion of the world's improvement. Further, the Lord Jesus implicitly sets aside the

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latter error when He tells us the nature of the harvest that is at hand. Remember too that the harvest is the end, or completion, of the "age," this present evil age, not of the "world."

When that end or rather consummation comes, there will be a process of discrimination in judgment. The wheat will be removed on high, the darnel consumed below. Consequently then will be the harvest; but this implies evil abounding up to the end of the age. Never will there be a time for this age, when the preaching of the gospel, or discipline however used or abused, can root out the evil sown by Satan from the beginning under the Christian name. It will close by divine judgment on the lawless and all the stumbling-blocks. The new age will be characterised by the Son of man's righteous rule over the earth in power and peace.

In short therefore those who expect the gradual extirpation of evil in this age are in antagonism with the distinct teaching of the Lord Jesus. Far as possible is one from saying this to repress efforts toward winning and edifying souls. It is to be feared that those who yield to such thoughts of their brethren, or at least to such words, are guilty of slander. It is one thing to work in faith, and another to expect the general and true blessing of the world as the result. Granted that this will surely come; but it is reserved for the Son of man. Should the bride of the Lamb be jealous? Such a result is not for the church, which has been verily guilty from early days, dragged down into the snares of the world, into its human activity, its politics, its ease,

its honours, its gold and silver, and what not. If Christendom is now suffering the buffets of the world, the world (once eagerly sought by Christians for its own things) is now turning against those who gave anything but true testimony to Christ, and to what a Christian should be. But it will be worse and worse with the world. Ungrateful for whatever of God has been shed around by Christianity, it will turn again and rend her who abuses the name of the Lord for her own selfish and earthly interests. Evil was planted under the pretext of Christ's name, and this evil can never be rooted out until the judgment to be executed at the end of the age. It is presumptuous unbelief to expect or attempt it. The angels dealing judicially are quite distinct from and contrasted with the servants who sow and watch (alas! how poorly) the good seed. It is astonishing how saints continue to confound the two.

We repeat also that the end of the age is not the end of the world. The phrase "end of the world" in Matthew xiii. 39, 40, is an unequivocal error. There is no scholar who ought not to be ashamed of such a blunder. Far from being the end of the world, the very next verse proves the contrary. The Lord sends His angels and purges from the field or world what is offensive to Him. The lawless are judged, the scandals removed, the bad crop and the bad fish destroyed. In short the living wicked are punished, and the righteous shine in the kingdom of their Father. The kingdom of the Son of man is the earthly part of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of the Father is its heavenly

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part, as the Lord explains to any attentive reader. The heavenly things and the earthly things of the kingdom of God (compare John iii. 12) will be found then in unsullied brightness and harmony. In the Father's kingdom, according to His own counsels, the glorified saints shine to His own praise. The field or world which had been spoiled by Satan's wiles will be cleared of all its corruptions and their lawless agents. Thus, far from being the end of the world, the harvest which closes this age will be the beginning of the world's going onward in blessedness under the displayed kingdom of the Son of Man and Son of God, the Head of the church which will then be exalted and reigning with Him.

It is the end of the age, the present age while Christ is on high, and does not appear in glory or reign over the earth. There will follow another age, when Christ, instead of being hidden, will be manifested to expel Satan, and remove all that contaminates men and dishonours God. This connects itself with the Old Testament prophets. They all refer to the times of restitution of all things, the kingdom of Messiah over the earth, as the apostle preached to the men of Israel in Solomon's porch (Acts iii. 19). The mistake is in applying them to the church now. The principle often does apply in the New Testament, as we all see: no one means to contest this; but there are limits. The fulfilment is another thing.

In the future kingdom there will be not only Jews blessed but Gentiles too as such. Of this truth the apostle avails himself, pointing to the fact of both enjoying the blessings of grace; and this

amply suffices to stop the mouth of the Jew. Thus we find the Old Testament applied in Romans xv. 10, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people."* How then could the Jew consistently object? Was it just to fly in the face of their own prophets? Did the Jew not affirm God's blessing on both to be contrary to the Bible? For the Gentiles are certainly blessed no less than the Jew by the gospel; and this the narrow and proud Jew could not endure. Yet the apostle never says that the prophecy is now therefore accomplished to the full or the letter. The principle is true under the gospel; the fulfilment of the prophecy awaits another age, and a different state of things, when Christ appears and reigns in visible power and glory.

In the prophecies we find intimations, not merely of the coming blessedness for all the earth, but of the Jews treated as a rebellious, gainsaying people, while God is calling out those who were not a people. Take the beginning of Isaiah lxxv. The Gentiles are there designated as those who had not known Jehovah, while His people Israel are judged as disobedient. Compare again Hosea i. ii. with Rom. ix. Thus the Spirit of God gives here and there hints, dim enough once but now clearly interpreted by Him, which should have a partial bearing on the present time. But none of these Old Testament scriptures discloses to us the

* But this principle the apostle does *not* call "the mystery kept secret since the world began; he only says that his gospel thus preached is *according to* the revelation of that mystery, which is but referred to, but opened out in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. To say that scripture gives no grace to the church, except the mercy to the fathers and the oath to Abraham, is not only blank unbelief but flagrant contradiction of the apostle Paul.

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heavenly glory of Christ at the right hand of God as the centre of union to saints on earth, He the Head of one body to the Christians (Jew and Gentile alike). These things compose "the mystery"; none of them is ever developed by the prophets. It was then a secret hid in God.

We have the fact of the Lord sitting at the right hand of God in Psalm cx.; but the great use the psalm makes of it is to show that He sits there till His enemies are made His footstool. There is not a word about what meanwhile is being done with His friends. The revelation of the counsels and ways of God with the latter now is Christianity. The psalm speaks of His sitting there till judgment is executed on His enemies. It tells us also that Messiah is Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; but it is silent about His present intercession there for the Christian, dwelling plainly on the future execution of judgment when Jehovah sends the rod of Messiah's strength out of Zion.

What the apostle calls the revelation of the mystery is now verified. It is a secret which the Old Testament never brought out, though giving certain intimations that are accomplished, as for instance in calling the Gentiles. For as Moses told Israel, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the works of this law." But the great central truth of St. Paul is, that the mystery or secret that was of old hid in God concerning Christ and concerning the church is *now* revealed to His

holy apostles and prophets* through the Spirit; as in fact it was made known to us by Paul himself.

It would be easy to furnish proofs, were this the fitting time. The character of the church supposes that God abolishes at present the difference between the Jew and the Gentile, which the promises and the prophecies kept up. The grand fact of earth's future is that the Jew is exalted to the first place, and the Gentile blessed but subordinately; so that the old superiority of Israel will be maintained then, however blessed the Gentile may and will be. To deny this is to ostracise the truth, though not quite like the wicked Jehoiakim. In the kingdom they will each be recognised and blessed, but in a different position, not as now when both are made one. It is quite evident that the future millennial kingdom supposes the reinstatement of Israel in more than former favour, and the nations will rejoice, but in a place secondary to that of Israel.

In the church of God (whereof the Fathers were as ignorant as the moderns) all this disappears, the church being heavenly, as Christ is, and according to the nature of things in heaven. People are not known by their nationality on high: on earth they are, and they will be in God's kingdom here. But, the Christian being essentially called on high or upward, all these earthly distinctions for him disappear. Hence there came a quite new state of things, and a fresh testimony; for God has now revealed in the New Testament that which comes in between the first and

* These were exclusively of the N.T., as they in fact composed the foundation on which the church was built (compare Eph. ii. 20; iii. 5: and iv. 11).

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the second advent of Christ, as different from the future on the earth as from the past before redemption.

When the Lord comes again, the Old Testament prophecies resume their course, with the additional confirmation of a small portion of the New Testament which refers to that time, in order to give so far a combined testimony, and all the more because so great a change had come to pass.

One may now see clearly, what has been pointed out already, that the Lord Jesus prepared His disciples from the very first not to expect that the economy would, as far as the world was concerned, progress or end in joy and light and blessing. On the contrary, old evils were to go on, and new evils begin and take root from early days by the crafty power of Satan, never to be extirpated till the end of the age. This then is a great lesson taught in the Gospel of Matthew.

Again, in Luke xxi. is a statement to which we may refer as giving according to scripture a further view of the world's course. It is said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." This distinctly points to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, when it was invested with armies perhaps more completely than at any point of its most eventful history. But not a word is here about "the abomination of desolation." Nor does this chapter say "then shall be great tribulation" such as never had been, nor shall be; "these," it only tells us, "be the days of vengeance": two very different things. Here again we read, "But woe unto them that are

with child, and to them that give suck in those days, for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." This was fulfilled to the veriest tittle in what befell the Jews when Titus took the city, and "this people" passed into captivity for the second time. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." So it came to pass. Jerusalem has been for many centuries trodden down by Gentiles. One national power after another was to have possession of the holy city. And so it is still; that treading down yet goes on, for seasons allotted to Gentiles are not even now fulfilled.

But much more follows: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, sea roaring and rolling waves, men ready to expire through fear and expectation of the things coming on the habitable earth; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," &c. Some have made the mistake that these scenes also took place when Titus took Jerusalem, but there is no authority for such a supposition. We have had the capture of Jerusalem in verse 20, &c.; after which Jerusalem is trodden down since the siege, and must be till seasons of Gentiles come to an end. But in those and the following verses we are transported into the final scenes. "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to

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pass, look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." It is clear that the earth's destruction is not intended, but the blessedness that comes after the end of the age, when God terminates the time of man's wickedness, and misery, and trouble, and suffering. The coming of the Son of man is never coupled with the dissolution of the world, or its end in any such sense, but with the close of Satan's misrule, and the shining forth of the kingdom of God. For the world there can be no real permanent general blessing till the Son of man comes in displayed power and glory to reign over it to God's glory.

Now we turn to the scripture immediately before us. The statement of the Spirit of God is most explicit. He beseeches the saints by the hope of Christ's presence, who will gather them together unto Himself, against the unfounded rumour that the day of the Lord, the day of judgment for the living, had actually arrived. There is in the A. V. an error of reading, "Christ" instead of "Lord," and an error of rendering, "is at hand" instead of "is present." The day of Christ, as in the Epistle to the Philippians (i. 10, ii. 16), has different associations from the judgment of the quick. But the mistranslation of the verb is far more important, because it falsifies the bearing of the passage, from which even those who correct it find it difficult to recover. The word *ἐνέστηκεν* means "is present" and nothing else. The true sense seemed so unintelligible, if not incredible, to translators and commentators, that they gave

the quite different meaning of "is at hand," or "imminent." Many of these could not be ignorant that the same tense in the N. T. imports elsewhere definitely and invariably "present": see Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. iii. 22; vii. 26; Gal. i. 4; and Heb. ix. 9. In all these it unequivocally expresses the then present, repeatedly even in distinct contrast with "at hand" as future, no matter how near. Yet I am not aware of any one before Grotius who pointed out the mistranslation. But that learned and able man was too worldly-minded, and disposed to human ideas, in short too unspiritual, to make any effective use of his observation for intelligence of the passage, by clearing the obstruction to the truth created by an error which perverts the sense.

Here are the two opening verses of the chapter according to the ascertained ancient text, and correctly translated; for in the Text. Rec. and in the A. V. there are faults in both respects:—"Now we beseech you, brethren, by (or, for the sake of) the presence (or, coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in (or, from) your mind, nor yet troubled, either by Spirit, or by word, or by letter as through (or, from) us, as that the day of the Lord is present." As in ver. 1 there is but one article binding together our gathering and the Lord's presence, the second "by" in the A. V. must therefore disappear. Again, in the last clause of ver. 2 "Christ" is read only in inferior copies and versions; "Lord" is incontestable diplomatically, and alone expresses the true aim. Lesser points we may dismiss.

But there remain the grave questions of rendering *ὑπὲρ* in the first verse, and *ἐνέσθηκεν* in the second. As to the first, the connection with a verb of entreaty has not been adequately considered, that connection too the peculiar one of a motive from joy and hope to counteract a false alarm. As there is no other instance in the N.T., it is not surprising that the rendering "by" or some equivalent should be unexampled there. So it is in all our older English translations, with the Vulgate and most of the other ancient versions. Wahl in his N.T. Lexicon refers to 2 Cor. v. 20 as another instance of "by;" but the context there favours "for," in the sense of "on behalf of" Christ. Here such a force suits not the sense exactly, but "by" or "for the sake of," as it appears to me for good reason.

As to the true and only legitimate meaning of *ἐνέσθηκεν*, there ought to be no doubt. It was a word every day in Attic use, as we may gather from the Clouds (779) of Aristophanes, where it is said of a suit going on, and not merely close at hand.

Can anything be more decisive, outside the N. T., than the technical phrase of *ὁ ἐνεστώς χρόνος* among grammarians for the "present tense"? Indeed it seems the one and only meaning of the word in the known authors of Greece. Thucydides does not employ this form of the word; but it occurs in Herodotus, Xenophon, Polybius, and Dion Cassius; and in no sense save as actually existing or present. It is the same with the orators Isaeus and Isocrates, Aeschines and Demosthenes. So again the philosophers, Aristotle and Plato, employ it, and in this

sense only. It would be easy to add more, but is not this enough? Where is a single instance of "imminent"? It does not occur in the Septuagint save in the Apocryphal writings; but there it occurs in 1 Esdras ix. 6; 1 Macc. xii. 44; 2 Macc. iii. 17; xii. 3, in all which it can only mean "actually there," nowhere "imminent."*

But say Webster and Wilkinson (G. T.), *ἐνέστηκε* everywhere else in N.T. means "present"; here, however, it has doubtless (!) the more ordinary classical meaning, "imminence," to be close "at hand." Now not only "the more ordinary" but the invariable classical meaning perfectly agrees with its uniform sense in the N.T. The instances adduced by Liddell and Scott (even in the seventh edition of their Greek Lexicon) for "pending" or "instant" really mean what was actually begun or present. And their vacillation in giving both for the same quotation is

* There is a passage in the Epistle of Barnabas, cap. i. § 7, so decisive of the question that it may interest the reader. *ἐγνώρισεν γὰρ ἡμῖν ὁ δεσπότης διὰ τῶν προφητῶν τὰ παρεληλυθότα καὶ τὰ ἐνεστώτα καὶ τῶν μελλόντων δοῦς ἀπαρχὰς ἡμῖν.* Here we have τὰ ἐνεστώτα between the past and the future definitely appropriated and distinguished by one of the earliest writers after the apostles. But how is this to be if it could by any possibility mean also what was future, however near? But this is not all. Even as late as Hefele's fourth edition of the Apostolic Fathers so called, and others later still, we had only the old Latin interpretation of the earlier chapters, in which the above sentence is thus rendered, *Propalavit enim Dominus per Prophetas quae praeterierunt, et futurorum dedit nobis initia scire.* For some reason, or through carelessness, the translator omitted "things present," which the editor explained in a loose bungling way. Tischendorf discovered at the end of the Sinaitic MS. the missing Greek, which enables us to judge the imperfectness of the version. Of this recent editors, as Hilgenfeld, de Gebhart, Harnack, and Zahn abroad, and others at home, have availed themselves to give the full text. But a similar phrase, with *ἐνεστώτα* for present things invariably, occurs in Theoph. ad Autol. I. 14; II. 89, and in Hippol. de Chr. et Antichr. 2 (Lagarde, 1.58). Abp. Wake was therefore not justified in rendering "instantia" "those things which are near to come" (Barn. Ep. iv.); it means "present things" (or N.T. truths), as in the Vulgate of Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. iii. 22, &c. In short, it is so used classically. The Latin word was more vague.

just like Bengel's, who here says, "great *nearness* is signified by this word; for *ἐνεστώς* is *present*!" Exactly so; and therefore great nearness is *not* meant. They seem all to have been misled by taking for granted that here "imminent" must be intended to make any tolerable sense.

In short the R. V. has here corrected a sure and evident misrendering, which owed its origin to theological error ancient and modern: the assumption latent and unsuspected, that the misrendering alone makes sense here; whereas it alters the meaning of the text and throws the reasoning into confusion. The sense it imposes is purely traditional, and opposed to the truth intended. The bad exegesis was probably what led to the unsound philology.

I am aware that the American revisers, though often right, here cleave to the misconception, and render it "is just at hand"; but can they point to a single case where any correct Greek writer ever employs the verb in this tense save for "present"? Long as the notion has prevailed, it is without foundation in fact.

Further, it is notorious that there is a quite different phrase (*ἐγγύς*) for "nearness" in the N. T. and in all other writings; and if emphasis were sought, the verb in the perfect was used (*ἤγγικε*); as also *ἐφείστηκε* (2 Tim. iv. 6). But one had hoped that no exact scholar would sanction the laxity of supposing that the apostle confounds the meaning of two kindred words, each of which has its own precise sense, *ἐνέστω*. "is present," and *ἐφείστω*. "is close at hand." On the face of it the erroneous render-

ing makes the apostle contradict himself; for in Rom. xiii. 12 he tells the saints that the day *is* at hand, meaning no other than the day of the Lord, as all surely must admit. How could the misleaders in Thessalonica be charged with error, if they had only taught that the day of the Lord is at hand?

It is thus evident that these divines, like others before them, venture to conceive that the errorists gave out the substantially same thing that the apostle urged later as the truth of God. But no: the false teachers fraudulently alleged the apostle himself, as we shall see, for the untruth that the day of the Lord was (not ever so near, but) actually arrived. And this error was filling the saints, not with enthusiasm of joy or the excitement of a spurious hope, but with panic, especially as inspiration was pretended, oral word, and even a supposititious letter as from Paul himself for it. Who can deny its effect, according to the apostle, to be agitation and trouble that the dreaded day was present, and in no way over-wrought warmth about His coming as very near? Thus in every point of view the old rendering is a manifest blunder which would set the apostle at war with himself; as it also conceives a state among the deceived Thessalonians which disagrees with what is clearly described in the same verse. Such a sense is really owing to theological bias, and the assumption (latent and unsuspected perhaps) that the unexampled rendering alone gives sense here. In fact it destroys the text and perplexes the context.

There is an indubitable sign of false teachers

which is here commended to the notice of all Christians; for we need it in these days, and may need it yet more if the Lord tarry. Observe then that the false teacher ordinarily does one of two things, sometimes both. Either he lulls asleep those who ought to be roused, keeping them entranced in the deadly slumber of fallen nature; or he tries to alarm true believers by endeavouring to shake their confidence in the grace and truth of God, filling their minds with groundless fear. Not possessing peace himself, he is often deceived as well as a deceiver; for he knows not in his own experience peace and joy in believing. The false teacher then either injures the children of God by weakening their confidence in God, or, along with this, he lulls with opiates those whom God would have to be awakened from their dangerous insensibility. In short, false teachers flatter the world, or seek to alarm the true children of God. Very often they essay mischief in both ways.

