

The Heavenly Hope;

or, What is the Hope of the Christian?

and What is the Hope of the Church?

Paper 1 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.

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(Morrish, new edition, revised.)

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."
— Peter.

Preface.

The following pages lay no claim to originality in the strict sense of that word. The Author has read with attention much that has been written on prophetic subjects by others; and he has never hesitated to avail himself of any sentiment which has commended itself to him as in accordance with the word of God. How much he is indebted thus to some who have preceded him, it would be impossible for him to determine. Some subjects discussed in this volume he is not aware of having seen similarly treated in any previous work; but as to these, as well as all else that the volume contains, he would have it understood that he has given expression to nothing (unless presented as a mere suggestion) which has not been judged by him, on comparison with the alone test of truth, to be the doctrine of God's blessed book. The reader is intreated rigidly to subject all that these pages contain to the same test.

Upwards of ten years have elapsed since the first edition began. That now, in closely perusing the sheets for the present edition, he should find, save for clearness of expression here and there, so little to change, is with the writer matter of sincere thankfulness to God. Truth is, like its Divine Author, immutable. To be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," is the effect of our learning not from God, but from men. May we all be kept from "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby" so many "lie in wait to deceive."

The former edition was anonymous; but the French translation having been published with the Author's name, though without his knowledge of the fact, it would be mere affectation to withhold it here.

God grant, in His infinite mercy, that these pages may be used of Him to awaken attention to prophetic subjects, and to aid inquirers, in the examination of His word with reference thereto. And may both readers and writer be found, (if still on earth when the Master comes,) with girded loins and burning lamps, and they themselves, "like unto men that wait for their lord."

Subjects.

THE HEAVENLY HOPE

APPROACHING JUDGMENTS.

THE COMING CRISIS.

THE DOOM OF CHRISTENDOM.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

ISRAEL IN THE PAST AND PRESENT.

ISRAEL'S FUTURE RESTORATION.

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION INTRODUCTORY TO MILLENNIAL BLESSEDNESS.

THE GREAT PROPHETIC QUESTION. WAITING FOR CHRIST.

ECCLESIASTICAL CORRUPTION AND APOSTACY.

THE LAST DAYS OF GENTILE SUPREMACY.

ISRAEL IN THE APPROACHING CRISIS.

THE SPARED REMNANT.

THE MARTYRED REMNANT.

APOCALYPTIC INTERPRETATION.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

THE MILLENNIUM. RECAPITULATION:

A GENERAL OUTLINE OF PROPHETIC TRUTH.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE HEAVENLY HOPE;

OR,

WHAT IS THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN?

AND WHAT IS THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH?

It can scarcely be necessary for me to explain that the above inquiries relate to the *Object* of hope; and, thus, that they imply, What is the *Object* of hope to the Christian? and, What to the Church? Neither can it be requisite to explain at any length, that the Object of hope inquired after is not any which may actually, as matter of fact, be pursued by Christians, or by the Church, but, What is the Object of hope set before us in Scripture? What are we there taught to hope for, whether regarded as individual Christians, or as forming a part of the Church of God? Momentous inquiry! Next to the question of a man's salvation, there cannot be one of greater importance than that on which we are now entering.

Man was not made for the present, and the present was never intended to satisfy man. Whatever might have been man's destiny had he remained unfallen, we are all aware that his fall was foreseen, and that the One *for* whom, as well as *by* whom, all things were made, was not the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, but "the second man, the Lord from heaven." It is in association with His glory, hereafter to be revealed, that we find the true destiny of our race; that for which man was created, and for which the heavens and the earth were formed. When "all things in heaven and in earth are gathered together in one, even in Christ," then, and not till then, will the first and second great ends of creation and of redemption — full glory to God and full blessing to the creature — be consummated. It is not in the present scene of confusion and of darkness, of mystery and of evil, that the glory of God is accomplished and manifested to perfection. Neither is it in man's hurried transit from the cradle to the grave that the destinies of his being are fulfilled. The present is leading on, indeed, to the full display of God's glory in the future; and it is in the present that all the seeds of man's future are sown. But it is in the future that the harvest shall be reaped, and God be glorified in the result. *It is for the future, not the present, that man exists.*