The truth does exactly the contrary. It always has for its effect to rouse men from their state of guilty indifference or their self-confidence, setting before them their fearful danger for eternity. But it tells them of a divine Saviour and a present salvation. Along with this there is the comforting, establishing, and leading on of the believers into all their privileges and responsibilities, their proper joys in communion with the Lord and one another, and their growth in the knowledge of His mind and ways for worship and service. For all these latter things pertain to the believer only.

It is striking in more ways than one, how John Howe (Works, v. 252, Hunt's ed. 1822) felt in his measure the force of this appeal, and commended it to others. "You shall hardly meet with a more solemn, earnest obtestation in all the Bible than this is: that is the thing I reckon it so very remarkable for. 'I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;' by what he knew was most dear to them, and the mention whereof would be most taking to their hearts; if you have any kindness for the thoughts of that day, any love for the appearance and coming of our Lord; if ever any such thoughts have been grateful to your hearts: we beseech you by that coming of His, and by your gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, that you do not suffer yourselves to be discomposed by an apprehension, as if the day of Christ were at hand. It may be thought very strange, why the apostle should lay so mighty a stress upon this matter, to obtest in it so very earnestly. And really I could not but think it exceeding strange, if I could be of the mind, that the coming of Christ here spoken of were only the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the man of sin afterwards spoken of were only meant of Simon Magus and his impostures, the feats that he was at that time supposed and believed to do; which certainly could be things of no such extraordinary concernment unto them that lived so far off as Thessalonica at that time, and much less to the whole Christian church."

Not that Howe had any special light of scripture

on the glorious counsels of God for Christ and the church. No Puritan was instructed in these truths more than Greeks, Romanists, Anglicans, Lutherans, or others; and his adoption of independency injured his intelligence of the church, as it must all Congregationalists in particular. But he was beyond comparison the most spiritual and profound of his class. At any rate I here quote him to show how a soul who loved the Lord and His word rose above the prejudices of his fellows, and that addiction to Plato, Plutarch, and other heathen, to which the Cambridge school of philosophic divines, such as Cudworth and H. More, helped him. Though confused like all the rest as to the distinction of the Lord's presence, and its appearing (or, His day), his logical and subtle mind could not overlook that the ground of the apostle's appeal in verse 1 was laid in the brightest hope and the deepest affections of the saints. Now this is peculiar to the Lord's presence for gathering His own unto Himself, as distinct from the subject treated of in the verses of chap. i. that precede, and in the verses 2 and 8 of chap. ii. that follow.

The rendering of the Revisers, and of many others, is avowedly because they assume that the apostle is entreating the saints in verse 1 in respect of what he had been just writing and was about to teach them more; for which *περι* would be the correct preposition, as we may see in John xvii. and elsewhere. But if he besought them, as I am persuaded he did, by their joyful hope against the false notion of the day with its terrors as actually come, it is no

mere question of the sense of *ὑπὲρ* in general, but of what is required in this context, of which there is no parallel known to me in the N.T. In other words, what led to the choice of "touching" here was an erroneous exegesis of the verse in which the preposition occurs. Had the real difference been seen, all would have acquiesced, if not in the "by" of the A.V. with most translators till of late, in the nearly equivalent "for the sake of," which is its frequent usage.

What were those about who misled the Thessalonians? They pretended to Spirit, and word, for their cry that the day of the Lord was come. False teachers fall into such ways. But these did more; growing bolder in their impiety they pretended to have a letter of the apostle, affirming that "the day of the Lord is present." I am aware that some learned and able men have conceived that they only alluded to the former Epistle. Thus Paley* says that the apostle writes here, among other purposes, to quiet their alarm, and to rectify the misconstruction that had been put on his words; in that the passage in the Second Epistle relates to the passage in the first. But this is an oversight. It is certain from the terms employed that the epistle alluded to was *not* his; for he says "that ye be not soon shaken in your mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from (or, through) us." Thus is intimated, not the letter that he had written, but a letter "*as* by us," or purporting to be from us, with which he had

* Works (*Horæ Paulinæ*), vol. v., p. 281 (ed. 7).

nothing to do. It was a forged letter, not his First Epistle which we have.

The pretended letter was to the effect that the day of the Lord was (not "at hand" merely but) already there. Now the day of the Lord, according to the Bible in general, is to be one of trouble and anguish, a day of clouds and darkness for the world. You may read this abundantly in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and the prophets generally. On what pretext then was the cry raised by the forger? The Thessalonians were suffering great trouble and persecution for the truth's sake. Indeed the apostle had in 1 Thess. iii. 4, 5, expressed his concern lest the tempter might tempt them somehow through the tribulation they were passing through. But *he* gives no licence for calling it the day of the Lord. The false teacher seems to have converted this (the existing fact of much trial) into that day, alleging that the day of the Lord was actually arrived. For in the O.T. certainly the "day of Jehovah" is repeatedly applied in a partial or incipient sense, *e.g.*, in Isa. xiii., xix., &c. The saints indeed knew from 1 Thess. v. that it would be a day of fearful trial, everything meanwhile growing worse and worse, till the evil is at length put down by the victorious power of the Lord.

Accordingly the apostle in 2 Thess. i. points to the revelation of the Lord from heaven, with angels of His might, in flaming fire rendering vengeance to those that know not God (the Gentiles), and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (wicked Christians or Jews, &c.), when

He shall come [not to take up the saints for the heavenlies, but] to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all that believed "in that day." Why fear it then?

On this occasion the misleaders had contrived to excite no little anxiety and trouble as if the day of the Lord had actually come. Not at all, says the apostle: how can you forget the bright hope that the Lord is coming to gather you to Himself? "We beseech you, brethren, by (or, for the sake of) the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind nor troubled." He thus appeals in ver. 1 to a known motive of joy and confidence in their hope; and from ver. 3 he goes into the prophetic reasons which demonstrate its complete refutation. But, we may notice, it is never said that the saints await the day of the Lord to be taken up and meet Him in the air. The coming of the Lord effects their translation before His day as we shall see.* They are to be an object of wonder in that day when seen glorified with Him.

* As some have questioned the exact force of the phrase, *ἔρωτώμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς π. κ. τ. λ.*, let me take this opportunity of remarking that it is an undoubted case of the genitive of relation after a verb of entreaty. This, with *περὶ* would point to that "in respect of" which one entreated; but with *ὑπὲρ* it is rather the motive "for," or "for the sake of," "by reason of" or simply "by," which the appeal was made. This is so true that we find it in so early a Greek author as Homer, *λίσσομαι ὑπὲρ* (*Il.* xv. 660; xxii. 338: xxiv. 467); and in the same sense without the preposition (*Il.* ix. 451; *Od.* ii. 68). Liddell and Scott say, even in their seventh edition, *ὑπὲρ* in Homer only joined with *λ.*; but even Homer joins it with *γονυάζομαι* (*Il.* xv. 665), another like verb, as they admit was done later. It is certain therefore that "by" as in the A. V. is no desperate shift but justified from the earliest writings in Greek letters. "In the interest of" might pass if it offered a reasonable meaning, but it seems barely intelligible. But to say that "the day of the Lord" was their hope is a pure blunder and untrue. The fact is that this sense is only a case of a far more general principle, as any student can

Thus "the presence of the Lord" and "his day" represent two connected but different thoughts often confounded by men: the one (being said of the heavenly saints) consummating grace, the other executing judgment. There is the less reason why they should be, because the apostle had already spoken with clearness on them both in his First Epistle. In chap. iv. 15-17 he describes the coming of the Lord, not His day. "For this we say to you in the Lord's word, that we the living that remain (or, are left) unto the presence of the Lord shall in no

see in Donaldson's Greek Grammar, § 458 (*see*) (a). In the New Testament we have *ἐπ. περὶ* where a person or thing is in question, touching whom or for which one beseeches, as in John xvii. *passim*; 1 John v. 16. It is natural to suppose, therefore, that the apostle would have used *περὶ* if he had meant no more here than the subject concerning or touching which he was entreating them. This however he is not doing, but more.

It does therefore seem not quite satisfactory to take *ὑπέρ* here, with Bishop Ellicott, as involving some traces of the idea of benefit to, or furtherance of, the *παρουσία*. It was really the "day," not the presence, which had been misinterpreted or misused, as we see in verse 2; but, had it been otherwise, is it not vague, if intelligible, that the apostle wished to promote its *commodum*? "On behalf of" is right in 2 Cor. v. 20, but here surely inapplicable. Thus Bp. Chr. Wordsworth develops this idea, as if the apostle here pleaded on behalf of what had been misrepresented by others. But this is just the root error. He is here arguing the presence of Christ as our hope against the misrepresentation. The subject matter of which he had been treating in 2 Thess. i. was the "day of the Lord"; and this he again resumes in verse 2 and onward. His "presence" comes in as a distinct though connected point of consolation and joy, by or for the sake of which he besought them not to be troubled by the false alarm about the awful day. He is *not* conjuring them by that concerning which he was about to explain; nor is it a question of doing justice to a misrepresented subject, but of entreating them by their heavenly hope as a motive why they should not be agitated by the baseless rumour that the awful day of the Lord's judgment of the earth had arrived.

It seems then that the force of the context, and especially the modification rendered necessary by the verb of beseeching, have not been duly weighed by those who contend for "concerning," or "touching," a meaning which here leads to the confounding the ground of entreaty in verse 1 contrasted with the subject the apostle is discussing from verse 2 and onward, after having paved the way for it in chap. i. Besides, is *ὑπέρ* ever so used with a verb of entreaty save in this case? The special instance naturally calls for a rendering equally special. No scholar has treated the question with less exactness than the late Prof. B. Jowett; and the reason was no lack of ability or scholarship, but that he had no perception of the apostle's meaning. He was misled unconsciously by the confusion of that theology for which he had scant respect: this he too often avenged on scripture. The same defect pervades almost all others who had more respect for the written word than that learned man.

wise precede those put to sleep. Because the Lord Himself with call of command, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then (*ἐπειτα*) we the living that remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in [the] air; and thus we shall ever be with the Lord." This was a new revelation, as he implies in opening the subject (15). Not such was the day of the Lord; for there is scarce any great topic more frequent in the O.T. prophets from Isaiah to Malachi. Even where this phrase may not be employed, it is involved habitually. But in no case did it make known what the Thessalonian saints are here taught by the apostle. They are distinct truths.

Hence having finished the statement of the new truth at the end of chap. iv., the apostle turns to the old in the beginning of chap. v. "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that ye should be written to." What a contrast with the foregoing new revelation! "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they may say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you as a thief," &c. Is it possible to conceive a sharper distinction? We see on its face what a mighty difference there is between "the coming of the Lord" and "the day of the Lord," as the

apostle describes them. Where among ancients and moderns does one find the same discrimination? or anything but the grossest confusion? Chrysostom had not his equal among the Greek fathers as an expositor; yet he (if the first in time) was so dark as to count death the Lord's coming to the saint! Were it so, how many thousands of times He must have come! No, it is just the inverse: our going to Him, not His coming for us, when all saints until then departed, and we the living that remain, are caught up to meet Him in the air. That is, "the day of the Lord" comes later. His presence is to our everlasting joy, our great triumph over death, as the day is His unsparing judgment of the wicked quick. How astonishing that any saints should lump them in one!

This is confirmed by what was written some time after to the Corinthian church in the First Epistle, xv. 51, 52. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: 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 trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The resurrection he does not call "a mystery," when he wrote of it in this very chapter. Nor was it justly one; for the O. T. had revealed it. The early book of Job tells us the resurrection of man (xiv.); not only the privileged case of the just in chapter xix., but that of "man," who must die and rise, yet not till the heavens be no more: in perfect accord with the two resurrections of Rev. xx. There is no "mystery" in the two resurrections. It was a truth for both just and unjust, which the Jewish

adversaries also received, as Paul told them before Felix the governor. But the coming of the Lord, not only to raise the dead saints, but to change the living, and translate both to Himself, is the fresh word of the Lord in 1 Thess. iv. and the "mystery" in 1 Cor. xv.

Thus the Lord's coming *with* His saints was a truth announced by Enoch and again by Zech. xiv. 5. This was not a mystery, therefore, more than their resurrection. It is repeated in 1 Thess. iii. 13, and elsewhere in the N. T. The "mystery" is in His coming *for* them as in 1 Cor. xv. 51, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, in order that they might come with Him as well as for other ends.

One of these objects for the earth which without doubt made the rapture to heaven requisite is the divine purpose to prepare a people here below for the Lord at His appearing. As grace had by the gospel and in the church brought in suitably for each the call of Gentiles to rejoice with His people, God would still work for a remnant from both during the frightful crisis when He would fill with His chastening judgments, which culminate in the Lord's personal infliction when He comes to judge and reign. The Psalms and the Prophets shed much light from God, especially on the godly remnant of the Jews, working by His Spirit on their hearts before and during the great tribulation. The evidence is so abundant that, if this were the time to furnish proofs, the difficulty would be which to select effectively to convince those to whom this side of the truth is not familiar. The Revelation is

as plain at the end of the N. T., as the Gospel of Matthew at its beginning, that there is to be a wave of blessing for Jews and Gentiles during that brief and awful space, after the Christian witnesses are withdrawn and seen in heaven. Take Rev. vii. and xiv. as distinct testimonies to this, along with the fact that there is no longer a hint of a church on earth, and that a new sight is beheld above, the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders, who, as is generally allowed, represent in symbol the saints of O. and N. T. in heaven round God and the Lamb. "The things which are" will then be past, and "the things which are about to happen after these" will be next accomplished.

The sealed of Israel's tribes, and the countless crowd out of all the nations are in different ways objects of divine goodness at that season of trouble. They are not joined together in one body, as it must be in the church. They are separately blessed at this preparatory epoch, as they will be in the millennial reign, when (as will not be disputed) Israel will form the nearest circle on earth, the nations blessed richly but willing and glad that the firstborn son of Jehovah should have the first place in honour and dominion here below. What confusion it would make to conceive the church here co-existing with this! Take a Jew converted by the gospel of the kingdom, and looking up for Christ's redemption by power; and consider the perplexity, if he heard the church with Jewish and Gentile distinctions effaced, praising in the Spirit, for a redemption by His blood already enjoyed, and

for Christ in each the hope of heavenly glory with Himself on high. Which, says he, am I to receive and confess? These heavenly glories with Christ the Heir of all things, and this union in one body, so opposed to Law, Psalms, and Prophets? Or my portion in distinction from the Gentiles, and waiting for the Messiah to accomplish, for us the children, the promises to the fathers and the new covenant to both houses of Israel?

The book of Revelation clears all up, as it presents the saints of the heavenly calling on high, and earthly saints, Jewish and Gentile, here below during the tribulation, alike awaiting the Lord's appearing for the glory to be manifested both in heaven and on earth.

There is also one evident reason on the heavenly side which calls for the heavenly saints to be with the Lord above before He and they are manifested in glory. Each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God. We shall therefore all be placed, though in differing times and for opposite ends also, before the judgment-seat of God (Rom. xiv.); and it is to Christ personally that we shall then bow. For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things [done] through (or, in) the body, according to those he did whether good or bad (2 Cor. v.). Now this will evidently take place for the saint in his glorified state (and what a comfort this will be, however solemn!), but as evidently before the Lord comes in His kingdom; for the respective place of each in the kingdom is determined by that mani-

festation of us to Christ. How very striking it is that the glorified saints are shown as perfectly at home above in God's presence, from Rev. iv. to xix., during the sad season of earth's greatest darkness and abomination and misery; and that only before the bridals of the Lamb come do we hear of His wife making herself ready! Can anything be suggested but that manifestation to Christ as needful for her? Next the marriage of the Lamb is followed by His appearing and His saints with Him. They had been caught up and in the Father's house long before, as is evident.

It is only lack of spiritual perception which has pitched on the Lord's coming or presence in one particular form to deny it in others equally but distinctly revealed in scripture. There are three applications of His presence at three separate occasions—to the Christians, to Israel, and to the Gentiles. Even the hottest partisans for merging all in one must on calmer reflection allow that Matt. xxiv. 31 wholly differs from that in Matt. xxv. 31. The latter is severed from the former by an interval of some, and probably from the nature of the case considerable, length. If the Jews, or Israel rather, be thus plainly dealt with before the Gentiles, it is the right order for the earth. But proof is at least as strong that the Lord's first and highest object is to receive to Himself on high those destined to be with Him where He is in the intimacy of divine love and heavenly glory, as well as to reign over those delivered Jews and saved Gentiles.

Ample proof is given in scripture that the heavenly saints take precedence and are caught up to be with the Lord for the Father's house before these Jews or Gentiles on earth are converted. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so surely is Christ's taking His bride above; and this, because Christ's rejection by Jews and Gentiles on the earth gave occasion to God's highly exalting Him above after a new sort. To rail at this clear truth of God as "a new god come newly up," "as a Jewish fabrication," with many another equally childish, unfounded, and unseemly imputation, must be treated as at best mere and impotent ill-feeling. The ignorance too is fathomless; as, for instance, the impossibility of "preaching the gospel [of the kingdom] to the world while actually keeping satanic saturnalia." It is *the Lord* who predicts this very fact at the very time, "before the end," when Satan, the Beast, and the False prophet prevail. Can any instructed Christian deny it? See where a false system leads its votaries.

Those who assume the identity of the Lord's presence here with that in Matt. xxiv. and kindred scriptures would do well to weigh what has satisfied their brethren that they refer to distinct acts, and differ in nature, each with its own personal object, the latter for the earth and the former for heaven. That there will be points of resemblance between them is natural, because their respective objects are to be blessed after a new and wondrous sort above and below. But ours will be by a removal on high characterised only by grace; theirs by a judgment

that overwhelms their enemies below. In 1 Thess. iv. none are spoken of but the risen and changed saints to be with Him, then and always. Only those are concerned who hear His call, and, seeing Him as He is, are henceforth like Him, their body of humiliation transformed into conformity to His body of glory. In Matt. xxiv. it is a question of "flesh" being saved through the antecedent perils, without a hint of resurrection or change when they see the Son of man, for it is in this character He appears. And then shall all the tribes of the earth or land mourn, which is plainly foreign to 1 Thess. iv. "And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;" yet nobody then is said to be changed by it. On the contrary after this He is said to send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect (from context here, of Israel) from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other: a description widely differing from the heavenly saints changed and caught up to Him on high, as in 1 Cor. xv., Phil. iii., and 1 Thess. iv.

But Col. iii. 3, 4 goes farther and positively excludes Matt. xxiv. from the possibility of being classed with these scriptures. For it definitely lays down, that there is no appearance of the Lord to any alien eye of all mankind, when He comes for His joint-heirs, *till* they are already changed and manifested with Him. "Whenever Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." Till then our life is hid with Christ in God. When He appears, we (are not

caught up, but) appear with Him in glory. How God-fearing men can refuse submission to the evidence of His word in distinguishing these two acts of the Lord's presence might well seem beyond belief, if we did not know the fact, and its sorrowful consequence, both in its darkening power on the subject generally, and in the sore feeling it engenders.