The present was never designed to satisfy man. That it does not, as matter of fact, is attested by the consciousness of all. Let the character of the present and the extent of the future be what they may, the present fails to satisfy, and it is for the future the heart sighs and yearns. How the child of two or three aspires to the school-boy's lot; the school-boy pants to be a youth, the youth to be a man; and the man, be his circumstances what they may, finds not in those circumstances what satisfies and fills his heart, but reaches after that which the future holds out to view. It is not in man to be satisfied with the present. True, indeed, his aspirings may be limited to the present state of being. But his present portion in this state of existence is not that which contents him: it is the future which he expects to do so, even if it be a future here — a future within the precincts of this narrow world and this short life. *It is for the future, not the present, that man actually lives;* just as we have seen that it is for the future, not the present, man was made.

It is with the future that *hope* has to do. "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth (or possesseth) why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see (or possess) not, then do we with patience wait for it." This is true of all hope: it is of the Christian's hope that it is affirmed; but it is true of hope, whatever be its character or its object. At least thus much is true, that what we hope for is that which we possess not at present. And it is thus that hope becomes such a stimulus to exertion, such a solace in affliction, such a light amid surrounding darkness, such a stay when no other stay remains. Extinguish hope, and happiness is gone. Let the faintest glimmering of hope remain, and man's misery is not complete. Poor unconverted sinner! It is the most dismal feature in the misery of that hell towards which thou art hastening, that there is no hope there. False hopes may flatter and deceive thee, till thou art cast into that pit of darkness; but once there, no single ray of hope, true or false, will ever penetrate the eternal gloom. The Lord awaken thee, ere it be too late, to a sense of the awful prospect that awaits thee, if thou shouldst live on, and die, in sin and unbelief!

My subject, however, is hope, blessed be God, not despair! And what more powerful in its influence than hope? It is the hope of harvest that cheers the husbandman in his toil. The exile is sustained in his wanderings by the hope of once more beholding his beloved country. It is in the hope of revisiting his native shores that the mariner ploughs the deep and braves the storm. The merchant is stimulated by the hope of gain — the student by the prospect of success — the warrior by the hope of conquest, and perhaps of spoil. Take away from these the hope of securing the objects they severally pursue, and all motive to exertion or endurance is withdrawn. Rob that mother of the hope of seeing her children happy and esteemed, or at least the hope of their being so, whether she should live to see it or not, and what do you leave to support her amid her daily and nightly anxiety and toll? Ah! it is thus that, even in this world, hope goes beyond the limits of the individual's life, and leads men to live and to act for a future in the well-being of their offspring, when their own career on earth shall have come to a close. And hope, even in respect to things of this life, sweetens the bitterest cup, and sustains under the heaviest load of present calamity and grief.

But if the present thus invariably fail to satisfy, and if hope, on which the heart lives and feeds, be bounded by the present state of existence, it follows that, as those things which have been hoped for come to be possessed, they are found to be as unsatisfying as all else; and thus the history of human life is the history of disappointed hopes. Either the object of hope is never attained, or, when attainment has transformed the future, into the present, that which has been bright to hope becomes dull and insipid in possession; and the heart still sighs and longs for something which it possesses not. It is, of course, of the natural heart we speak thus. The sum of all that it seeks, as well as of all that it possesses, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

What an infinite mercy it is that, amid the bustle and excitement of this vain and fleeting world, any should have their attention arrested by eternal realities! There are realities, both of sorrow and of joy, which never pass away. And when the light of eternity shines into the soul, how solemn the conviction which presses on the conscience, that not only has one's life been wasted in pursuing that which satisfies not, but worse than wasted, as having been spent in sin and rebellion against God! As long as my thoughts are limited to time and sense, I may regard nothing but myself — or, which amounts to the same thing, my own immediate circle, which becomes a kind of second self. But the moment eternity is seriously thought of, God must be

brought in; and then I find that all my restless longings and searchings after something to satisfy and fill my heart, are the fruit of that heart having been alienated from God. When once this discovery is made, the question ceases to be, How am I to be satisfied? The one all-absorbing question becomes, How is God to be satisfied? How is His deserved wrath to be appeased? How is His favour to be secured? Happy the man whose attention is thoroughly aroused to such inquiries! Thrice happy he who has had them all resolved, by the light which the gospel affords as to the person and work of Christ!

Dear christian reader, you have not only had such questions awakened in your conscience, but you have had them satisfactorily answered. You have understood that, if you cannot satisfy yourself, it is vain to suppose that you can satisfy God. Nor is it needed. You have been led to see, that however angry — justly angry — God is with sin, and however solemn the deserved consequences to the sinner who lives and dies in sin, God has viewed sinners, yea, a whole world of sinners, with such compassion and love, as to give "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In His blood-shedding on the cross, you have discerned how God can "be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." And as to how God's favour is to be secured, you understand fully, that it is not by your repentance or reformation, your obedience or devotion, your fastings or prayers or tears — "not by works of righteousness which you have done," or hope to do — much less by any priestly influence, that your fellow-sinners can use on your behalf. No, you read your title to forgiveness and acceptance, in the glorious person, the perfect obedience, the atoning blood, of God's holy Lamb. The assurance of God's infinite satisfaction with Him, and with all who believe in Him, you see in God raising Him from the dead, and placing Him at His own right hand in heaven. And conscious as you are of clinging to Christ as your sole trust and confidence in God's presence, how sweet the peace which He breathes into your spirit, as He gently with His own lips assures you, "Because I live, ye shall live also." You, at least, need no longer to go hither and thither, restlessly inquiring, Who will show us any good? You have found the true, the everlasting good. The light of God's countenance — acceptance in Jesus — peace through His blood — a conscience purged from sin — the privilege to enter boldly into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; these, with the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the, Holy Ghost, so that you joy in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ — are blessings of such a character, that your heart is effectually weaned from the ten thousand objects on which it once was wasted; and you can understand the Saviour's words to the poor Samaritan woman, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The secret of happiness — true, satisfying, unfailling enjoyment — has been disclosed to you.

"Why speak then," it may be said, "of the Christian's hope?" Ah, this is not your question, dear christian reader. He who would ask this question is not in the secret which you possess. It is true that you have tasted of real happiness, of eternal life, in the knowledge of the Father, and of Jesus whom He has sent. But this is not to say that you have the full, perfect, unhindered enjoyment of this happiness, this life. This is still before you as the object of your hope. "Then the Christian is not satisfied, any more than others?" It may seem so to the worldling; and it is quite true that in one sense the Christian is not satisfied; but it is in a widely different sense from that in which the worldling is not, and for widely different reasons. The worldling is not satisfied because he knows nothing, is possessed of nothing, which — can either now, or at any time,

satisfy him. The Christian knows One who can, and is possessed of One who can satisfy him. He knows Christ — he possesses Christ — he enjoys Christ. Christ is his life — Christ is his peace — Christ is his joy — Christ is his portion; but, as yet, he has never seen Christ. It is by faith he knows, by faith he possesses, by faith he enjoys Him; but the more he knows and enjoys Him thus, the more he longs to behold Him. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Yes, my brethren, believing in Christ, whom we have not seen, we love Him; we rejoice in Him with unspeakable joy; we receive the salvation of our souls But to see Christ — to have the salvation which He wrought out on the cross applied to our bodies as well as to our souls — to have it perfected in our experience even as it respects our souls — to have it consummated thus in all who are fellow-partakers with us of Christ — to be with Him, and with them, in our Father's house — to behold His glory which the Father has given Him — to appear with Him in glory when He appears — to reign with Him over a ransomed and redeemed and happy creation — to fulfil our part in the universal harmony of all in heaven, and all in earth, when all shall bow the knee to Jesus, when every tongue shall own Him Lord, and all voices shall join to celebrate His praise; this, and far more than this — far more than heart can conceive or tongue explain, is what we wait for; and, above all, we wait for Him whose return shall introduce us to all this perfect blessedness — we "wait for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." HE IS OUR HOPE. We know Him now by faith as our Saviour, our Lord, our life, our peace, our joy, our all. AND HE IS OUR HOPE. He is plainly said to be so in 1 Tim. 1: 1, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, OUR HOPE." And what He is thus in so many plain words expressly declared to be in this passage, He is shown to be by the uniform, unvarying testimony of Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. On few subjects is Scripture testimony more copious; on none is it more uniform and express than on this. The Lord grant us to consider it to our profit.