Do you doubt that this is so? Hear then some words of an aged and respected clergyman: "Are the scriptures in these days tortured by any evangelical believers? wrested, at least, to their own injury? in union with scorners or heretics? . What degree, &c., exists of the temper that God loves, of *trembling at His word*? &c. Are there in these last days any supplemental addenda to the Holy Word to be received as God's revelation as the book of Mormons is received? Was *the faith once for all delivered to the saints*? or was it not?" Do I wish to give pain to him or his friends who have deemed such utterances becoming or justifiable? Not in the least degree, more than they affect one with other feelings than sorrow for themselves, and a solemn sense of the false teaching which produces such bitter fruits, utterly out of measure, place, and season. For they know that we are no neutrals in divine truth, but appreciate the strongest indignation where Christ and His work are assailed, or any other vital truth.

Another fact is clear. The apostle had in 1 Thess. v. explained the contrast of "the day" with "the presence" or coming of the Lord for His own. The latter was a new revelation which they had not

known before. As to the former, they knew accurately that it comes as a thief in the night. Whenever they may say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as the throes upon her that is with child, and they shall in no wise escape. But the apostle's assurance is distinct that this was for the sleeping world, not for sons of light and day as they all were. Hence it was as inexcusable, for the Thessalonian saints to listen to the fraudulent alarm of their misleaders that the day of sudden destruction had arrived, as for others who to our day confound these two things so different, the joyful meeting of the Saviour and the saved above, and the day of terrible destruction on the men of the world. It is this confusion that underlies the misrendering of *ὑπὲρ* in 2 Thess. ii. 1, and of *ἐνέστηκεν* in ii. 2.

Nearly all teachers take for granted that in the former the apostle alluded to that concerning which he was about to teach them. It is, on the contrary, an appeal to the comforting hope of the Lord's coming and their gathering together unto Him, as a motive for rejecting the false teaching about His day. Further, from ver. 3 he shows the prophetic grounds why that day, *not* His coming, could not arrive till the evils were fully and openly out which are to be then judged. The Revisers, like Bp. Ellicott and Dean Alford, have corrected ver. 2; but they left ver. 1 worse than in the A. V.

Again, it is urged with unwarranted confidence, that the saints only go up into the air to meet the Lord there, and forthwith come down with Him.

For this, where is any attempt at proof? They may press into the service Matt. xxiv. 31. But this demonstrably applies to the gathering of the elect of Israel after the Son of man is seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. In this connection there is no hint of the resurrection nor yet of the translation above.

As this chapter of Matthew has been examined rather closely of late, there is the less need for discussion now. But Col. iii. 4 seems plain and conclusive that the words of Matthew do not and cannot legitimately apply to the risen saints. For the apostle there lays down that "when Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also (not be caught up, but) *be manifested with Him in glory.*" The reference of Matt. xxiv. 31 cannot be to the glorified ones spoken of by Paul. For this Gospel treats of elect Israelites gathered from all parts of the earth to the Son of man after His manifestation; the apostle treats beyond doubt of Christians manifested along with Christ in glory when He who is now hidden is no longer so. In short, the Epistle excludes all question of Israel here, as all would admit, and means only the saints changed into the likeness of Christ's glory; whereas the context of the words in the Gospel is occupied with the future saints of the chosen people on the earth, and has nothing to do with the risen for their rapture or their manifestation with Christ. The earthly people are in view, and the Son of man coming to judge and establish His kingdom here below.

Nor is this by any means all. In the latter half

of Rev. xix. we have the beginning of the day of the Lord (or the presence of the Son of man). It is the prophetic description of what the apostle briefly sketched in 2 Thess. ii. 8, when the Lord Jesus shall destroy the lawless one with the breath of His mouth and shall annul Him by the appearing of His coming. As to this there can be no real question. But here we are told, not of the saints being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but of the armies in heaven following the Lord when He emerges to judge and make war in righteousness. That those armies are saintly and not angelic (though angels are not to be wanting then) is clear, among other proofs of special association with Christ, from their garb of "white pure byss" (just before interpreted as "the righteousnesses of the saints"). The glorified saints therefore follow the Warrior-King out of heaven: a truth which had been already and necessarily implied in Rev. xvii. 14 of which more will be said anon.

Indeed, the just preceding scene (xix. 6-9), the marriage supper of the Lamb beyond controversy *in heaven*, proves still more strongly, that the saints who form the Bride were already there; and if the evidence be traced in the book, they in a glorified state are symbolically shown to be there from chaps. iv. v. For who but the least intelligent can think of separate spirits being seated on thrones? So little is it scriptural to say as in a little tract on "The Time of the End," that "when His presence—His Parousia—as announced by Himself is 'seen like the lightning from the east even to the west,'

the wedding feast shall be kept." No, my brother, prejudice and passion have misled you. The marriage *is* in heaven and *before* that day. Dare you deny it in flat contradiction of God's word? Tremble for yourself, and beware of such temerity.

The coming or presence (*παρουσία*) of the Lord is a wider term, embracing the day as well as what is just before the day. It may be qualified by "the Son of man," that is of the Lord in a judicial point of view, so as to coalesce with "the day," and imply not His presence only but its display, as in the phrase, "the coming of the Son of man." Thus His coming applies to His day; but the appearing, manifestation, revelation or day, is fixed to the time when He comes with all His saints to set up His kingdom by judgments. The first object is to gather home those He loves. Love would always secure the object of affection first. Think how blind one must be who assumes that taking vengeance is the primary object.

The coming of the Lord then is bound up closely with the gathering of the saints; the day of the Lord as clearly with the judgment inflicted on His enemies here below. Hence we find here, "let no man deceive you by any means." There might be a great deal worse than mistake on this subject. "For it [will not be] except there come *the* falling away (or apostasy) first." "That day shall not come" is an insertion of our translators, marked therefore by italics, though substantially correct. The day was not to be till the apostasy have first arrived, the public abandonment of Christianity

throughout Christendom. O how men deceive themselves when they think that all goes on to progress and triumph for the gospel or the church through existing means!

Victory will be when Christ comes, not before. Scripture has revealed a very different and more humbling prospect. God's distinct intimation is that "the day" is not to be except the apostasy come first. And what is the character of modern infidelity, but preparing the way for the *apostasy*? people bearing the Christian name, yet giving up all the Christian substance? leaders who still carry on the dead forms while the spirit has fled? This will grow and extend, and men little think that they rapidly get ready for it. The outward and public recognition of the truth is being destroyed everywhere on earth. There will soon be no outward homage paid to Christianity in Europe.* It is too plain that the governments of the world are gradually stripping off all real respect for the Bible as God's revelation, even if they yet keep up their formal connection with Christendom. How many in England treat this as no great boon! Though without practical interest in or affinity for an established religion, I cannot but think its rejection criminal and profane; and that this will turn out more serious than the so-called reformers expect.

It was a most seductive evil when the Christians accepted an alliance with the world; but it is a totally different and most solemn issue for

* Take the shameless audacity of scepticism in the younger Delitzsch before the Emperor of Germany and other grandees quite recently.

the world, when *it* casts off all its profession of Christianity. Deep was the Christians' loss when they sought the world's recognition; but what an awful day for the world when it is so tired of the union as to throw off the profession! The consequence will be that the very slender tie which binds and attaches men generally to the reading of the Bible or attending service will be broken. Granted that there is no reality, no divine life, no true or acceptable honour paid to the Lord, in carrying on a merely outward profession; but people who go to church (as it is called) hear the word of God and Christ named with honour. When this is no longer recognised, they will give it up as an antiquated prejudice, and go to shoot, fish, ride, or drink on His day. They will occupy themselves in reading anything but the Bible. The most rapid decay will ensue. Not so with the elect of God. As the evil progresses, the real saints will then become the more evident. They will by the Holy Spirit rest only on the word of God and such testimony of Jesus as is then rendered; but unbelieving men will be engulfed in the apostasy.

Is not this what is before the world as its doom? Is it not the written word which says so? What is the worth of any human forecast? Men prefer to look for a pleasant prospect, because they dislike and dread the divine warning. But this unbelief only hastens the evil day.

The first Epistle to the Thessalonians was the first written by the apostle; the second, from the nature of the case, was written shortly after. Thus,

from the beginning of revealed Christianity, from the first communications of the Spirit of God to the churches, such is the solemn result of which they were warned. Those who profess the gospel will abandon it ere the end come as it surely will. For that day is not to be "except there come the falling away first." It is not merely "a" falling away here, and a falling away there, but *the* falling away, *the* apostasy in the fullest sense.

Further, "That man of sin will be revealed, the son of perdition." There was once a man of righteousness, the Saviour; but He was rejected. There will be a man of sin, the son of perdition, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." We are aware that many people apply this to the Pope of Rome. Now we cannot honestly accept this, though regarding his system as a frightful delusion, even Babylon. How can men believe that "the apostasy" has arrived yet? * It is a sorrowful thing even unconsciously to use scripture with a party aim, or for controversial objects. In the presence of growing evil, which pervades both Protestant and Catholic countries alike, it is beneath the truth to cast such a stone from one to the other. No, the apostasy is the result of despising the gospel, of trifling with the truth, of keeping up forms that are unreal, and then rejecting them and all divine revelation with shame, or without it, in cold, proud, reckless, and definite unbelief.

* Who can wonder that the various translators of old softened it down to "a" departing, revolt, or falling away? or that Wiclif and the Rhemish follow the Vulgate in an un-English slurring over the ellipse?

The apostasy will be the result as far as Christendom extends. Wherever the gospel has been preached, or at any rate the Lord professed, the apostasy will be the issue, whether of Romanists (for none are really Catholics) or Protestants, whether of Lutherans or of Calvinists, Greeks, Nestorians, or any others; such will be the result, not outside but within Christendom. It does not mean the end of the Jews, or of the heathen. The apostle is here speaking of that broad scene wherein the Lord's name has been professed. No doubt Papists are now and long the most opposed to the gospel and the most persecuting in spirit; and therefore Protestants assume that theirs is the apostasy. But not yet is it come for Christendom to abandon openly and avowedly the N.T. as a falsehood and the Saviour as an impostor. It is surely coming for Protestants as well as Papists, and all the rest. The day which is to judge the lie, and worse still, cannot be till all is fully out. "Because [it will not be] except the falling away shall have first come, and the man of sin been revealed."

It is still the mystery of lawlessness at work, which was working when the apostle wrote: so early had the principle of utter ruin entered. There is piety in all orthodox sects, and even in Popery, where, spite of its corruption and idolatry, the fundamental truths of the Trinity and even of the atonement are owned more than in some Protestant sects. The present mixed state is not what is here meant by the apostasy, any more than the Gnostic departure of "some" from the faith re-

ferred to in 1 Tim. iv. 1-3. It is general, complete, and open.

The climax is the lawless one who "exalteth himself." Jesus humbled Himself, and only exalted God, Himself God but become man, the Man of righteousness. Here is a man, "the man of sin" pre-eminently, the opposer, and self-exalter against all called God, or object of reverence, the personal adversary of the Lord Jesus. And, as the Lord said to the Jews, they would not have Him who came in His Father's name, so they will receive him who comes in his own name (John v. 43). At the end of this age he will come, and accordingly he is found as Satan's winding-up, not merely of apostate Christendom, but of apostate Judaism also, indeed of man, Jew, and professing Christian, in revolt.

The connection with Christendom has been already shown; but now we may briefly touch on Judaism. For this personage "opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly above all that is called God or object of veneration; so that he himself sitteth down in the temple of God, showing forth himself that he is God." As the true church began in Jerusalem, the great result of the apostasy will find itself conspicuously in Jerusalem. It was this city which saw Pentecost; so far as the world could discern, it beheld on the earth the assembly which belongs to heaven. Jerusalem will see the judgment of that which, long a counterfeit, will end in a manifestation of hell—the fruit of the amalgam of Christendom with Judaism.

Those who are under the impression that the

apostasy is already consummated, and that it is thus found in Romanism, do not assuredly think worse of it than myself, who may speak without presumption of being farther from its evil dogmas, forms, ways and worship, than they even profess. But, while we utterly abhor the Papist system, scripture, and the chapter before us with others, speak of a still more awful revolt from the gospel, the church, the Christ, the Trinity and of God's revelation as a whole before the end comes, or even the revelation of the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus is to destroy, personally appearing for this purpose though for other blessed objects.

Under that impression they consider that the Papacy is this adversary and enemy, of course a succession during the centuries, and not the haughty individual antagonist of Christ, the last antichrist of John's Epistles, who denies the Lord Jesus as the Christ, and yet more as the Son, and of course the Father, both the hope of Israel and the truth of Christianity. Hence they adopt the view of the Fathers from Irenaeus to Cyril Hier., Chrysostom, and Theodoret, &c., among the Greeks, and to Tertullian, Augustine, Jerome, Lactantius, &c., among the Latins, that the Roman empire is the restraining power, which when broken would leave all open for the man of sin. There is however this great difficulty for the Protestant view, that the Fathers with one consent looked for a single personage to fulfil this and other predictions, to be destroyed by the Lord, the son of perdition by the Saviour, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Dr. Chr. Wordsworth makes much of Chrysostom's remark that, if the apostle had meant the Holy Spirit when he speaks of the power that restrained, he would have spoken plainly and said so. This is a hasty supposition; as it is hardly decorous to predicate why the apostle, or the inspiring Spirit rather, refrained from giving all that man might wish. It is assumed by him, like the Fathers and the moderns too, that the restraining means was some power which St. Paul had mentioned to them by word of mouth; that he practised reserve concerning it in writing; and that the reason for this oral mention only must have been fear of the consequence from the empire for himself and his brethren if he had written of it openly in scripture.

But this reasoning is quite unfounded, and no bad instance of the slovenly way in which the scriptures are read and pressed into service. The apostle does *not* say that he had often spoken to the Thessalonians of the restraining power, or that he had told them what it was. He speaks in ver. 5 of what he had said of the coming apostasy, and of the man of sin, with his blasphemous assumption and defiance of God in His very temple. "Remember ye not that, being yet with you, I told you of *these* things?" It is after this that in ver. 6 he goes on, "And now ye know that which restraineth, that he may be revealed in his own season." He does not say that he had mentioned or explained the restraining power to them, but that they knew that by its action the man of sin

could not be revealed till his own season. They may have gathered it from the known place of the Holy Spirit as exercising power for good.

But without dwelling more on this, let us test the notion with what scripture does say of the time when there is no restraint more. When that evil hour arrives, the powers that be, at least as far as the Roman earth is concerned, will no longer be ordained of God. The dragon will give its emperor its power and his throne and great authority (Rev. xiii. 3). For the ten horns, his satellites, as they receive authority as kings for one and the same hour with the Beast (the symbol of that Empire in its last form), so also have one mind and give their power to the Beast (Rev. xvii. 12, 13). And Beast and False Prophet perish awfully together, as do the kings and their armies. The Fathers were right in seeing portentous personages with their followers, not a succession in history, but the divine judgment at the close, coming into collision with the Lamb appearing from heaven to their destruction. If the Beast that rises from the abyss were now and for more than a thousand years in power, there could be, where his influence extends, no powers ordained of God. This will follow when the restraint is gone. The Roman empire is long gone; but He that restraineth is still here. And He will restrain, till the moment comes for that very empire (which existed when the apostle wrote, and ceased to be as now for so many centuries) to emerge from the abyss, and is to be ordained of Satan on its revival, to its everlasting destruction.

So far from the truth of God is that patristic tradition as a scheme. Yet, as a passing fact, it is true that while the Empire was in power, God owned it, heathen though it was; and the restraint still wrought. But the Empire fell in the fifth century; and the man of sin did not yet rise. God's providence wrought, and owned in His providence the Teutonic hordes, and the kingdoms which took the shattered empire's place, as He did the Romans before, and does the powers that be still. The restraining power still works, and will till the dreaded time when the church joins her Head for heavenly glory. For a while too after that event the Holy Spirit will work and control, according to the Apocalyptic expression of "the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth." For it is only in the latter half of the unfulfilled seventieth week of Daniel, the 1260 days of which the Revelation treats, that Satan plays that terrible game on earth, when he sets up the Beast, and the man of sin sits down in God's temple.

Now if this be simple and sure truth as scripture puts it, we can better understand why the apostle was reticent. God may not have revealed to him, as He did through the beloved disciple, that strange quasi-resurrection of the fallen Roman empire (under the authority of which the Lord of glory came in His humiliation) destined to rise again under Satan's power, when the restrainer is gone, but to receive, from the same Lord appearing, its doom on the person of its eighth head in the lake of fire. The Spirit of God, as a spirit of government has restrained

all through and will till just before the end of the age. When the dragon is allowed to govern, without a check for a brief space, He will cease to restrain. To imagine that He has nothing to do with the powers that be, since the Papacy, is as great an error as to overlook the Satanic reign of terror and blasphemy during its allotted "little while," before the Lord is revealed in flaming fire to destroy it, and to bring in His own world-kingdom in power, righteousness, and glory.

The truth of the Spirit governmentally restraining meanwhile may have been known to the Thessalonian saints in a general way, but not written down for wiser and better reasons than any dread of the Roman government. Daniel had already given its destruction, as foreshown to Nebuchadnezzar in chap. ii. 34, 35, 40-44, and to himself in chap. vii. 7, 8, 19-26; as it was yet more fully in Rev. xiii., xiv., xvi., xvii., xix., after the death of the apostle Paul, so that the dread imputed to the inspired writer can scarcely stand its ground.

At most the Roman empire may be said outwardly to have hindered the uprising of the last imperial adversary, because it was ordained by God as all powers are till Satan's short time, when *he* is permitted to ordain him. The traditional view has proved imperfect when examined in the light of scripture. It was a narrow and short-sighted application, in no way meeting what the word elsewhere says and demands, but provisionally true while the Empire held its place. "The son of perdition" suits the personal antichrist, not a

succession of pontiffs, not a few of whom were the vilest of men, and the office itself an imposture. But to characterise the succession as denying the Father and the Son is not merely uncharitable but senseless. Why strain scripture derogatorily to God and dangerously for the man, however sincere and well-meaning, who is guilty of such a licence? When the man of sin appears, there will be no doubt about it for all who have the fear of God.

The truth is that the old traditional view is not only unfounded as a question of full truth; it is also manifestly illogical. For if the Roman empire were the absolutely real barrier against antichrist, and the Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries prayed for its continuance against that dreaded foe, what could be in such a declaration, however open, to arouse its hatred and draw out persecution? It would naturally tend, if known, to give them confidence in the church as the warm and not quite disinterested supporter of the empire before God. It is extraordinary that men so able as Dr. W., and a crowd of others who are no friends of tradition as he was, should use an argument so suicidal.

The Thessalonian saints, like others, who believe in that unspeakably terrible consummation at the end of the age, knew that it will be the allowed apparent triumph of the lawless one, the instrument of Satan to the last degree. They knew therefore that God, working by His Spirit as He had ever done, and now especially to Christ's glory since Pentecost, alone could hinder that cherished aim of the arch-enemy. The Roman empire while it lasted

might be and was an outward hindrance; and when it fell, other governors, ordained of God stood in its way. To have named it only would have been a mistake, which divine wisdom avoided. The particular barrier, τὸ κατέχον, might vary, as it did; but ὁ κατέχων, the restrainer, abides to use providentially the powers that be till the Roman empire rises from the abyss for the final crisis.

Further, being both a power and a person (that is, spoken of as neuter as well as masculine) it is not rightly said of an empire, and can apply to none so well as to the Spirit of God. He still, to sustain His testimony to Christ, and for the sake of the children of God, continues to hinder the final manifestation of Satan's power. But when the church is gone up on high, it seems that the Spirit will act not only to convert souls, but as a spirit of government (Rev. v. 6) till God allows Satan to do his worst for his short time. The Spirit of God will then indeed cease to restrain the working of the evil one, who will dare all things against the Lord.

"And then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy with the breath of his mouth, and shall annul with the appearing of his coming." The Lord Jesus is the appointed destroyer of this fearful being, the one who is elsewhere called the antichrist. Even now there are many antichrists, says St. John; when *the* antichrist comes, he will be brought to nought by the Lord Jesus in person appearing from heaven and publicly. The critical addition of "Jesus" is put in, because it is certainly genuine; and as it gives

more definiteness to the expression, so it excludes any mere dealing in providence.

Here recall the first verse. The apostle does not say the day of the Lord, nor the appearing of His coming, when Christ gathers the saints. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him." And these two wondrous events are so closely associated by one article in the Greek, that the second "by" in the A.V. is an impertinent and injurious intrusion. But, when the destruction of the man of sin is in question, he speaks, not of His coming merely, but of the appearing, the epiphany, of His coming. If it were a display when the Lord comes to gather His saints, why should "the appearing" of it be expressed in ver. 8 only? Why is its "appearing" avoided when He comes (ver. 1) to gather together His saints to Himself? Is it not manifest from the phrase itself that the coming of the Lord does not of itself imply His appearing? How else account for the difference in the wording of verse 8? It was necessary, when His appearing was meant, to say so; and this is when He judges. When it is the dealing of His grace in translating us to heaven, His coming or presence is named; but not a word about His appearing. When the lawless one shall be destroyed, it is not merely His presence or coming, but the appearing of it. He could not appear without coming; He might come without being seen beyond what He pleased; but now we hear of the display of His presence. When He comes to take up His saints, what will the world

have to do with it? It was His own love which saved them. They belonged to Him, not to the world. He comes to claim His own. He does not make the world a spectator before He appears in glory for the destruction of the antichrist.

Alas! we are told in terms of uncalled for vehemence that in no school of French or German rationalism is there a bolder subversion of the predictions of God than in this fable! that 1 Thess. iv. 16, with of course 2 Thess. ii. 1 (which, as all admit, synchronises), is, or could be, unheard by the world. But where is, or what implies, the world here? The apostle is showing how God will bring with Christ the departed saints. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a call of command (*κελεύσματος*), with archangel's voice, and trump of God. It is exclusively to raise the sleeping saints and change us who remain alive for His presence, when both are caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Not a word implies that the world hears at that moment, not a word that earth and heaven are shaken. Not only is there total silence as to these bold importations, but we are expressly taught by the same apostle that, "when He shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." We must therefore have been caught up before the common manifestation of Him and His in the same glory. This violence is beneath a sober believer. It is absurd to say that the archangel's voice or the trumpet of God must be heard beyond the saints concerned. When the day comes for man to be

raised for the resurrection of judgment, we are told of neither. The voice of their Judge will raise for their doom those that believed not but did evil. We may not add more without divine authority.

We have seen how different it will be when the Son of man comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to gather together His elect of Israel from the four winds. Here the rapture on high is not hinted. It is His presence for the earthly people, and therefore as expressly for all on earth to see (Rev. i. 7); as the other was to gather on high the heavenly ones. Only ignorance can set the one in opposition to the other; and ignorance is apt to be impatient, self-willed, and abusive against what it has not learnt from God in scripture. But such a spirit condemns itself to considerate children of God.

The distinction therefore of 2 Thess. ii. 1, and 8 (the presence of Christ simply, and the appearing of His presence) is precise, instructive, and undeniable. The one is to gather together the saints to Christ above; the other is for Him (and we may say for all His saints thus gathered to appear with Him) to crush His enemies. It is then that every eye shall see Him, as it concerns every soul on earth. Timothy was solemnly charged in the First Epistle to keep the commandment spotless, irreproachable, till the Lord's appearing; because responsibility always refers to that day. The rapture is grace to all the saints equally caught up to Christ on high. The appearing will manifest the fidelity or the failure of each saint. Hence the apostle still more straitly

testifies by, or charges, His appearing and His kingdom on Timothy in preaching the word and in all his other service; and he connects the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will render "in that day" (not at His presence simply), with His appearing to those who love it.

It would be crass indeed for any to say that the epiphany or appearing of Christ is secret. The question is entirely whether the Spirit of God does not draw a plain and sure distinction between the presence of the Lord to gather His own, and the appearing of His presence to destroy the lawless one and his adherents. If His presence necessarily conveyed appearing, how could the apostle write as he did in the same context, 2 Thess. ii. 1 and 8? If he meant us to learn the distinction, how could he have intimated it more exactly? It is well to leave it to the late Prof. Jowett and the incredulous school to teach that the apostle wrote loosely and reasoned ill.

The world will have bowed down to the anti-christ. Gentiles as well as Jews will have accepted him. Just as the blessed Lord Jesus is both the true Messiah and the God of Israel, so this lawless personage, the man of sin, will set up to be both Messiah and Jehovah of Israel; and kings, classes, and masses, will be led away by the fatal delusion. The same unbelief which rejects the true will cringe abjectly to the false. It is Satan's woe for the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for men under settled government and for those in a revolutionary state. These are the dismal prospects of the world

according to the scriptures. A far different future fills the imagination of men generally. Why wonder at this? How can they truly prognosticate what is to be? No man can discern the future unless by faith he profits by the light of God's prediction, and declines going beyond it.

What is particularly awful for that day is the intimation in verse 12 of our chapter, which connects with the lawless one. "Whose presence is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to those that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sendeth them a working (or, energy) of error, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Here we see that Satan will work in imitative counteraction of God's power that wrought in Christ. It is no trickery of priests or monks, no winking Madonnas, or liquefying blood, or profane fire ostensibly of the Holy Ghost. The same terms are here used of Satan's energy in the man of sin, as Peter employed in Acts ii. 22 of the Lord Jesus as demonstrated by God to the Jews. On the other hand God will give up men by a judicial blindness to believe the lie of Satan that man, and especially this man of sin, is supreme God; so that he even dares to sit down in the sanctuary, showing that he is God. It will be divine retribution. They had rejected the truth, they had no love for it that they might be saved. They imputed the undeniable

works of power and wonders and signs of the Lord Jesus to Beelzebub; they ascribe to the only God those of Satan by this minion of his, the man of sin. As the Jews were at last given up to blindness for their unbelief, so will Christendom be. Jews, professing Christians, &c., will combine to worship the son of perdition, as Jews and Gentiles united to crucify the Lord of glory. And the last will be worse than the first. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

But at this very time among the distant and till then heathen nations will be a great and true work of God's mercy, when godly Jews, forced to flee from the scene of the antichrist in Jerusalem sustained by the dragon-honoured Roman Emperor, are used of God to win a countless throng of Gentiles by preaching the gospel of the kingdom; as we learn by comparing Matt. xxiv. 14 with xxv. 31 to the end, also with Rev. vii. 9, &c., and xiv. 6, 7. It is an "everlasting gospel."

The lawless one as here depicted must await the dreaded hour when God sends judicial darkness, and the western powers and the Beast animated by Satan like the False Prophet combine against Jehovah and His Anointed. But the Lamb shall overcome them (for He is Lord of lords and King of kings), and they that are with Him, called and chosen and faithful (Rev. xvii. 14; xix. 14).

Of course many will tell us how dangerous it is to predict; and so it would be for them, us, or any uninspired men. But the faith of prophecy is

calculated and meant to keep us from predicting. Those who value and study the written word should be humble enough to praise God for the lamp of prophecy. If you despise the inspired prophecies, you may set up to be a prophet; and if you do so, who can wonder if you are a false one? God alone knows and can tell the future. But God has revealed it; and we have the responsibility of believing or of being infidel. A man cannot truly believe these things without their leaving a divine impress upon his soul. If you have Christ the hope in your heart, show it in your hand and on your forehead, seeking to stand true to Him whom you believe. The Lord Jesus is coming; but He is to appear also. He is not merely coming to receive His own, when the result will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. xv. 52). That the world should see the change and translation of the saints, as it is unknown to the scriptures, so it seems neither necessary nor fitting.*

The Lord has many ways of taking His own to Himself without death. Suppose the Lord were to cause a tremendous earthquake to happen, would not the wise men of the world say that the Christians had been swallowed up in the earthquake? It is easy enough to conceive a way in which the Lord could conceal the matter; but He does not conceal from us, nor will He from men, what He will do to the misleader of the Roman world or others. He

* One only do I recall whom I forbear to name, that committed himself to the strange and baseless fancy that the risen saints will appear as a sudden and terrible apparition among men, before the living are changed and caught up! But whether this notion still lives, or has been left to die as it ought, I know not. If the fact be questioned, it is easy to produce the evidence.

will not conceal His judgment from the world, and even the various forms and times in which it will fall. Then certainly He will be manifest to every eye. Hence we find that, whenever judgment is in question, manifestation characterises it.

When the Lord Jesus in His sovereign grace called Saul of Tarsus, his companions were allowed to feel the tokens of some extraordinary action going on, though they knew nothing about it really. There were not a few in the throng going to Damascus, yet only one man saw the Lord Jesus. All the rest heard but an inarticulate sound. They did not hear the words of His mouth; Saul of Tarsus did. Then, again, we find Philip caught up and carried to another place; but what did the world know of all that? There was a subsequent occasion when the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven. But this was so far from being divulged for the sake of the world, that the apostle says only "whether in body or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth." Nothing, then, is easier than for the Lord to conceal or show things partially on these occasions; but He will display them on the grandest scale when the judgment of the world comes, after taking on high His people previously.

But as already said, there is a bearing on service. Timothy was to keep the injunction, laid on him, spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. vi. 14). There is a pressure of responsibility; and responsibility in scripture attaches to His appearing, as sovereign grace does to His coming and receiving us to

Himself for the Father's house. But it is the merest fallacy to conclude that our abiding on earth till then is implied in keeping it, any more for us than for Timothy. Neither departure to be with Christ nor being caught up to be with the Lord at His coming hinders like fidelity on our part or on his. But another principle is involved.

It is the same principle in 2 Tim. iv. 1, 8. Responsibility is again impressed, and with especial force not only for Timothy but for all saints who love His appearing. The verse is as plain as it is solemn and important. "Henceforth is laid up for me the crown of *righteousness*, which the Lord the *righteous Judge* will award to me in that day; and not only to me, but also to all that have loved (and do love) his appearing." His coming for us would here be quite inappropriate, because it would simply imply being caught up to be ever with Him. But His appearing is the day when faithfulness will be revealed publicly, and the work of each be made manifest; and if it abide the test of that day which declares, each shall receive reward according to his own labour. Besides, even now to love His appearing, who will judge every evil thing and set right the world long disordered and envenomed by the Serpent, is not only a joy, but the deeper because all will be to His praise whose appearing will alone bring it to pass. Were one filled with earthly care, or courting wealth and honour of men, how could one love His appearing who will judge it all and establish His righteous reign? It is indeed a "blessed hope" (Tit. ii. 13), though there be what is incomparably more in

being with the Lord Himself in the Father's house, and beholding His glory outside and above the world (John xvii. 24).

Let us refer to one scripture more and a solemn one, Rev. xvii. Two evil objects of judgment are set before us; one called the great Harlot, the other the Beast. The unclean one is seen sitting upon many waters, "with whom the kings of the earth" &c. (verses 1-6). At first they are together: the corrupt woman, seated upon a well-known and remarkably characterised Beast; the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, the meaning of which symbols is not doubtful. Much may be gathered by comparing verse 1 here with verses 9, 10 of chap. xxi. "And there came unto me" &c. Is it not plain from the comparison, that the one is the counterpart of the other? that Babylon, the harlot, is Satan's sad contrast to the bride, the Lamb's wife? As the one is the holy city having the glory of God, the bride of the Lamb, the other corrupts herself with the kings of the earth, to their corruption also. This explains why she is styled "Harlot." She is too the great ruling city of the world, which has her kingdom over the kings.

It is not so with the church glorified, the body of Christ, the Lamb's wife. "And the nations shall walk by her light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory unto her" (the heavenly city). The bride is said to be "the holy city, Jerusalem," that comes down out of heaven from God. This, then, is the holy (not the great) city. If we read in the ordinary text, "He showed me that great

city, the holy Jerusalem," the word "great" ought, as is known, to be expunged, and the word "holy" transposed to take its place, "the holy city, Jerusalem."

But still the very fact that the holy city, Jerusalem, is the church glorified, gives no little help for understanding Babylon. What is the religious body which under the shelter of Christ's name, pretends to be the mother of all the churches? Can anyone hesitate? Was there ever a system of such varied idolatry, hypocritical corruption, and atrocious cruelty in the Saviour's name?

Granted, that much evil has been done by mischievous men actuated by strong feeling in so-called established churches, the national body of this country, the national body of Scotland, and that of any other land; but what is this in comparison with the pretensions of her that claims all countries and tongues, kings as well as subjects? Can there be a question who and what she is? Has there ever been any but this one, the great harlot that sits upon the many waters?

There can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning of Babylon; but, as if to preclude the possibility, we have several marks. First, she dominated once the Beast as none else ever did, arrayed in all the world's splendour, and earth's richest ornaments. Next, she abandoned herself up to illicit union with the kings of the earth for their gifts of patronage. Then, her golden cup was full of abominations, and "the unclean things of her fornications" beyond all rivalry. Lastly, she is a vin-

dictive claimant,* the most unrelenting of persecutors, drunk with the blood of the saints. Have you not heard of an ecclesiastical body which thinks it her duty, for the love of God and the good of men's souls, to exterminate heretics? She is herself as innocent as Pilate. She kills none; she only hands them over to the civil power to be punished! Alas! there never was a Pagan state, nor the worst of Jewish fanatics, nor the most frenzied of Mohammedan scourges, which so tortured the saints of God as Babylon has done. So clear is her identification that one needs not even to mention her name. Surely the truth must be very evident when it is unnecessary to say who she is to the most unlettered, where the Bible is read.

Nor is this nearly all we are told here. The last verse says, "The woman is the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." There is a distinction we may now note. The chapter does not confound the harlot and the woman. It is the woman that is declared to be the symbol of the

* Mr. J. A. Froude was no friend to the truth, but had too much reason to say "The so-called horrors of the French Revolution were a mere bagatelle, a mere summer shower, by the side of the atrocities committed in the name of religion, and with the sanction of the Catholic Church. The Jacobin Convention of 1793-4 may serve as a measure to show how mild are the most ferocious of mere human beings when compared to an exasperated priesthood. By the September massacre, by the guillotine, by the fusillade at Lyons, and by the drownings on the Loire, five thousand men and women, at the utmost, suffered a comparatively easy death. Multiply the five thousand by ten, and you do not reach the number of those who were murdered in France alone in the two months of August and September, 1572. Fifty thousand Flemings and Germans are said to have been hanged, burnt, or buried alive under Charles V. Add to this the long agony of the Netherlands in the revolt from Philip, the Thirty Years' War in Germany, the ever-recurring massacres of the Huguenots; and remember that the Catholic religion alone was at the bottom of all these horrors; that the crusades against the Huguenots especially were solemnly sanctioned by successive popes, and that no word of censure ever issued from the Vatican, except in the brief intervals when statesmen and soldiers grew weary of bloodshed, and looked for means to admit the heretics to grace."

ruling city. This is unquestionable, for there never was one that ruled as this city did. The better history is known, the more it will be felt that Rome only it can be. This one city ruled more and longer than any other since the world began; and everybody in the apostle's day would know where this city lay and what was its name.

It was not Athens; for Athens could never for any considerable time rule even Greece. It was not Jerusalem before, nor Constantinople since. Some think that this refers to a future Babylon in Chaldea; but such a city must be built on the plain of Shinar. How then could it be truly said to be built on seven hills? So many heaps of her ruins could hardly be an answer. The old Chaldean capital had been a great city; it passed away, and only remains to occupy the curiosity of learned men. Here was one ruling over the kings of the earth. But one city could be said so to reign in the days of John, and no city ever has so reigned since. London, vaster than any and of world-wide influence, has in no sense reigned over the kings of the earth.

This city was to become the harlot, and so to exercise power over the Roman Beast or empire, the Beast of seven heads and of ten horns. But at first sight there is a difficulty here; for the Roman empire has disappeared. It existed and has fallen. How then are we to understand the chapter? The historian tells us that the Roman empire long ago declined and fell. There he stops; he could not lift the veil; and alas! he believed not in

God's revelation. Not history explains prophecy, but prophecy explains history. Prophecy is the true and divine key to the prospects of the world. Accordingly here is the explanation:—the Beast that then was, the Roman Beast, would cease to exist. "The Beast that thou sawest was, and is not." Its vast power was to perish; and the infidel historian chronicles the fact. But behold in the word another thing which history could not divine. If God's word is true and sure, the Roman Beast is to revive. It is well known that its revival has been essayed. Charlemagne tried; Napoleon the First tried; Napoleon the Third would have liked well to have tried. Not that one has sympathy with those who pretend to forecast the person. There were many that fixed on the last-named fallen potentate; and a few cling still to the notion of a relative. They are premature: better leave guess-work to such as do not search into prophecy.

Here is the word of God. Why should any predict? You had better not pretend to it; the word of God has spoken already; be content with His predictions. Now the word of God has said nothing of the sort; it speaks of the Beast that should ascend out of the bottomless pit (or, abyss), and go into perdition. Why add to this? Why speculate? Let us only believe. The restrainer will then be gone. Diabolical power will revive the Roman empire. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the Beast that was, and is not, and —.