Let us look at the subject, first, in its bearings on the Christian individually.

Should the question be put to almost any Christian — What is it that is the object of your individual hope? the answer, in most cases, would be — Heaven. And this, surely, is according to the word of God. We read there of "the hope which is laid up for you in *heaven*." (Col. 1: 5.) We read of being begotten again "to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved *in heaven* for you." (1 Peter 1: 3, 4.) Heaven is surely thus the object of our hope; and, in commencing a series of papers on prophetic subjects, it is important to place this in as distinct a light as possible. Nothing makes Christians so instantly recoil from prophetic studies, as the idea to which too many writers on prophecy have given sanction — viz., that the future portion of the Church is one of blessedness on earth — renovated indeed, and purified — but still earth. Now in this the instincts of the Christian are right. THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH IS A HEAVENLY, NOT AN EARTHLY HOPE. Heaven, not earth, is our future dwelling-place. Whatever links of connection there may be in that day between heaven and earth — whatever benign influences the Church may be employed of God to exert on the earth and its inhabitants — heaven, not earth, is our distinctive place and portion. "Holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling." (Heb 3: 1.) "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in HEAVENLY places. (Eph. 1: 3.) "Our conversation (citizenship) is *in heaven*." (Phil. 3: 20.) Even the patriarchs desired "a

better country, that is, an *heavenly*." (Heb. 11: 16.) Sad, indeed, would be the effect of prophetic inquiries, if they resulted in transferring our hopes from heaven to earth. Happy, to be assured, that the sober and patient study of God's word has no such effect. Prophecy does reveal the future history of this earth; and it is important we should know what God has been pleased to tell us on such a subject, or rather, on all the subjects embraced in this one; but rest assured, dear reader, that you will find nothing in any part of God's word to disturb or unsettle the hopes of heaven awakened by the first entrance of God's word into your soul.

There is another point on which the faith and hopes of Christians generally are undoubtedly according to God's word. I mean the expectation of being happy with Christ in heaven after death, in case that event should occur. Scripture certainly and explicitly teaches, that while for a Christian to live is Christ, "to die is gain." (Phil. 1: 21.) So confident of this was the apostle, that he speaks of "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." See the whole of the passage just quoted. Paul elsewhere affirms, that "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5: 8.) These passages, with our Lord's assurance to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," (Luke 23: 43,) place beyond question the fact of our conscious and happy existence, in the presence of the Lord, between death and the resurrection. Blessed be God, for passages so clear and so decisive. But I suppose the very putting the case, as above, conditionally — the saying of death "*in case that event should occur*," must have startled some readers, and awakened in their minds the inquiry, "And are there any to whom this event will NOT occur — is it not certain that we shall *all* die?" No, dear reader, it is not certain. Scripture says, "We shall *not* all sleep, but we *shall* all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52.) And while it is most true, and, in its place, most important, that departed saints are happy with Christ in heaven, it is not this disembodied state, this state of happy, departed souls, which is set before us in Scripture as our hope. The passages I have quoted are, with two exceptions,* all that can be found in the New Testament on the subject: and sweet and precious as are those passages, they themselves do not affirm that this disembodied state is the full or final object of our hope. Nay, one of them distinctly affirms the contrary. I refer to 2 Cor. 5, where the apostle, having said, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," adds, "For in this (that is, in this tabernacle) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." What is this house which is "from heaven?" Surely it cannot be our disembodied state while in heaven awaiting the resurrection of the body! No, it is the resurrection-body itself which the apostle says we earnestly desire: "if so be," he proceeds, "that being clothed we shall not be found naked." Nay, he goes on to say, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, (or disembodied,) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." It is not death, and a state of happiness between death and the resurrection, for which the apostle waits, and longs, and groans. It is the resurrection- state, the being clothed upon with the house which is from heaven, the swallowing up of mortality in life. Afterwards he does intimate, that even to be disembodied is better than to be in these mortal tabernacles. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Such was the state of the apostle's mind on this important subject. While in this body, or tabernacle, he could not but groan. Why so? Because, while at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord. On this account he was willing, and in Philippians he says he had a desire, to be

"absent from the body, and present with the Lord." But though preferring the disembodied state to the present one, it was not for the disembodied state that he groaned and waited, as the definite, final object of his hopes. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." It was for the resurrection-body, the resurrection-state, the resurrection-glory, that he longed. And *resurrection, not death, is the believer's hope.*

*One of these is Acts 7: 59; the other, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Rev. 14: 13.) If this passage be quoted thus, it may seem to refer to the happiness of the righteous dead in general. But the whole passage is, "Blessed are the dead *which die* in the Lord, from henceforth;" and it would seem to refer to a certain class of persons, who are to die after a given prophetic epoch.

Most true it is, then, dear christian reader, that heaven is our hope; and, that if the Lord should tarry, and we should fall asleep ere He return, we shall be happy with Him in heaven until the resurrection. But it is not this state of separate spirits which is placed before us in Scripture as our hope, but *the return of Jesus*, to raise the sleeping saints, and to change those who are alive and remain, that both being caught up to meet Him in the air, we may thus, in bodies like to His glorious body, be "forever with the Lord." This is the hope set before us as individual believers. Some passages which state this have been already quoted. Let us now turn to a number of others, which plainly declare and irrefragably prove it.

I pass by all the passages in other gospels to one well-known passage in John. To His disciples, when just on the eve of His departure, and conversing with them respecting it, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 1-3.) Here we have not only the fact of His return to His disciples, but the object of it, at least, as far as they are concerned. We find that He is to come *for* them, as well as *to* them. It is for us, my brethren, that He is gone to the Father — to prepare a place for us with Himself in the Father's house. And as surely as for this purpose He has gone away, so surely will He come again, and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. If it had not been so, He would have told us. And with assurances like these from the Saviour's own lips, what can be our hope, save this promised return of His, to receive us to Himself, that where He is, we may be for ever?

"But does not Jesus come to each of us when we die? And does not the departed spirit of the saint abide in His presence from the moment of its departure?" Assuredly, dear readers, as we have seen from Scripture, the spirit of the departed saint abides with Jesus from the moment that it quits the body. Where the authority of Scripture is regarded, there can be no question as to this; but where is it said in Scripture that Jesus comes to each of us when we die? *He is with us by the Spirit* — blessed be His name! — in our departing moments. But He is with us thus from the moment of our conversion. In this sense, He needs not to come to us in our dying moments. He has come long before, never to depart. But, further, Scripture says *we go to Jesus*, not that Jesus comes to us, when we die. "Having a desire *to depart*, and to be with Christ." The dying martyr sees Jesus, standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive his spirit when the stones of the murderers have done their work. Further still, the words "that where I am, there ye may be also"

are almost literally repeated by the apostle where he says, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." But what does he mean by "so?" — "*so* shall we ever be with the Lord." Is it by departing this life — by our souls being singly and separately received into His presence, while our bodies moulder in the grave — is it thus the apostle says we shall ever be with the Lord? No, my brethren: read the passage for yourselves, and see how the Saviour's words are to be fulfilled — "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Is it at death, or by death, that He comes? Hear the apostle: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." What was to assuage their sorrow, and comfort their hearts? That Jesus *had* come to them, and fulfilled His word? No; "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." It is the return of Jesus, accompanied by His departed saints. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, (so that our hope is not death in any sense, but the coming of the Lord, which may find us alive and remaining to that moment) shall not prevent (or go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain (this is our hope) 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.*" It is thus by His personal return, to receive us all to Himself in the air, that He fulfils His word, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." What a hope! May its full comforting and animating power be realized by our hearts.