72 THE COMING, AND THE DAY, OF THE LORD.

The common reading "and yet is" (*καίτερ ἔστιν*) is incorrect. "And shall be present" (*καὶ πάρεσται*) is the true reading and sense. Here, then, we have the clearest intimation that the Roman empire is to be reconstructed, under the most fatal influence for a little, before the age ends and the Lord returns in judgment.

Let us look back for a moment at the history of the world, and compare it with the present and the future. In the time of John the Roman empire ruled the known world. The empire had then but one governor or chief. Gradually the power began to weaken and wane. First came the division into east and west. Then some time afterwards the Germanic barbarians broke up the Western empire and founded those separate kingdoms of Europe, which, after feudalism, passed into the constitutional monarchies of modern times. Such has been the result of the breaking up of the Roman empire. Here we find the two conditions: the Beast that was, and the Beast that is not. But it "shall ascend out of the abyss (or, bottomless pit)." This will be a new trait in the world's history. The worst of powers is better than anarchy; the most grinding tyrannies are safer than no authority at all. But a new state is to rise for the old power, absolutely without God, and under Satan's unhindered agency, drowning men in perdition.

It is evident that, whatever changes may have occurred in the world's affairs, there has never been a power without the sanction of God, bad as its exercise of authority may have been. The letting

loose of the power of Satan is not yet, because there is One who withholds now (2 Thess. ii.); but when He withdraws the hindrance, the Beast ascends out of the bottomless pit. Here John of course speaks symbolically of the Roman empire in its last Satanic uprising to power. In the end of this age Satan will be allowed by God to re-establish that great object of human ambition. Men are even now yearning after an energetic central authority in the West. It is the plain fact that the ten horns, or kingdoms (supposing for the moment that the kingdoms of Western Europe comprised just ten), have no political coherence. One of their marked features has been that they are constantly in danger of war with each other. They have sought, by what they term "the balance of power," to maintain a measure of mutual understanding, peace, and order. But in consequence of this very arrangement no one power has been allowed to get the upper hand.

Many have desired it; but the result of their policy, when action has been tried before the time, is that all proves abortive and perishes. By and by it will be accomplished. Then the Beast will be reconstituted. There will be unity, one central authority, without extinguishing the separate kingdoms, save that the little horn acquires three. Thus there will be the revived Roman empire with distinct kingdoms. The future state will consist of the imperial headship, along with the subordinate kingdoms of the once united western empire. The balance of power will then be required no longer in

the West. But in the East and North there will be mighty adversaries whom some so ignore that they confound as if they all were the same, though one will besiege, and the other be besieged. Between them all the day is coming when Satan will deceive the world. God will accomplish His own purpose of gathering out His saints to Himself. Then the world is allowed to have its little moment, when Satan has consummated his power on earth. (See Rev. xvii. 12, 13.)

The state here described is perfectly unexampled before or since the fall of the Roman empire. One knows the independence of even the least of the kingdoms. They do not like another to interfere, if they be ever so little. Several too join—some for, and some against. Such is the way things have long gone on in the political field of the West.

Here the principle of national independence will have disappeared. Separate or party action is all gone. The time is come for a vast change in the world. This will be the character of it: a great imperial power, called the Beast; not absorbing all, but wielding the separate powers of the West. The Beast is a type of strength, no doubt, but absolutely destitute of reference to God. So it has been really throughout; but then it boldly and avowedly rejects God at the close. The western imperial system will have thrown off all owning of God or thought of Him, yea it will defy Him. Apostasy will have prepared the way. This imperial power will have the direction of the distinctive Roman dominion, the western

nationalities of Europe.* The several kings will be flattered with the idea that they have each a separate existence and will. But they are only as the sinews of the strong man who sways them all. What follows their destruction of Babylon? "These shall make war with the Lamb."

What a difference from the blessed reign of peace and righteousness, no less than from what men dream as the gradually optimistic future! On the other hand, the saints come from heaven, being with the Lamb when the conflict arrives. (Compare Rev. xix. 14.) Being changed, they are for ever with the Lord, and follow Him out of heaven. So, when the final contest arises between the Lord Jesus and Satan represented by the leader of the West, the Lord is accompanied by His saints. They are here styled "called, and faithful, and chosen." Some have thought these must be angels; but this they are not. For angels are never called "faithful." And, again, they are said to be not merely chosen but "called." How could an angel be "called"? Calling is an appeal of grace, which comes to one who has gone astray in order to bring him back to God. But this is never true of an angel. The gospel is God's calling fallen and guilty man to give him, through faith and because of redemption, a place with Christ in heaven. Those who believe on Him are here shewn to be with Him; and they are "called, and faithful, and chosen."

* This is plain from Dan. ii., &c. For though the final blow falls on the feet of iron and clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, will have representatives in a separate though feeble form, to share the common irreparable ruin.

They have been above from Rev. iv. or rather just before, as the chapter implies.

But there is more. What becomes of the woman? We hear about her too in verse 15, where we discern her vast quasi-spiritual influence. It is not a national body (inconsistent with the true nature of the church as this must be), but an idolatrous, persecuting, pretentiously religious system, claiming to be the spouse of Christ, but really an unclean harlot that extends her corruption over all the world. For if Rome be her centre, she sits upon the many waters, peoples, and crowds and nations, and tongues. How easily seen who and what she is, and what only such a system can be! There is but one such in Christendom, though she has daughters too.

Further notice (as in verse 16), what a change takes place! * Instead of these horns, or kings of the West, being any longer subjected to Babylon, they turn furiously with the Beast against her. Would it not be an incredibly strange thing for the Pope to turn against his own church or city? Hence the Pope is not the Beast, and has nothing directly to do with destroying Babylon. It is the symbol of the empire in its last phase, when the Beast from the abyss is thus joined by the various leaders of the different kingdoms of the West against that impure and most guilty system.

* In this verse observe that the true reading is not the ten horns "upon" the Beast, but "the ten horns which thou sawest *and* the Beast, these shall hate the whore," &c. As the truth is here as often wholly opposed to the Protestant scheme of prophecy, one cannot but deplore how it vitiated so able a book as the *Horae Apocalypticae* up to the last, as it misled its excellent author.

Babylon had long intoxicated men, persecuted the saints, and dallied with the kings of the earth. Now the turn of the tide comes: Babylon was not of God, but a corrupt idolatrous imposture. But there is nothing of Christ's mind in her destroyers. It is Satan against Satan, and his kingdom shall come to nought. The end of the haughty world-church is come, and, soon after, that of her destroyers. The Beast and the ten horns, throughout the Western empire, have their one mind in this revolt from the Roman harlot, to strip, eat, and burn her, according to the language of the prophecy.

There are solemn premonitory signs even now. Let me mention only one fact noticed by both Romanists and Protestants. You are all aware of Œcumenical Councils lately held in Rome. One distinctive character is remarkable, as emphatically indicative of the change that has taken place even among the Western powers. For the first time the Pope could not ask one Catholic sovereign to sit in the council. It was composed simply and exclusively of priests. Not a single ambassador or representative of the crowned heads was there. There never was such a state of things before in mediæval or modern Europe. Originally indeed, at Nice, it was not the Pope who convened or took the lead but the Emperor, who at least kept the turbulent bishops in a measure of order.

Granted, that infidelity underlies the change. It is overflowing even now everywhere, as by and by the Beast will be steeped up to the eyes in blasphemy. He and the horns will be given over

to the hatred of God, while at the same time they will at last hate the Harlot which had deceived them so long. It is a violent reaction against the vileness of Babylon, but no less a rejection of divine truth. You see its spirit in our own country and day. Leading men glory without shame in spoiling the religious dignitaries and their earthly goods. This is going on in all lands; but the end of it will have a deeper dye. Do men call it "the Eternal City"? Alas! the Romish priests keep it hidden from their hearts that Babylon, the great city of the West, is doomed to be thrown down and found no more at all, but her smoke to rise up unto the ages of the ages, everlasting like Sodom and Gomorrah, when the Lord reigns over the earth, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

It is not of course meant that we are yet come to the Beast and the ten horns of Rev. xvii. But enough has been said to show the rapid trend of the present times—the strong way in which the wind blows in the West. Men prepare to turn violently against what they had been so long enslaved to. As the end approaches, the word of God asserts its majesty and power to men of faith, as fresh as at the beginning; but by the mass it is more and more slighted and scorned. We are verging toward the close of the profession of Christianity on the earth, when the Lord again leads His own to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. Besides, we have these admonitory symptoms that the world gets weary of hollow earthly religion, and becomes ashamed of

forms which are themselves no better than empty superstitions. And no wonder, for there is not an outward ordinance remaining, scarcely even a form, which has not been utterly perverted, as well as the truth itself to a great extent ignored or denied.

A Christian must be beyond measure prejudiced by his earthly system and too excited against the fuller and heavenly truth, who could dream of saying, "Coming to take vengeance is the primary object of His leaving heaven." Had he annexed and limited vengeance to "the day of the Lord," he might perhaps be justified; but it is so flagrantly opposed both to 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, and to 2 Thess. ii. 1, that God's word condemns the unspiritual deliverance beyond appeal, and proves the importance of distinguishing between "that day" and "the presence of the Lord" which has for its primary object the gathering of His saints to Himself above. Not a hint is breathed in 1 Cor. xv. 56, more than in those Epistles of vengeance or judgment in any form or degree. The one speaks of "a mystery"; because to raising the dead saints, which is no mystery but an O. T. truth, the apostle adds the new revelation that "we" (Christians) "shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for it shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The other says, as an equally new revelation, that after the dead saints rise, we the living that remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always

with the Lord. They are the divine expression of grace, and of nothing but grace.

Shortsighted brethren (and they are many, if this be a comfort to them) confound this heavenly gathering together with the wholly different gathering together of the "elect" of Israel, as in Matt. xxiv. where not a word implies any catching up to join the Lord. They are scattered to all quarters and need to be gathered, when the time comes for the Son of man's presence on the earth. They are expressly called His "elect" in Isa. lxx. 9, 15, 22, as in Matt. xxiv. 31. As in the same verse "a great sound of trumpet" summons the elect of Israel, so in that day (Isa. xxvii. 12, 13) a great trumpet shall be blown summoning them to worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem. This the Lord clears and confirms in Matt. xxiv. The context alone can decide whether the elect be of Israel, of the church, or of Gentiles; for it is true of all three as the different parts of the Lord's prophecy on Olivet prove. But blessed as they are to be on earth, it is quite distinct from those caught up to meet Him for heavenly glory. From these all thought of vengeance is excluded. Israel's deliverance is accompanied by the destruction of their enemies. Our rapture to the Lord is entirely and exclusively a question of sovereign grace in its consummation for heaven and in being thus ever with Him, our best and brightest privilege. But even His presence for the earth, though necessarily involving vengeance on the wicked, has for its "primary object" the deliverance of the sorely tried and scattered or

beleaguered Jews, and the gathering of His elect of Israel.

The want of eye-salve is not duly felt. They are rich and increased with goods, especially the old clothes of Judaism and the new suit of philosophy; and they have need of nothing. Hence, by not distinguishing things that evidently and profoundly differ, the whole truth on this subject is embroiled and thrown into confusion. For the kingdom of God embraces earthly as well as heavenly things. How sad to misuse the less to darken or deny the greater! There is to be the Father's kingdom where the righteous are to shine as the sun; there is to be the Son of man's kingdom where His earthly people shall be blessed and honoured as never before; but in order to this last the sword of divine judgment must clear the way for the Lord's righteous sceptre. No such earthly dealing applies to the heavens, or on our behalf before going on high. There the Lord went up triumphantly and in peace; there and thus at His call shall the heavenly saints be caught up. How can saints overlook the contrast or fight against it!

The "desperate shifts" are exclusively with those who are blind enough to swamp grace and judgment, heaven and earth, heavenly family and earthly people, in one strange conglomeration. Assuredly scripture gives no countenance to such disorder. It is ignorance or calumny to say that any one sought to discredit the champion of this Babylonish system. God allowed that he should also fall into the wildest delusion, to say nothing

now of the gravest error as to Christ which he himself acknowledged and in part recanted, many of his chief associates more fully than was charged on any of them. But, apart from this, what does an excuser mean by such a cry? Is he not aware that the one he thus goes out of his way to defend taught openly and definitely, that the church is to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent in the day of glory? See "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," pp. 45-51 (1843). *Is this, or is it not, heterodox and even blasphemous? Was it ever retracted?* Surely it is "a crooked device" to ignore such extravagant and fatuous falsehood, and to impute deceit, wanton cruelty, and unscrupulous misrepresentation to brethren who had to clear the Lord's name from being a cover for this and many other serious errors.

Beware, brother, of a zeal not according to knowledge! Have you not too good reason to pause and consider yourself, when you compare the heavenly side of Christ's future presence to "a new god newly come up"? On the face of things we go up, not to the "old paths" of O.T. prophecy, but to the apostolic and prophetic revelations of the N.T., where alone specifically Christian truth is brought fully out. Meet, if you can, the clear indications of Christ's presence in these distinct aspects, as we gather from a full induction and a careful study of God's word. We do not expect help from Christendom as it was and is. It is not we that forget the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to lead into all the truth; still less take refuge in such dumb or blind guides, as the post-apostolic

fathers, who were either altogether silent on the great and distinctive privileges of the Christian and the church, or fell into exclusively Jewish hopes with grotesque exaggeration, in denial of all the prophets' testimony to the restoration of Israel, the centre of all the nations in their due place of blessing. Everything brought in *since* the apostles is a novelty which we repudiate, far more decidedly than such as proclaim themselves our adversaries and manifest a spirit both unreasonable and implacable. Why should our pointing to the heavenly truth they ignore sting them to such childish wrath?

Again, let us consider the testimony which 2 Thess. i. renders. It is certain that here is the execution and display of the Lord's retributive judgment. The aim was to make known the general character of the day, before taking up and refuting the false teaching that the day of the Lord was arrived, as in chap. ii. 2. The apostle boasts in them, as he says, in the churches of God for their endurance and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations they were sustaining. This he calls a manifest token of God's righteous judgment to the end of their being counted worthy of His kingdom, for the sake of which they also suffer; "if at least it is a righteous thing with God to award tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us [who were no less fellow-sufferers], at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven." This implies, of course, His presence; but it says more. It will be His unveiling, after being hidden from view, His heavenly saints being already

with Him. For His revelation is described as with angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on two classes, those that know not God, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus [Christ]; "who are such as shall pay as penalty everlasting destruction from the Lord's face and from the glory of His might, when He shall have come [not to receive His own to Himself, but] to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that believed (for our testimony unto you was believed) in that day."

Such is the character of "that day": not sovereign grace in associating saints with Himself for heaven and the Father's house, but righteous requital on both sides of friends and foes; to the wicked trouble, and repose to saints whom they once troubled. The trouble now would bring vengeance of flaming fire on unbelieving Gentiles and Jews, excluded for ever from the Lord's face, and from the glory of His might. But at the selfsame time the Lord will have come to be glorified in His saints and to be wondered at in all that believed. His saints, all that believed, come with Him.

It is not said, we may just observe, "in all them that believe": this is a vulgar error. No doubt a great harvest of blessing would begin on earth, not for Israel only but for all the nations. Here it is all the saints who come *with* the Lord in that day. The lost had no excuse. There had been full testimony; and the Thessalonians by grace had profited and would share in that display of glory. Part in that hope to which we are called, and in that faith of the unseen which accompanies it, will close;

though there would be exceptional favour to the Apocalyptic saints who are to suffer death for Jesus subsequently. Henceforward it would be for the world to "know" that the Father sent the Son and loved those heavenly ones as He loved Christ (John xvii. 23). For the world would see Christ and His own in the same displayed glory. 2 Thess. ii. 3-12 gives us the awful introduction which brings on that day; for this was the subject, not the Lord's coming which was a motive to cheer, but His day.

This display of judgment coalesces with the narrower application to Israel given in Matt. xxiv. It is about the same time. No one cavils at its being "seen" as the lightning, or would weaken its plainly expressed meaning. And 1 Thess. v. pronounces it "sudden destruction." It will be both "sudden" and "seen." But it wholly differs from 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, and Jude 24, where indisputably we are given the previous dealing of the Lord's grace, that when He will thus come in public judgment of His living enemies, the heavenly saints might accompany Him in manifest rest and glory before all eyes. No one is entitled to imagine lightning or flaming fire when the Bridegroom comes for His bride. Any such judicial terms or thoughts are then and there entirely absent. Those who foist them in are without the smallest justification. To every thing there is a season; a time to love, and a time to hate. Invincible disproof appears elsewhere; but this we need not anticipate. It is enough here to say that there is no evidence for any such incongruous mixture. It is the unfounded assumption,

not to say the gross interpolation, of an unsound hypothesis, the essence of which is an effort to exclude the first heavenly joy, and reduce all to the earthly expectation of the godly Jewish remnant of the future, which will be gratified in "that day," when the sons of God are revealed, yea the Firstborn among many brethren, to the deliverance of the whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain till then (Rom. viii. 19, 21).

"The revolt" goes farther and deeper than thought the Reformers and their followers since, who were limited by the pressure of the enormities of Romanism. The apostle discloses a still more guilty and rebellious reality still future. The apostasy means (on the part of Christendom, Protestants as really as Papists) the coming abandonment of all revealed truth. It far exceeds the departure of "some" "from the faith," as we read in the earlier verses of 1 Tim. iv. This was realised first in Gnostic folly, and yet more in the determined, durable, and systematic departure of Romanism. 2 Tim. iii. 1-9 (though, like the former express saying of the Spirit, having its application then when written, it bore yet more distinctly on the independent and heady self-assertion of Protestants) was still far short of the apostasy, when all form of godliness will be discarded with scorn.

But the man of sin revealed, the son of perdition, issues from the apostasy, and is its crown of shame. All of old admitted that he is the antichrist of St. John, though most confound him with the first Beast of the Revelation, the head of the civil power

in defiance of God at that day; whereas he is clearly the quasi-religious but really most irreligious chief that rivals Christ's position, no longer as Priest (which is exactly the Pope's atrocious pride), but as Prophet and King. He has accordingly not seven horns and seven eyes (the seven Spirits of God), nor even three, but "two horns like a lamb." Nor need we wonder at the common confusion; for these two Beasts equally cast off God and slay His saints, and are as closely allied as their great enemies, the final Assyrian or king of the north, and Gog, Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, who sustains his ally, foes to the emperor of the west, and the wilful king that is to reign in the land. It is not surprising that when grace wrought to deliver nations and countries from the wickedness and domineering of the Popes, those who took part in that great movement and suffered not a little should have it to be the predicted lawless one; for Popery was then the worst evil in Christendom, the most offensive to God in all the earth, as any can see if he weigh the denunciation of the great harlot in Rev. xvii. xviii.

Still even there it is apparent, that this corrupt, cruel, and idolatrous system is expressly "a mystery," the loathsome counterpart of Christ's bride, and quite distinct from, though long associated with, the Beast or imperial power and its vassals, who at last turn against her in hatred, strip, devour, and burn her. It will be no longer the mystery of lawlessness then, of which she when she sits a queen is so great a part. The man of sin will next be revealed, with

the Beast and the willing kings, of whom the False Prophet is the director in that day. Here it is that the Protestant commentators, like the Fathers, fall so short of the written word as to the future. One has the fullest sympathy with their conscience awakened to judge and quit the iniquities, pretensions, and horrors of Popery. But they were notoriously ill versed either in the church's heavenly character, in the Christian hope as well as worship, and in the prophetic word, yet worthy of exceeding love for their work, their faith, and their sufferings.

Some of the Popes were monsters of impurity, deceit, and cruelty; others of egregious worldly-mindedness, and political ambition, and of outrageous vanity and pride. Others were reputable persons, and some few of piety when days were dark and evil. It is therefore untrue that they could be all fairly called "the man of sin, the son of perdition." Scripture never speaks in terms of exaggeration. Nor does such a moral description, any more than the ominous repetition of the traitor's doom, suit a succession. They point to a person surpassing all others since the world began, in the crisis of the present evil age, reserved for condign punishment at our Lord's appearing. An office as a king or priest, admits of a succession; but here it is a person emphatically distinct and alone.

This is confirmed by the words of verse 4, "That opposeth and exalteth himself against (or, above) all that is called God or object of veneration, so that he should himself sit down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The lawless one is

to be a sinner beyond sinners, the man of sin, and affecting to be God, claiming the honour of the Supreme on earth, in His temple, not in mere earthly things, or personal vain glory, like Herod in Acts xii. The Christ who was God became on earth a bondman to glorify His God and Father at all cost. It is a mere imposture for the Pope to dub himself vicar of Christ, and head of the church on earth, while acknowledging formally the Lord in heaven. But for this reason he does not fulfil the arrogant self-exaltation of this adversary, who raises himself above all that is called God or object of religious veneration. And the temple of God literally, in Jerusalem before the age ends, will fall in with his blasphemous claim; for many of the Jews will be back there in unbelief, whilst a godly remnant hold aloof and flee as the Lord directed. It is not well to pare down scripture to pile the agony against the Pope; and it is a danger for men who are not papists to exclude the extreme end of destruction as only for others to their own peril.

Hence it appears that though the apostasy is the starting-point, the man of sin revealed is a great advance of an audacious and unbounded impiety under Satan's power, to which the total abandonment of the Christian revelation leaves the door open. Grace scorned and Christ the gift of God for sinful men utterly derided, the man of sin follows; man not only without God, but ignoring and spurning all divine restraint: atheistic lawlessness denying sin and wallowing in it without shame or fear. As God was Himself in Christ, the image

of Him who abides invisible, the man of sin will be His personal adversary, exalting himself above all that is called God or object of veneration. "Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John ii. 22). Though beginning as a false Christ, at last he will flout the hope of Israel, no less than the Christian testimony. As the culmination of the extreme pitch of defiance, in claiming to be God supreme, he seats himself in the temple of God. Thus apostate Judaism amalgamates in that hour with Christian apostasy; and the first temptation for man to become as God ends in the lie of man ousting God and showing forth himself to be God in His very temple.

As for the alleged difficulty raised on the sitting of the man of sin in the temple of God on Mount Moriah at the end of the age, it is essential to bear in mind that the apostle here incorporates the testimonies of two prophets who treat of Jewish iniquity at that very time. The first of these, Dan. xi. 36-39, is explicit of the place. It is no other than the land of Judæa. The second, Isa. xi. 4, is equally clear that he is the "lawless one" destined to his awful doom at the breath of the lips of Jehovah Jesus. Into neither scripture can one foist Christendom. Haggai also enables us to see that, whatever be the iniquity, destruction, or renewal, the house of Jehovah has its unity to the ear of faith. "Who is left among you that saw *this house* in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet

now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high-priest. . . . I will fill *this house* with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of *this house* shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts" (ii. 3-9). Neither the hostile Antiochus IV., nor the evil patronage of the Idumean Herod, nor the blasphemous self-deification of the antichrist, destroys God's title and rights. It is His house throughout, whatever the faithlessness of His people, and the seeming triumph of Satan meanwhile; and the end will be glorious and permanent, and for ever.

The apostle predicts a time when the church will have been gathered on high, the Jew and the once professing church becoming alike apostate, and the man of sin revealed, the awful contrast of His revelation, who, though true God, became the most humbled bondman for our redemption to the glory of God. Thus there is no real difficulty in the lawless one seating himself in the Jewish temple to show off as God. This is very different from the pretended successor of Peter, the spurious Vicar of Christ, and hypocritical servant of God's servants; nor is there the least ground in God's word to call St. Peter's at Rome the house of God, or to allow that the Pope so sits in Christendom as a whole, seeing that half or more utterly rejects his assumption. Again, while succession is quite allowable in the office of a king or a priest, it is quite excluded from the

description of a personage so unique as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," the lawless one here portrayed, no less than his awful end. But is it not plain on the face of our chapter that the lawless one opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped? This the most aspiring of the Popes never did on any fair interpretation of their words and deeds, however dissolute and flagitious in life, however arrogant and ambitious in sacerdotal or secular power. Many and various antichrists there have been; but they all point to one individual at the end, who as here written will surpass every person that preceded in impious and audacious setting up to be God in His own house, Jew and Gentiles uniting to worship him as they did of old to crucify the true King of Israel, yea the true God incarnate.

But from apostolic days the germs were sown and actually there, which were to bear these fatal fruits when the divine restraint (6, 7) should be removed, and the season come for their full display. The departure in the churches of Galatia from the sovereign grace of God that saves sinners was an early stage in declension. So was at a later day Satan's effort at Colosse to interpolate philosophy, the principle of Gentiles, and religious ordinance, the principle of Judaism, between Christ the head and the members of His body; for both principles struck a death-blow at Christ's union with the church. Other evils already noticed in the two Epistles to Timothy contributed their quota; and so did that slipping back or away, of which Heb. vi.

and x. treat; which, if yielded to, could only end in apostasy and irremediable ruin. How could it be otherwise, if those, who had in any measure enjoyed the effects of the Holy Spirit's presence, or who had owned Christ's sacrifice and eternal redemption, renounced that only salvation of God's grace and power? All this was but the mystery of "lawlessness" at work, which when the apostles were gone rushed on to greater ungodliness, with tradition, human and angelic mediators, Mariolatry, transubstantiation, earthly priesthood, the mass, the confessional, relics, Papal assumption, and all the other heterodoxies and horrors of Rome.

Yet will the end be still worse, not corruption but rebellion against God bold and open, as our chapter intimates. For the Popes confess their sins to a priest, and worship God and Christ, with the Virgin, &c. The Popes enjoin worship divine, and human in varying degrees, to save appearances. How can fairminded men say (in the face of such worship of God, wretched as it is, with abundant idolatry) that they oppose and exalt themselves above all that is called God or object of veneration? How contend or conceive that this rather polytheistic character of Popery agrees with setting up man in the temple of God, showing forth himself as God?

One could not expect the men who took the Protestant view to know that the Restrainer will be out of the way only when the saints are translated, in whom He dwells individually and collectively; and then the temple of God will be no longer on earth in a spiritual sense. Nay, some little after that, He

ceases to act in ordaining the powers that be. Satan's brief season will then come, and the season proper to the revelation of the lawless one, the man of sin. Dan. xi. 36-39 is plain and positive proof that his field of operation is "the glorious land"; and it is no less plain that the apostle applies that prophecy to the personage he here describes for his blasphemous self-exaltation and self-deification above every object of reverence or worship, real or false. It is also equally plain that he applies Isa. xi. 4 to the Lord's slaying him with the breath of His mouth, the true reading of ver. 4. This again confirms the locality of this wicked person.

Neither text has to do with the church or professing Christendom; for all that will either be gone, or have sunk into the apostasy and the blasphemous worship of man as God. All these texts explain why the daring apotheosis will be in the temple of God in Jerusalem. There the blessed Spirit came down and filled all the confessors of the Lord Jesus. At this time He will be clean gone; and Satan will have filled his minion, the antichrist, worshipped as God in the temple by Jews and Gentiles banded against the true God. But the Reformers and their descendants have been slow to believe the prophets, being absorbed in the urgent questions of Popery, and hence indisposed to allow the uprise of an evil even more appalling than that which was the worst then extant. Who can wonder at this? But the revival of the true hope has given a great impulse to the prophetic word also; so that the truth of the future has shone out

brightly in precision and full extent according to scripture.

But one error leads to many more, as for instance to the unsound interpretation that prevailed and still does among Protestants that "consuming with the spirit of His mouth" means the gradual and gracious work of the gospel; whereas it is solely the Lord's immediate and destructive action at His appearing, as the last clause of Isa. xxx. 3 may convince the most stubborn, if there be subjection to scripture. The gospel is certainly not like a stream of brimstone, which destroys judicially.

Though it cannot be drawn from the words of the text that the apostle had explained to the saints the details of the restraint and the restrainer, yet it is not improbable that he told them of these things also. What he says is, "And now," i.e., since things are so, as he had set out in vers. 3, 4, "ye know that which restraineth as to his (the man of sin's) being revealed in his own season." God raises a barrier meanwhile. "For the mystery of lawlessness already worketh: only [there is] he that restraineth at present, until he be gone out of the way." Every saint ought to know Who that mighty agent is, now here below, to resist the overflow of Satan's power. It may be that the apostle taught those young believers who He is in a general way. Assuredly they to whom "our gospel" came, not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, should of themselves be conscious that neither the church nor any world-power could avail to keep down

the frightful energy of Satan if let loose to do his worst, as it will be.

That the church has a chief place as an instrument of that restraint, they might readily conceive who had just experienced God's power in gathering to Christ's name in truth, peace, and love, Jews and Gentiles that believed on Jesus, notorious for implacable hostility, especially in the religious domain. How could there be that renunciation of this grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ as long as He was here? Is not God's house on earth, a living God's assembly, pillar and basement of the truth? As long as such a witness of the mystery of godliness bore up, Satan could not force his scheme to efface or trample down the truth, and set up undisputed his lie.

The empire too had its authority from God, as the apostle Paul in particular and indeed all the apostles were careful to affirm, whatever its abuse in the hands of its head; and never was a more extravagantly wanton one than when the Epistle to the Roman saints laid subjection down as the Christian's duty. But even then it was enjoined in terms so broad as to cover all change in the form of government. "Those that be" are set up by God. As long as this authority from God subsists, believers were bound to respect and be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience. It was not merely the empire but any government divinely sanctioned. Satan they knew could not set up his man of sin supremely, as long as there were rulers in God's providence. It is not likely that these

young saints were instructed in the possible control of the Spirit governmentally for a while after the rapture of the saints, till the last half-week of the Seventy of Daniel, when all restraint ceases, and the dragon, in a great rage and knowing his short season, begins the final campaign of this evil age on the earth given up to his worst.

There is an element in the restraint far more direct and influential as well of nearer interest, which seems to have escaped the tradition-mongers old and new. For the Spirit of God has in the church a most special and congenial sphere of loving care and continual action personally in connection with the Father and the Son. To it He has imparted unity, constituting believers, Jew or Greek, the one body of Christ; as also by His indwelling He makes it God's house or habitation. No factor in the barrier against the antichrist is so decided as this, which has been ordinarily left out of the account, because the real and exceptional character of the church was so quickly lost by all of old, and is in general so little apprehended still. He is here acting in power according to Christ's victory over Satan, not only in life, but in redemption. Who but the Spirit could adequately restrain Satan? He made use externally of an earthly government and yet more of the church; yet who but He working on earth could be the real restrainer? Of course the Holy Spirit has no such close or intimate relation to any world-power. Yet when the Roman governor talked of his having authority to crucify as well as to release, the Lord told him what

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to the Gentile that knew not God must have sounded strange, but is the truth, Thou hadst no authority against Me except it were given thee from above. The powers that be are ordained by God, and the Spirit is the agent in their unsuspected control also; so that, however godless the nations or their rulers may be, the issue is by His determinate counsel and foreknowledge; and the Jews and their rulers, because in unbelief they knew not their own Messiah, fulfilled also the voices of the prophets, read every sabbath, by condemning Him.

His presence in the church then, as long as it is here, is much the weightiest part in that restraint; and thus Satan cannot go beyond "the mystery of lawlessness," while the great mystery as respects Christ and as respects the church is being carried on. Hence the man of sin cannot be revealed till his own season shall have come: the restrainer forbids it. When that heavenly work is completed on earth, and the last member of Christ's body in his place, the Lord will come and receive to Himself not only them but all that were His from the very first. Though the rapture will close that peculiar association here, the Holy Ghost will still act for a time as He did before Pentecost, as it appears, spiritually and governmentally. Both Jews and Gentiles, not then joined in one body as now, will be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, as is plainly taught, where above all we might expect it, in the Revelation. This book also discloses the later epoch, when for the first time in the history of man not God but Satan ordains the Roman empire in its last and fatal form,

and empowers the False Prophet, who shall reign as king in the holy land (Dan. xi. 36-39), doing his own will, as Christ ever and only His Father's will.

These are the proofs and marks that the Restrainer will be then and there clean gone (*ἐκ μεσοῦ γένηται*). Almost all versions unwittingly add to the word here. For it is not said "taken," as might well be of an earthly power, or person, that does not vacate but is forcibly removed (*ἀρθῇ*). Not so the true Restrainer, behind all the visible and varying forms of the restraint; He goes of Himself, and quits the scene, judicially left open for a while to Satan's abominable pride and mischief. It means "till he become out of the way," which as I believe precisely suits the Holy Spirit. But it suits no other person so well; still less that traditional impediment, of which some are confident still, though evidently long falsified by the event. Yet the Fathers who furnished that tradition looked for the personal antichrist, whom the Lord Jesus personally is to destroy. And so Dean Alford and Bp. Ellicott, &c., concede in deference to the terms of plain and positive scripture.

Observe another plain disproof of the application to Popery in vers. 9, 10, however earnestly able and pious men have argued to that effect. The true force points to an evil not yet accomplished and far more tremendous in the personal antichrist. "Whose presence (or, coming) is according to the energy of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to those that perish; because they received not the

love of the truth, that they might be saved." For it is a very mistaken enfeebling of that awful fact then allowed to Satan in an exceptional way, that they are the mere juggling tricks of a deceitful priesthood, or "lying wonders" as in the A. & R. Vv.

As the Lord will manifest His presence in overwhelming power and glory, so will the presence of the lawless one be according to Satan's energy in every form of power and signs and wonders of falsehood to deceive and destroy. The same incredulity which refused the evidence of God's power and truth in Christ will fall under Satan's lie in these powers and prodigies. They are super-human. Wonders were wrought to a certain point by Pharaoh's magicians; as in another way we see surprising effects by natural agents in Job's trials. But here similar language is employed about the man of sin, as the apostle Peter used about the Righteous One (Acts ii. 22). They were real miracles to promote falsehood, not pretended ones; and the issue will be, not only his own perdition, but the deceiving of all his abettors to ruin everlasting, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. His lie, the deceit of unrighteousness, was incompatible with salvation by Christ and the truth. They all perish without doubt: is it so with every Papist? *I dare not so say.*

Now no Pope ever wrought a miracle, nor even, for aught one knows, pretended to it. What strange exaggeration then to ascribe this awful power of Satan to the Pope! What equally strange prejudice to deny it to the man of sin, whom the Lord at His

appearing is to annul! The apostle gives the moral reason for a judgment so stern. "And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they should believe the falsehood, that all might be judged that believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (ver. 12). God's sending a working of error is judicial hardening at that crisis; and Satan follows with his deceiving marvels of power to drag down all its votaries to perdition. It is divine retribution at the last. They renounced the truth and salvation with it; they loved the lie, and must perish. But the heights and depths of Satan far transcend Popery and belong only to the consummation of the age. The elect of that day solely escape by divine grace, as this is at bottom true of all the elect in any day.

How strikingly portrayed, in contrast with the perdition of that awful time, are the position and privileges of the Thessalonian saints, as the apostle depicts! "So then, brethren, stand, and hold fast the traditions ye were taught whether by word or by our letter." As all scripture was not yet written, they were called to heed what they had been orally taught as well as by the apostolic letter. They were beloved by the Lord, chosen of God unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth, whereto He called them "by our gospel" to obtaining our Lord Jesus Christ's glory. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father that loved us and gave everlasting comfort and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and stablish [them] in every good work and word"

(vers. 13-17). The judicial hardening, the energetic action of the enemy, and the day of the Lord were to fall exclusively on those who despised Christ and renounced the gospel; everlasting comfort and good hope through grace, were the portion of those who believed; and present establishing in every good work and word were besought on their behalf.

It may interest and profit some if we here notice a scripture, which is adduced more frequently perhaps than any other to oppose the rapture, at least before the day of manifestation. We refer to the parable of the wheat field, and the Lord's explanation, in Matt. xiii. We refer to the only similitude in the chapter that is historical (*ὁμοιωθή*, "likened," not merely "is like"). The bondmen of Him that sowed the good seed proposed to root up the darnel of the enemy's sowing. But no: their work is that of grace. "The field is the world," let commentators say what they may. It is not the church, where discipline is essential; but the kingdom, where they must be left for judgment at the end, when it is no longer in patience but come in power. "Suffer both to grow together unto the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers (or harvesters), Gather first the darnel, and bind it in bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary." The crop was spoilt; and no effective remedy can be, till the end of the age arrives, and its judgment.

The harvesters, unlike the bondmen, are angels. It will be for these, not for those, to bind in bundles

the sons of the evil one, at the fit moment for their activity, and as their first revealed act; for the time of harvest is not an epoch, but a period. The angels are instruments of divine providence; and at that season they will be employed in a measure, even before the sons of the kingdom are translated to the granary above. The wicked in the field will, by this instrumentality or means, be brought into close association, with a view to burning them (*πρὸς τὸ κακαῦσαι αὐτά*). It is not yet the penal execution that awaits them, but the preparatory act of God's providence which disposes them suitably for their doom. Nobody, one hopes, can be so ignorant as to conceive such a work by visible angels before Christ takes to Himself the saints on high. Probably most persons have no definite judgment about it.

Not indeed that anything transpiring at present is the accomplishment of this act: it will devolve by-and-by on His angels. But it is a grave thing to recognise in the actual combinations of our day, rife all over the world as never in the past, how the coming event casts its shadow before. For men without the fear of God confederate by all sorts of unions, to overawe or embarrass, and thus effect their selfish ends. The Lord will employ His angels (for the saints are still on earth), evidently before He appears to do this work perfectly with a view to His further aims. At present real Christians are mixed up in these fleshly and worldly combinations. But when the harvest season begins, it will not be so. The bundles will be made up exclusively of the guilty objects for His judgment. None but the

wicked will be collected and bound for the purpose : this the angels can effect, as man could not, and saints are forbidden. It might be providentially at any unknown moment.