Heaven, then, I repeat it, my brethren, is the place where we hope eternally to dwell; but it is heaven, as we shall be introduced to it along with all saints, departed or alive, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is Christ Himself, as about to return and receive us to Himself, who is thus our hope. We look back believingly to the cross of Christ, and have perfect peace; we look forward to the coming of Christ, as our hope. And this hope, as it is presented to us in Scripture, is of universal influence on the spirit, and character, and conduct of the saint. There is scarcely a single christian grace, scarcely a single fruit of the Spirit, with which it is not expressly connected. There is not a form of christian devotedness with which it is not associated. Would the Spirit of God incite us to the patient and joyful endurance of suffering for Christ's sake? He reminds us that we are "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." With such a hope, the apostle says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time. are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8: 17, 18.) Is it a question of the confirming of the saints to the end? "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1: 7, 8.) Is it that we are to avoid rash and hasty judgments of persons and things, on the one hand; and to be fortified in our own souls against such judgments of us, on the other? "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's day; (see margin;) therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4: 3-5.) Is the saint to be stirred up to diligence, and zeal, and untiring exertion? The apostle treats the whole subject of the resurrection and of the coming of Christ. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's *at*

his coming." He speaks of diverse glories, of heavenly and of earthly, of natural and of spiritual bodies; and he then winds up by a passage already quoted in part, "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." This is clearly the event treated of in the passage we have considered, in 1 Thess. 4. But what use does the apostle make of the subject here? After further dwelling on it, and raising a note of holy exultation as he views the last enemy under the victor's feet, he concludes thus, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15: 22, 23, 50, 52, 58.) As the grand motive to an unearthly spirit and a devoted walk, the same Apostle uses it elsewhere. Having besought the saints to walk as they had him for an ensample, and told them, with tears, of some who were enemies of the cross of Christ, minding earthly things, he thus proceeds: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." (Phil. 3: 21; 4: 1.) This hope stands equally connected with the mortification of our natural, sinful propensities. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. *When Christ*, who is our life, *shall appear*, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Col. 3: 3-5.) In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the coming of Christ is mentioned in every chapter. The hope of it is, in part, what they had been converted to. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and *to wait for his Son from heaven.*" It was at the coming of Christ Paul expected to have the full joy of the success of his labours among the Thessalonians. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at his coming*? For ye are our glory and joy." The Apostle prays the Lord to make them increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, "to the end," as he adds, "he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* with all his saints." After the long and interesting passage, already considered, as to the resurrection of the sleeping saints, the change of the living ones, and the translation of both to meet the Lord in the air, and so be ever with Him, he adds, to show the value and use of the doctrine he had been teaching, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." "The hope of salvation" — not the salvation of the soul, which we now have, but the perfected salvation which the coming of Christ will bring to us — is "the helmet" we are exhorted to wear. Then, finally, the Apostle prays for the Thessalonians — "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" How this hope associates itself with everything in his mind!

In the next epistle, Paul speaks of what will occur at the return of Jesus, "when *he shall come* to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." This sets his heart on fire. and he adds, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." "*The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and our gathering together unto him," form the basis of all the exhortation and instruction in the second chapter; and in the third he prays thus — "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient *waiting for Christ.*" To

his beloved Timothy he writes, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead *at his appearing* and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season;" while, in the same chapter, he affectingly describes the hope by which he himself was sustained on the very eve of martyrdom. Ready to be offered up, the time of his departure at hand, having fought the fight, finished the course, kept the faith. "Henceforth," says he, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also. that *love his appearing*." What a powerful, exhilarating hope!

In the Epistle to Titus we are expressly told that the grace of God teaches us to look for this hope; and the looking for it is the crowning lesson of those enumerated by the Apostle, as taught to us by the grace of God. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and *the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour* (see the Greek) Jesus Christ." (Titus 2: 11-13.) In the light of this hope patience is inculcated. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will *come*, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10: 36, 37.) James uses it in like manner: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord*." (James 5: 7.) Peter treats largely of our being begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time. He speaks of the saints rejoicing greatly in this hope, even though now for a season, if need be, they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The issue of such trials is to be seen at the coming of Jesus. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*." Then further he exhorts us, "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*." It is this hope by which Peter, as well as Paul, would encourage the saints under all the afflictions they endure. "But, rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that *when his glory shall be revealed*, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." The godly care of the flock by those who have the charge of it he enforces by the same motive. "Feed the flock of God which is among you and *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The disciple whom Jesus loved, and who lay in the Saviour's bosom, is not, as we may well suppose, behind the rest in his joyful anticipations of his Lord's return. "And now, little children, abide in him; that *when he shall appear*, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him *at his coming*." "Beloved," he says, "now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that *when he shall appear*, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The sanctifying influence of this expectation he declares in the most emphatic way. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." As to the Revelation vouchsafed to this favoured Apostle — the closing book of Scripture — it is impossible to understand it at all, if the coming of Jesus be not, as we have so largely seen, the hope of the Christian. True, that it is the coming of Christ to execute judgment that is most prominently treated of in this book, along with the premonitory judgments which usher in that solemn event, and the reign of peace and blessedness which ensues upon it. But when Christ

comes thus, it is *with His saints*; when He reigns thus, *His saints reign with Him*; and all this implies that they have been previously caught up to Him and glorified. They are those who have part in the first resurrection, that live and reign with Christ a thousand years. I content myself at present, however, with quoting from the last chapter of this book — the closing chapter in the volume of inspiration — a passage which shows, in the most affecting way, what the value of this hope is, both to the heart of Jesus, and to the hearts of His saints. The coming of Christ has twice, in this very chapter, been spoken of in the way of warning, "Behold, I come quickly." But ere the whole volume closes, Jesus announces Himself to His people. "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." This announcement of what He is, elicits from the Church an invitation to Him to come. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Any one who has ears to hear is invited to join in the cry: "And let him that heareth say, Come." Thirsty sinners are also invited, yea, and whoever will, to partake freely of the living waters. Then, after a parenthesis on quite another subject, Jesus replies to this invitation. It is not a note of alarm — Behold, I come quickly. It is an assurance to the hearts of those who long for Him, and invite Him, that He will not long delay. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." The Church again responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The Apostle's benediction on the saints is all that remains of the Apocalypse or the Scripture. It is, if I may venture so to express myself, with this touching dialogue between Christ and His Church, as to Himself and His speedy return, that the Bible concludes. Can any one doubt that the coming of Jesus was intended to be the Christian's hope? Would that it were more vividly realized in each of our hearts!

This last passage relates, indeed, to the hope of the Church in its corporate character as the Bride of Christ. The Spirit and *the Bride* say, Come. But the hope of the Church is the same as that of the individual believer: and it is, moreover, in the hearts of individual believers that the Church's hope is cherished. The Church corporately is composed of individual believers; and while, viewed in its corporate character, the Church has relations to Christ which the believer individually has not; (a believer is not the body of Christ or the Bride of Christ — the Church is;) it is, nevertheless, in the affections and conscience of the individual believer, that those relations of the Church to Christ are to be recognized and to have their effect. Hence the identity of the Church's and the individual believer's hope. That moment which brings to the believer all he has longed and waited for, in the return of His now absent Lord and Saviour, brings to the Church the consummation of her happiness and glory, as the body, the Bride, of Christ. The Bridegroom and the Bride join each other in the air. The body is glorified with its Head.

Scripture identifies the corporate and the individual hope; that of the Church, and that of the Christian. By man's thoughts and systems these two are separated. First, men substitute, as individual Christians, the hope (true in itself as to all who die) of happiness with Christ after death, for the true, blessed hope of His return, as set before us in the Scriptures we have considered, and in many, many more. Then, when death has been made the certain terminus of our earthly pilgrimage, and the state of happy, departed saints, all that is looked to or looked for beyond, the only remaining hope for the Church, corporately considered, is the false, delusive hope entertained by multitudes, that as generations succeed one another and the course of time rolls on, Christianity will gradually spread, and the Church increase in numbers and in influence, until the world become the Church, until all nations are converted to Christianity.

Dear reader, is this the vision of futurity as to the Church and the world which thou art accustomed to cherish? Whence has it been derived? Is thy answer, "From the word of God?" Let me entreat thee, then, to read that word once more. Soberly, earnestly, and prayerfully search the sacred pages from beginning to end, and see if they afford the least shadow of a pretext for such a hope.