The wheat, the sons of the kingdom, are not left like the darnel on the field, but next brought together into Christ's granary. This, we all surely agree, means and must be to meet the Lord, who deigns to descend into the air ; when at His call all the saints, dead and alive, are changed in a moment, and caught up to join Him, "and so shall we always be with the Lord."

The Lord's explanation as usual adds to the original parable. Here the very momentous information is given of what will be manifest to all eyes. In the providential action the bundles were not said to be removed from the field ; according to the figure they were left there to await their awful end. But later on during harvest "the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all offences and those that do awlness, and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." The other side of glory is equally clear : "then (not before) shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear let him hear." It is not the rapture to heaven but the revelation from it. This may wound many a prejudice ; but the truth is well worth it. It is the display of His presence, the *appearing* of His coming, His day, when the saints are beheld with Him in the

heavenly glory. Christ and they are manifested together: they already with Him, not He alone before them, nor yet coming for them.

Thus, as it quite appears, on a closer study than is usually given to this most instructive parable and the Master's explanation, everything here is consistent with that later word which the apostle divulged in the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). As both are parts of the truth of God, they harmonise perfectly; while each contributes its own portion suitably to the divine purpose on the appropriate occasion. No doubt it is the future that we await in a perfect peace that rests on the blood of His cross; and in a fulness of joy created by His love which is as rich in grace and glory, as it is altogether beyond the mere creature, and as sure as God's word can make its revelation.

So, in the parable of the seyne or sweep-net (Matt. xiii. 47), we have the distinction kept up between the angels who executed the judgment, and the fishers, who drew it to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels but cast out the worthless, a work peculiarly suited to closing scenes. The Christian labourer is occupied with the good; he is an agent of that grace which saved himself. The worthless he leaves aside for those who excel in might, whose function it is to deal with them individually. For it is no more a question of discipline with the fish than with the darnel. And all the talk about wheat becoming darnel, or *vice versa*, is outside the word of the Lord. There is no question of a good fish turning worthless, or of

the worthless rising to good. The bondmen like the fishers have a charge only to secure the good. This was a right and intelligent work: the contrast of the bondmen's readiness, ignorant of self and of God's ways, to uproot.

Here commentators are either silent or no less mistaken than as to the darnel. It is the kingdom again, not the church. Who can fail to see that they are plainly distinct? The kingdom was a familiar truth though it took the form of "mystery" now. The church is first announced in Matt. xvi. 18, 19. The confusion of the two is not only a doctrinal blunder in theologians generally, but it has wrought great practical havoc in all ages to this day. Thus in the church we are bound to judge evil (1 Cor. v.); in the kingdom we are forbidden (as in ver. 30 of this chapter). Punishment is a work for angels' hands; not for Christians, who are called not to resist evil but to suffer, giving God thanks. Donatists and Catholics were utterly astray, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they confidently affirmed. The truth of both kingdom and church was lost since apostolic days, as all may see who have light from God on these things. How far is it recovered to-day?

But here again we find that "in the end of the age the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked out of the midst of the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." As there was a providential gathering of the darnel before the execution of the judgment, so there was a spiritual

work by saintly men in sorting the good into vessels, before the execution of the judgment to clear the wicked out of their midst. There is the great common principle that this judgment belongs to the angels, not to the saints; but there is a marked difference in that the gathering of the wheat was immediate into the heavenly garner, but the darnel were subjected to a longer process, with the same sad end as the worthless fish. Only it is the inverse now; for these wicked ones are severed from among the righteous there, as the worthless were taken out for the terrible judgment of everlasting fire. In vain can one search for consistency of interpretation as to either of these parables in the moderns any more than in the ancients. Even the best vacillate strangely, partly through lack of duly distinguishing the kingdom and the church, partly through no less lack of discernment between the coming of the Lord for the saints, and His day with its terrors and destruction, when His own shall be manifested together with Him in glory.

But it is plain that not a word implies any visible act in the binding of the darnel into bundles first, and then of the sons of the kingdom, the wheat, gathered at once into the garner. No doubt the Lord comes down into the air and the changed saints are caught up to meet Him there. The garner is not on earth or in the air but in heaven. Thence in due time, the saints follow Him out of heaven (as Rev. xvii. 14, xix. 14, distinctly teach) for the day of the Lord and His judgment of the Beast

and the False Prophet, the kings of the earth, the darnels too, and every other object of divine retribution, the judgment of the quick or living. This quite falls in with the added explanation of both parables: on one side the display of the glorified saints, shining like the sun in the kingdom of their Father; and, on the other, of the Son of man through His angels clearing out of His kingdom all offences, and those that work lawlessness, into the furnace of fire.

The day of the Lord is the open introduction of the age to come by terrific judgments, and never in scripture mixed up with His coming to receive His saints to Himself for the Father's house. And hence we saw that the apostle appealed to His presence to gather the saints to Himself, as their bright hope, against the false and foolish notion, introduced by fraud, and calculated to agitate and alarm, that the day of the Lord had actually arrived. Its imminence was not the error; for it is an indisputable truth, often taught in scripture, and by Paul himself, of no small moment practically for souls. But people, fancying that this was too strange a delusion to enter, gave the verb a sense which it never bears, and thus lost all real understanding of the passage, by adopting a false rendering which has plunged men into mistake ever since.

A favourite argument among some is that the church must be on earth till the Lord appears, because Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of

our Lord. This however has been already shewn to be a mere fallacy. Scripture connects responsible service, and also the walk of all saints with the day or the appearing, never with His coming as such or our translation to meet Him on high which is a matter of nothing but sovereign grace. But responsibility attaches to His appearing because, when we come with Him, our place is decided according to our measure of fidelity. To confound the two things is to lose the distinct truth and the special blessing of each to the soul. We are called to wait for Him with unclouded joy; but we are also bound, each to his particular work, and all of us to watch, abounding in mutual love, in order that our hearts be confirmed blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

It might have been hastily anticipated that this would be when He comes for us. Such however is not the teaching of 1 Thess. iii. 12, any more than of kindred scriptures. It will be at His coming *with* all His saints. Infinite love gave us the holy nature capable of so walking, in giving us Christ as our life even now, to walk in love accordingly. This will have its consummation in that day, and in the communion of all who share it when the Lord comes to be glorified in all that are His in the fullest and most evident way. The establishment in holiness by love of the saints toward each other would go on and stop not short of that glorious day when the Lord is wondered at in all that believed; and this is only by their manifestation with Him in glory. How admirable scripture is in thus binding up every

day's walk as saints with Christ's appearing in glory and of us together with Him in it!

Thus the argument betrays a want of spiritual understanding and right use of scripture. Besides, when looked into, it is quite inept. For employed as it is, it would deprive of its profit not only Timothy but all other men of God who pass hence before the Lord appears, and confine it to such as then remain on the earth. Whereas according to its real bearing it applies fully to him and all that follow in the same path of devoted obedience to the end. Asleep or alive when He comes, they will have their due place in the day of His appearing. And if this is true manifestly of the responsible servants in the word, still less can the mistaken notion apply to the church. In short it in no case implies remaining on earth till that day; which would directly contradict Col. iii. 4, and is quite inconsistent with other scriptures that reveal the glorified saints accompanying Christ, and out of heaven too.

It is remarkable, and apparently little known, that the late Mr. B. W. Newton, the keenest advocate for identifying Christ's coming with His appearing or day, was in effect compelled to bow to the evidence of Rev. xix., and to confess that it "opens with one of the great *results* of the resurrection of the saints" (Thoughts on the Apocalypse, p. 297). Again (p. 290), "The saints have joined Him and fall into the train of His glory." He does not contest that the marriage of the Lamb is in heaven, and the bride there before then. But this assuredly

surrenders the principle, for which his disciples vainly contend with no small outcry. It is the grossest error therefore to look for the resurrection of those that compose the church, or of the O. T. saints in Rev. xx. 4. Both are there undoubtedly, but already changed, in those seated on the thrones, to whom judgment was given. The raising from the dead which then follows is exclusively of the Apocalyptic sufferers, slain after the first general class of the glorified were caught up to be with the Lord. The two classes of martyrs (for there are two) are now seen to be raised, in order to share the reign with Christ for the thousand years. On all this the views commonly held are vague and erring. But the light conveyed by the scripture is as bright and simple as possible.

It is useless to search the Reformers any more than the Puritans for any real grasp or right estimate of sovereign grace in its heavenly portion. Their hearts did not dwell on or even turn to the rapture. Take the learned John Jewel, who wrote expressly on the Epistles to the Thessalonians (the only Exposition in his Works), edited by the Parker Society. But he never seems to rise beyond the Lord's coming to judge the quick and the dead. His descent in 1 Thess. iv. 16 only draws out for comment, "Here is laid for us the true manner of the terrible judgment of God" . . . "Such shall be the shew and the sight of the Son of God: He shall come down with majesty from heaven; the trumpet of God shall sound, and be heard from the one end of heaven to the other; and whosoever

shall hear it shall quake with fear. [What! the bride at the Bridegroom!] Then shall He be the Judge over all flesh. Then He shall shew Himself to be King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Even on ver. 17 he can only say, "We which shall see all these things shall also be caught up ourselves. But here you must notice that Paul speaketh not this of his own person, and of them that lived in his time, as if they should continue alive unto the end, or that the world should have an end before they should die; but he sheweth what shall be the state of such whosoever shall then remain alive."

Now this is to miss the beautiful intent of the Spirit through the apostle's words. If the meaning the then Bp. of Salisbury put into them had been intended, it would have been easy and alone correct to have written, We that must die shall rise first; then the living that remain shall be caught up together with us in clouds to meet the Lord in [or into] the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Surely those caught up should not be confounded with "all flesh." The apostle (even in correcting the unfounded fancy that the deceased saints of their company must miss their part in that hour of unmingled joy) takes pains to confirm them in constant waiting for His coming. The bishop's view loses sight of the Holy Spirit's care to keep the saints in habitual expectancy, and therefore left, always uncertain when He might come, to look for Him day by day, hanging evermore on His assurance of love, "I am coming again" (John xiv.), without one word to fix a date, or cloud the heart,

or delay the hope. To begin to settle that it cannot be in our time, is it not to say in the heart, "My lord delayeth," the inlet to self-seeking and overbearing? Certainly not a hint was ever given by an inspired man that he or others then alive must survive to the Lord's coming, still less to the world's end. But the Christian was expressly set to wait and watch for Him as his most cherished object, and expressly kept always so looking, because he knows not the moment. It was in divine wisdom for the best good to be so ordered.

On 2 Thess. ii. the learned bishop starts off to warn against Popery, says not a word on the weighty opening verse, and on the second gets into the theme of "crafty and false teachers." When he does speak of the advent, beyond quoting words of 1 Thess. iv., he looks for judgment and the passing away of heaven and earth, without any adequate sense of the revealed blessedness of our gathering together unto the Lord.

Nor is there in Protestant writers any more than Popish a sound conception of the awful revolt that is to befall professing Christians at the end of the age, or of the still more audacious rising up that follows of both the civil Beast of Rome, and the quasi-religious Beast of Jerusalem, in the power of Satan. For it will be a travesty of the three persons of the Godhead, and arrogate divine power and glory to the exclusion of the only true God, especially of the Father and the Son, through the energetic, and no longer checked, working of the evil spirit.

The exaggeration of truth is never the truth ;

and the exaggeration of the evil that now exists, whilst the mystery of lawlessness works, exposes souls to shut their ears against the divine warning, that the time hastens when the unconverted of Protestantism and of Popery will join the ever-growing host of open sceptics, all of whom will form Satan's human array in the last daring denial and defiance of Jehovah and His Anointed.

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS: WHO SUGGESTED IT, OR RATHER ON WHAT SCRIPTURE?

WHEN a bitter adversary of the Christian's heavenly hope sought many years ago to stigmatise it as having a foul and even Satanic origin, there were questions, in which he was compromised, too serious for any who weighed their import to notice so unworthy an insinuation. It is much to be doubted that the late Mr. J. N. Darby saw or heard of it; nor did I ever meet with it till lately, long after its dispersion far and wide. A recent American journal brought it first under my notice; but the idea was probably derived, directly or indirectly, from that source. I quote from a "little booklet" written with no small warmth on our side of the Atlantic by a clergyman. This one could appreciate if Christ's person or work were assailed; but is it not extravagant, if not unaccountable, in such a question where all agree in the general truth?

"I am not aware that there was any definite teaching [i.e. in the early days of the Plymouth movement] that there would be a *secret* rapture of the saints at a secret coming, until this was given forth as an utterance in Mr. Irving's church, from

what was there received as being the voice of the Spirit. But whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not, it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose. It came not from holy scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God; whilst not holding the true doctrine of our Lord's incarnation in the same flesh and blood of His brethren, but without taint of sin."

What must one think of a polemic who would extract an envenomed shaft to injure, if he could, the apostle Paul's preaching and teaching of "salvation," from the utterance at Philippi of the maiden with a spirit of Python? "These men are servants of the Most High God that announce to you the way of salvation." The then instrument of Satan was not so openly hostile as the slanderer of J. N. D. On the contrary the enemy adopted the craftier policy of commending the apostolic testimony. But Paul, distressed by it (for it went on for many days), turned at length, and in the name of Jesus expelled the unclean spirit, disdaining such an ally. The spirit's talk of "the way of salvation," however, did not hinder Paul or his companions from proclaiming "so great salvation," which, having been spoken by our Lord, was confirmed by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them. Argue, as adversaries might, from the fact that the apostle never wrote a word on the way of salvation before the evil spirit proclaimed this as his errand, he was not to be driven from the truth

by the wiles of the devil; and woe would surely be to such as availed themselves of that craft to turn away from the glad tidings of God.

But let us turn from surmise to such facts as exist; for both assailed and assailant are departed. Though Mr. D. in general used to say little of himself, he does speak, in two pieces which appear in his Collected Writings, of the way in which light dawned on his heart as to the future according to the scriptures. The first bore on the change in the divine dealings with men at the end of this age. "But I must, though without comment, direct attention to chap. xxxii. of the same prophet [Isaiah]; which I do the rather, because in this it was the Lord was pleased, without man's teaching, first to open my eyes on this subject, that I might learn His will concerning it throughout—not by the first blessed truths stated in it, but the latter part, when there shall be a complete change in the dispensation, the wilderness becoming the fruitful field of God's fruit and glory, and that which had been so being counted a forest, at a time when the Lord's judgments should come down, even great hail, upon this forest; and the city even of pride be utterly abased" (Proph. i. 165, 166).

Of that light which later shone on the heavenly side of the Lord's coming he speaks rather differently. "It is this passage [2 Thess. ii. 1, 2] which, twenty years ago [i.e. from 1850 when he then wrote], made me understand the rapture of the saints before—perhaps a considerable time before—the day of the Lord (that is, before the

judgment of the living).” The difference is this that he expressly excludes “man’s teaching” in the first case, which he does not even imply in the second. There he simply says that it was 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, which made him understand the rapture of the saints to be before the day of the Lord, but not a word about the Lord pleased to open his eyes in the same way: how he does not say, as there was no call for it in his criticism of M. Gaussen on Daniel the Prophet.

Now it so happens that, during a visit to Plymouth in the summer of 1845, Mr. B. W. Newton told me that, many years before, Mr. Darby wrote to him a letter in which he said that a suggestion was made to him by Mr. T. Tweedy (a spiritual man and most devoted ex-clergyman among the Irish brethren), which to his mind quite cleared up the difficulty previously felt on this very question. No one was farther from lending an ear to the impious and profane voices of the quasi-inspired Irvingites than Mr. T., unless indeed it were J. N. D. himself who had closely investigated their pretensions and judged their peculiar heterodoxy on Christ’s humanity as anti-christian and blasphemous. As to this anyone may satisfy himself by the Collected Writings, xv. the first two articles of Doctr. iv., with strictures in six other vols., to which may be added, in a new edition, a longer paper that has been discovered since.

On the other hand Mr. Newton knew, as well or better than most at this time of day, such of the Newman St. oracles as reached ears and eyes out-

side. But he also knew that no serious brother in fellowship regarded them with less than horror, as emanating not from human excitement merely but from a demon accredited with the power of the Holy Spirit. Their sorrow was great over E. Irving as a man of rare ability, large gift as a preacher and teacher, and zealous to live the truth in faith and love. Though he was carried away pitifully by the claim of tongues and miracles, and by the yet more dangerous pretension to restored apostles and prophets, they thankfully observed, what was his humbling admission, that *he* received no such endowment. It was a striking difference from his associates; that he, much the most eminent of them all spiritually, should have been unvisited by the alleged new power from on high. Yet Irving was bolder than any in affirming the fundamental heterodoxy as to Christ's person, nay that His sinful humanity (may God forgive the blasphemy!) was the basis for the divine gifts, the spirit (whatever its source and character) coming as its seal.

But Irving was at least honest and outspoken; and however erring as he surely proved, God kept him personally from the evil energy which wrought in those to whom he bowed down with abject superstition, and took him away comparatively young but worn out, contrary to their confident predictions. Their apostles and prophets with the rest of what they called the fourfold gifts, shuffled and prevaricated in the way habitual among men under demon powers. Take a single sentence of

his out of many, "I believe it to be most orthodox, and of the substance and essence of the orthodox faith, that Christ could say until his resurrection, Not I, but sin that tempteth me in my flesh" (The Orthodox Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature, p. 127, London, 1830). And when Mr. Robert Baxter challenged this doctrine as false, Irving could reply that the spirit in their prophetess, Miss E. C., had laid down that B. had departed from the truth which I. had maintained, the Lord being pleased with him for it. This was confirmed by another prophetess, Mrs. C. (Baxter's Narrative of Facts, &c. pp. 104, 105).

But I willingly bear my testimony to Mr. N. that he never to me thought of attributing the source of the so-called doctrine, the rapture of the saints, to that seducing spirit. It was new however to hear that Mr. Tweedy, who died full of blessed labours in Demerara, was the one who first suggested, as a decisive proof from scripture, 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. I so implicitly believed in his telling me the truth as conveyed in Mr. D.'s letter to himself, that it did not occur to me to question Mr. D. about it. The latter I knew to be generous in acknowledging readily any debt of the kind he owed to other brethren, having experienced it in my own case and in that of Mr. Bellett, if not of more still. Indeed it was very touching to observe that one, to whose richly suggestive help so many were indebted, was himself so frank to own any fresh thought of value in another, and to manifest his simple-hearted pleasure, not only in hailing the accession but in adding

to the evidence of its truth, as he so well could and did, while pointing out its importance.

Further, when Mr. N. named to me the disclosure of Mr. D.'s old letter, things had reached a very high temperature, and on no question more than the one before us. Mr. N. had issued the first edition of his "Thoughts on the Apocalypse" in parts, completed in 1844; and Mr. D. was at that very time bringing out in parts his "Examination" of it, as able a volume as he ever wrote, not only in my judgment thoroughly subversive of the "Thoughts," but establishing on a sound basis the grand truths which were sought to be undermined. Now B. W. N. was no neutral, but abhorred it in divine things as much as J. N. D. or anyone. Christ's relation to God had not yet come into controversy, nor the righteousness of God; but he was quite right in feeling the immense moment of God's revealed mind as to the Lord's coming, the heavenly calling, the church of God, &c. These truths he opposed through his prophetic system, which was sadly narrow and crude, however assured he might be of its certainty. His antagonism to Mr. D. and his teaching as incompatible had already come out clearly and decidedly, though the open breach did not occur till some months after.

On that humiliating breach there is no call to speak here. It was followed about two years subsequently by the distressing discovery of a systematic heterodoxy, one part of which, singular to say, appeared in the *Second* edition of the Plymouth "Christian Witness" (vol. ii.), an article

of B. W. N. on the Doctrines of Newman St. The Editor (J. L. H.),* through the loan to his wife of MS. Notes on Psalm vi., divulging doctrine revolting to his spirit, deemed it his duty to Christ and the church, that it should appear with his comment, no matter what the secrecy enjoined might be or any possible consequence. Mr. N. hastened to defend his scheme of thought, and thus first laid open what had been working too long in the dark. J. N. D., providentially detained beyond the time when he meant to go abroad, was thus called to deal with it searchingly, and with such effect that the most trusty of N.'s fellow-workers who remained broke down in confession of their fatal departure from the true Christ, owning the evil to be worse than what was known and laid to their door. Even B. W. N., threatened with the desertion of his friends if he did not retract, sent out (26th Nov., 1847), "A Statement and Acknowledgment respecting certain Doctrinal errors."

But this failed to satisfy those aggrieved. Mr. N. did confess his awful sin "in holding that the Lord Jesus came by birth under any imputation of Adam's guilt, or the consequences of such imputation"; but he put a similar issue on His being made of a woman. Think of including *Christ* with the many constituted sinners! This he gave up; but he never disclaimed

* He also disclaimed all knowledge of this "Second" edition, like most of the elder brethren also, being already provided with the first. This it is well to state, as an effort was made to show that people were inconsistent in complaining later of what was in circulation long before. The fact is that an active teacher of the system (W. B. D.) acknowledged just before it was exposed, that it had been fully canvassed in their large meeting for eight years before, and that the party were fully made up in it. He too with N.'s chief associates renounced it in print.

the horrible falsehood that He was under the curse of a broken law as a born Israelite, not vicariously, but in His own relation to God. No one any longer alleged against him his perversion of Rom. v. 19 (first half); but he gave no sign that he renounced his evil teaching against the Lord, as "come of a woman, come under law." On the contrary, in a "Letter on subjects connected with the Lord's Humanity" (Oct. 1848), the latest known to me in which Mr. N. brought out his own doctrine on Christ's relation to God, he maintained the principles of the obnoxious tracts withdrawn for reconsideration—all, save involving Christ in Adam's guilt. He had "used wrong theological terms, and a wrong application to the fifth of Romans" (p. 32)!

It is plain that this system is semi-Irvingite, and though rejecting sinful humanity, comes to the same result of overthrowing His person directly, and indirectly the work which depends on His person. No doubt he wrote often on His work, and on justification by faith; but what is the value, as I told an eminent religious leader, of faith in a false Christ? Living faith is in the true Christ of God. Now it is one fully implicated in his kinsman's heterodoxy who dared to impute to an Irvingite spirit the doctrine of the church's rapture! Far from me to say a needless word of one who is no longer alive to speak and explain. Nor is it that I was with the new departure of Park St., nor approved of proceedings that led up to and followed it, and have reason to feel grief for that which there is good ground to impute to others. But unbroken deep

regard to a great and good man, an uncompromising champion for Christ's glory and God's truth, makes it an imperative duty to expose so vile an effort of polemical rancour.

If there had been no letter from Mr. D. to Mr. N. stating the actual source, it was a rash and wicked surmise to say or think that "it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose." That a vexed and vindictive spirit might thus imagine under a lamentably sad temptation, one can readily understand. But can any fair mind in God's presence, if he knew no other facts, conceive a greater improbability than J. N. D. adopting the utterance of what he believed a demon as a truth of God?

On the face of it, the "supposed revelation" declared that, within three years and a half, the saints would be caught up to the Lord, and the earth wholly given up to the days of vengeance. The power came upon another at the same time, confirming the rapture of the saints within three years and a half. Mr. N.'s words are purposely quoted from the article in the "Christian Witness," though at hand is Baxter's Narrative from which he drew the information. This betrays a source and character totally different from Mr. Tweedy's suggestion, or Mr. Darby's letter, for the doctrine which became a factor of force not only among brethren so-called but among saints of God largely throughout the world.

The oracular utterance was grounded on the

ordinary system, which Mr. B. W. N. shared, of making the Lord's coming a link in the chain of prophecy. The rapture was to be within three years and a half from the time of prediction; as the voice then or afterwards taught that those described in Rev. vii. and xiv. (for they confounded the two companies) would be the saints caught up. But all such ideas are baseless, and prove the absence of any real intelligence as to the book of Revelation. In neither case is there a translation to heaven, which takes place between Rev. iii. and iv. For the saints are still viewed as in the churches on earth according to the one chapter; and in the other they are seen under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders. During that interval Christ must come to fetch them on high. The hope is thus carefully kept in scripture from confusion with the prophetic account of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles which follow. The like distinction is not less carefully marked by the coming of the Lord in 1 and 2 Thess. with other corresponding scriptures, and has nothing in common with the Irvingite voice in its unfounded and false application to the prophetic part of the Apocalypse.

Whatever men think, scripture (in the capital seat of the revelation of Christ's coming for the church, 1 Thess. iv.) is express, that the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we the living that remain *shall be caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. All must believe in this rapture at some time; for it is surely the common

hope of Christians. The humbling fact, even among prophetic students, is that it has occupied so little their hearts and lips. But allowing this, why should any who wish to decry its prominence rush to the malignant conclusion, that it was derived from an Irvingite source, by those who are and have ever been as far as possible from such teaching, and who deem it utterly antichristian?

Ah, yes; but the "modern phraseology"—that tells the tale! Is it then that "the rapture" betrays the tainted source beyond a doubt? What a blinding preoccupation must have possessed the mind which drew such an inference! It is true that in the Dictionary of Dr. S. Johnson, and even in that of the much lauded Richardson, "rapture" is wholly absent in the sense before us. Webster, and Worcester also ignore it. It is an inexcusable blank. For it is *not* a modern "phraseology," but employed as in this case two or three centuries ago by well-known authors of choice expression.

An early use of the word "rapture" for actual removal out of the present scene by power is by Shakespeare (Pericles, Act II, sc. 1, near the end). This however applies, not to the Lord for heaven, but to the sea, "the rapture of the sea." As there is no other expression for the idea in our tongue, we cannot afford to lose it. But in fact it did not become obsolete. On the contrary it is employed, and in its scriptural application to divine power catching up to heaven, by men of celebrity for their language. John Milton, who, whatever the splendour of his style in prose and verse, is not one to be

relied on for soundness in the faith, or decent respect for prelates however pious, did believe that "Thou, the eternal and shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world," and of course to reward so sober, wise, and religious a commonwealth as that of England! But no reference of his to heavenly hope do I know; and hence he had no need of such a word. But in the same literal sense he does use its kindred "rapt" in Par. Lost, iii. 522, "Rapt in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds," and in Par. Reg. ii. 39, 40, "For whither is he gone, what accident hath rapt him from us?" Nor is he by any means the only old English poet who so wrote.

But let us pass to the graver roll of divines, which any can verify without trouble. Bishop Joseph Hall in the most popular of his writings, "The Contemplations," so entitles Elijah's translation to heaven, "The Rapture of Elijah" (Hall's Works, II. p. 80, Oxford, 1837). A second is Dr. Thos. Jackson, Dean of Peterborough, born after Bishop Hall but deceased before him; in whose second folio (p. 1068) we read of the "taking up" of Enoch and Elijah, yet in the Table of the third it is their "rapture" (ed. 1673). A third and later witness is the still more celebrated Bishop Jeremy Taylor, who in vol. vi. 548 of his *Whole Works*, a new ed. 1828, uses "rapture" twice over for Paul caught or rapt up; and *he* has the credit of being considered one of the refiners of the English language.

From the Episcopalians of that early day I turn to Nonconformists, not so far back but by no means

modern; Matthew Henry's Exposition of the O. and N. Test. vi.* on the scripture before us. "At, or immediately before, this rapture into the clouds, those who are alive will undergo a mighty change," &c.

The last that we need is the respectable Dr. John Guyse, who wrote the Practical Expositor (*i.e.* of the N. T. in three 4to vols.). The Second ed. of 1761 now lies before me. In his paraphrase of 1 Thess. iv. 17, he says of the dead saints raised, "and we with them shall be carried up by a divine rapture," &c. These quotations are the more seasonable, as whether Anglicans or Dissenters they were little conversant with the blessed hope. Nor was anyone more uninstructed than Dr. G. For in the Lord's call he hears only "an awful summons," and he confounds the glorified saints when caught up with the sheep or blessed of all the nations (Matt. xxv. 34). Like all the theologians and their Oxford critic, Prof. Jowett, he, with even more evident blundering, makes the apostle entreat them by "the awful coming" of the Lord to the final judgment at the last day, and by their hope of being then gathered with us to meet the Lord in the air. That is, he makes Paul treat of the same subject in his plea of comfort and in the falsehood he refuted!. Yet even Dr. G. did not go so far as a highly respected Bp. of Carlisle (an Oxford double first), who translated ἐνέστηκεν *will immediately come*. Dr. G. was

* Of course it is known that Henry only left MSS. for the latter half of the N. T., and that D. Mayo completed the Epistles to the Thessalonians. But this only confirms the fact that "rapture" was commonly known in that day, instead of being a modern phrase due to Irvingite vagary.

more grammatical; but all err who deny it to mean that the day of the Lord "is present."

It is no question of omniscience in man, but of the inspired truth God was pleased to give. The confusion, not merely among Christians little conversant with prophetic scripture, but in those who fully look for the Lord to return in His kingdom and fulfil the predicted times of refreshing for the earth, is deplorable. Take, as an instance out of multitudes, the words of the late Dean Alford in his *Prolegomena* on 1 Thessalonians, Sect. II. 6, 4th ed. p. 46. "Their attention had been so much drawn to one subject—his preaching had been so full of one great matter, and from the necessity of the case, so scanty on many others which he desired to lay forth to them, that he already feared lest their Christian faith should be a distorted and unhealthy faith. And in some measure, Timotheus had found it so. They were beginning to be restless in expectation of the day of the Lord (iv. 11 ff.),—neglectful of that pure, and sober, and temperate walk, which is alone the fit preparation for that day (iv. 3 ff.; v. 1–9),—distressed about the state of the dead in Christ, who they supposed had lost the precious opportunity of standing before Him at His coming (iv. 13 ff.)."

Here the mistake corrected in the First Epistle is mixed up with the error which the Second dispels. They are quite distinct. The first was not restlessness in expecting the day of the Lord, but was unintelligent sorrow over departed brethren, because they were supposed by death to lose their place in

the train of His glory. This gave occasion to the fresh revelation in 1 Thess. iv. of the Lord's causing the dead in Christ to rise *first*, while it is also shewn that both dead and living saints are to be caught up *together* into the air to meet the Lord; and thus shall we ever be with the Lord. After the removal of their needless grief, disturbing alarm befell the saints by the unfounded rumour that the day of the Lord was actually there. It was probably confounded with their sore trials and persecution from their worldly countrymen and the unbelieving Jews, embittered by envy against the gospel and all who had received it. This the apostle clears away by setting before them the true nature of that day, which will display their enemies as the objects of retributive punishment, and Himself glorified in His saints and marvelled at in all that believed. He next beseeches them, by their bright hope of His presence and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken quickly from their mind, nor yet troubled by this false report. After this he proceeds to prove that there must be the apostasy first, and the man of sin revealed, not before the Lord comes to receive His own, but before they come with Him from heaven to accomplish that tremendous day (2 Thess. ii.).

Again, what misconception of the hope as a whole can be more profound than to represent that the later epistles gradually modify the earlier "expectation of His almost immediate coming" (Sect. iv. 8, p. 49)? "9. And in this, the earliest of those Epistles, I do find exactly that which I might expect

on this head. While every word and every detail respecting the Lord's coming is a perpetual inheritance for the Church,—while we continue to comfort one another with the glorious and heart-stirring sentences which he utters to us in the word of the Lord,—no candid eye can help seeing in the Epistle, how the uncertainty of 'the day and hour' has tinged all these passages with a hue of near anticipation: how natural it was that the Thessalonians, receiving this Epistle, should have allowed that anticipation to be brought even yet closer, and have imagined the day to be actually already present.

10. It will be seen by the above remarks how very far I am from conceding their point to those who hold that the belief, of which this Epistle is the strongest expression, was an idle fancy, or does not befit the present age, as well as it did that one. It is God's purpose respecting us, that we should ever be left in this uncertainty, looking for and hasting unto the day of the Lord, which may be upon us at any time before we are aware of it." &c.

Thus then the rapture of the saints is not a mere catching up into the air in a moment, to come down again with the Lord the next, which seems to be the strange, hasty, and narrow conclusion of some men. But even Matt. xiii. might correct them. For the saints are transferred from earth to heaven to be for ever with the Lord, as the wheat from the field into the barn. No doubt it is the harvest season, and after the darnel are collected by the reaping angels into bundles for the purpose of burning them. It is Christ's presence who calls and assembles the saints

to Himself above. The consummation of the age is not a point of time, but a period which consists of successive events highly important, distinct, and even contrasted; for after the rapture beyond controversy the darnel are consigned to the furnace and burnt; and *then* do the righteous shine out, not on the earth, but as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, the heavenly region of the kingdom of God. Antichrist is not destroyed till then, whereas before it the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated above. Other scriptures of more formal and comprehensive prophecy, as the Revelation, enable us to see the interval, and to learn the momentous aims which it subserves for the divine ways of both judgment and mercy, almost quite lost in the superficial and confused view referred to.

Ps. cx., so often and boldly urged for Christ's rising from the Father's throne at once to take His own in the new age, leaves room for these great events which lay outside of Israel's hopes, and are here passed by in silence. The notion (Five Letters p. 58) that for a time the "saints in their risen bodies will be in the midst of those who remain unchanged: a terrible sight bursting suddenly as in a moment upon the slumbering world:—the Lord over them in the air in His glory, and raised saints near and around them"! is a dream worthy of the Shepherd of the Pseudo-Hermas, and beneath even the Pseudo-Barnabas.

Not less suicidal is the notion that after Christ has received the wheat and executed final sentence on the darnel in Christendom, the lawless one "was

still existent," and "undismayed by all he had witnessed," instead of being annulled by the appearing of the Lord's presence (Thoughts on the Apocalypse, 1st ed. 298). But what destroys the entire scheme is the admission (in the page before, 297) that the saints "are recognised in the commencement of this chapter [Rev. xix.] as being above with the Lord in the glory." This is indeed quite true; but how does it consist with the systematic effort to jumble all up in a single act at the moment of His presence? It is not for me to defend his spurious idea in the same page, "that the moment when the Lord terminates the history of Christendom, and takes His saints to meet Him in the air is the moment when He also gives His final blow to Babylon." To Babylon! Why, this is another absurd contradiction of his and almost every one else's fundamental principle, that the vials like the preceding series of judgments are *God's* activity before Christ comes judicially. For great Babylon came in remembrance before God to give her His cup of wrath in the most extreme form before the Lord with all His saints left heaven to deal with the Beast and the False Prophet, &c.

Now this is the staunch champion of the school implacably hostile to allowing any but one act of coming. For on Rev. xix. 11-14 he concedes (in Thoughts, 299) that the saints have joined Him, and fall into the train of His glory. Yet *he* knew, as do his followers, that the Lord must have come into the air to receive them, before they could thus follow Him out of heaven to execute judgment

on the most blasphemous and daring of all his enemies.

"Magna est veritas et praevalerebit." Who before could anticipate such an acknowledgement from B. W. N. ? For he thus acknowledged the principle, without having learnt that the only true time for the rapture is at the close of Rev. iii. and before the scenes of Rev. iv. v. But even he was compelled by the force of scripture to confess that Rev. xix. 14 (and he also adds the preceding vision of the heavenly bridals) compels the admission of Christ's having come for His saints before He appears, and they with Him, manifested together in glory. Granted the great truth of His coming for the saints in sovereign grace before they follow Him from heaven for His overwhelming judgments on the earth, the interval is quite secondary ; but this too can only be learnt satisfactorily from scripture. Surely acrimony might be well spared in searching into such a detail, though of no small interest and importance.

The criticism then, in order to deny the "rapture," evinces not only a captious spirit but real ignorance. "Rapture" in the usage required is a word familiar to English Christians from earlier days, and gives no ground of offence save to an evil eye.

Need it to be pointed out that "the modern doctrine," if of any weight, assumes that the rapture of the saints by Christ to the Father's house is *not* the doctrine of God ? But this is the question for revelation to decide. We on the contrary here join issue, being assured that no other conviction truly

answers to the inspired testimony, only let scripture be fully taken into account, and adequate room left for what it speaks about Jews and Greeks, and the church of God, as the apostle says. The failure to distinguish Christ's coming, or Presence for the Christian (for the word bears a generic sense), from that later aspect of it which is specified as "the day," throws even careful minds into confusion, and creates sure collision with scripture. Where for instance is the force of the apostle's appeal in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, when they are mixed up? Distinguish them, and chaos is reduced to divine order, and the argument is seen in all its cogency without strain or effort.

Take this illustration from a still more solemn subject, though not strict but sufficient to help, if the enemy were seeking to destroy faith's confidence by the terror of the great white throne. We beseech you, brethren, for the sake of (or by) the known grace of Christ and the life eternal and the everlasting redemption we have in Him, that ye be not soon shaken in (or from) your mind, nor troubled, either by spirit, or word, or letter as by us, as that the eternal judgment will bring perdition on you. That awful doom is to be at the close, long after you have been caught up to heaven; and it will fall on the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars. Their part will not be in a new heaven and a new earth, but in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; this is the second death,

THE HEAVENLY HOPE.

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 saviour 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 (εἰς) God, believe also on (εἰς) 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 forehoped 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 veil 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 sucking 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 this 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? Judaising 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* (1): 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 Danaides and Dirces* (chap. vi.), or of the fabulous phoenix. 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 reproved, 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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