Once, dear reader, I was of thy mind. I, too, looked for Christianity's universal spread, and for the world's gradual conversion. Awakened by circumstances to inquire after a scriptural foundation for this hope, I searched the sacred volume from Genesis to Revelation. Whatever may be the result of thy inquiries, I avow to thee that the result of mine — a result which cost me no small astonishment — was, a most profound conviction, which has deepened and strengthened to this day, that there is no such doctrine in Scripture — that there is nothing which bears the slightest resemblance to such a doctrine: nay, more, that the doctrine of Scripture throughout is as contrary to this as can possibly be. The doctrine I found in Scripture was, that throughout its continuance here below, the true Church is distinguished from the world, as sheep or lambs are distinguished from the wolves which devour them — as an exile is distinguished from the nations among whom he spends his dreary sojourn — as a virgin, espoused to another, but not married, would be distinguished from the murderous population of a city, or country, whose hands are yet red with the blood of him to whom she had been betrothed. The Church is that desolate one, "espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ:" Christ is the Bridegroom to whom her heart, with all its affections, and desires, and expectations, has been given. The world she knows only as the place where He has been slain, and its teeming millions she recognizes as the people on whom rests the solemn responsibility of having put her Lord, her Saviour, her Bridegroom, to a cruel, shameful death. God has taught her, indeed, that by His death her sins have been expiated, and her salvation secured. God has shown her also that He has raised Jesus from the dead, and placed Him at His own right hand, where, by faith, she knows Him as the source and spring of her life, her peace, her joy, her strength, her comfort; and as the alone object of her hopes. Jesus, whom as yet she has not seen, has assured her that His desire is that she should be with Him,* and that ere long He will come and receive her to Himself. Does all this tend in anywise to reconcile her to the world? Quite the contrary. She knows that, to be the friend of the world, she must be false to Christ, and an enemy to God. True, that as the vessel of Christ's sympathies, and the herald and messenger of the Father's love, as well as its fair and bright expression, she regards not the world with enmity, but weeps over it with compassion, as Jesus did over the city of His choice, and rejoices to fulfil the ministry of reconciliation, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. She knows this to be the object for which she is left here, as well as the appointed means for her own completion.

*See John 17: 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

But what does she look for as the result? The joyful reception of her message, and the accession of all nations to her ranks? No; she bears in mind what her Lord has said, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." (John 15: 20, 21.) She finds true what the beloved disciple says — "Therefore the world knoweth us

not, because it knew him not." (1 John 3: 1.) She knows from God's word that the world's character will remain unchanged to the end of this dispensation — nay, that at its very close it will assume an aspect, and take an attitude, of more open and daring defiance and revolt than ever, and be visited by the outpouring of the vials of God's wrath, and receive its complete, everlasting overthrow by the coming of the Son of man from heaven. She looks for Him, however, in a previous stage of His return. She looks for Him, not as the Son of man who comes to execute judgment on the ungodly, but as the Son of God, the Head and Bridegroom of His Church, who comes to receive to nuptial joys and heavenly glory, the Church which has known and confessed Him, in whatever weakness, during His rejection by a proud and unbelieving world. She knows that when He comes in judgment, she shall be the companion of His triumphs, and the sharer in His glories. And this, too, she knows as the epoch of creation's deliverance, and the world's conversion. The world is to be converted — Israel is to be restored — creation is to be delivered — righteousness and peace are to prevail from shore to shore, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. But this is not to be brought about by the present evangelic labours of the Church; much less by the cumbrous and worldly machinery, and carnal, earthly influences, with which these labours are hindered or clogged. Judgment is to clear the scene of earth's corrupters and destroyers. Christ's coming to the earth will bring the judgments which accomplish this. Multitudes will, indeed, be spared by sovereign grace; and these multitudes, converted and saved, will form the nucleus, the commencement, of the population of the millennial earth. The enemy will be bound. Christ and His saints will reign. Then, and thus, shall be fulfilled the unnumbered predictions of universal peace, and righteousness, and joy, which Christians have vainly supposed were to be fulfilled by the success of their own labours, and the gradual spread of the truth.

But before the crisis of man's consummated iniquity — before the judgments by which his proud vauntings are silenced, or rather changed to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth — and surely before the reign of Christ in righteousness and peace, Christ Himself shall come; His saints who are alive and waiting for Him shall be changed into His glorious image; the sleeping saints, the righteous dead., shall be raised; both together shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is the Church's, even as it is the Christian's, hope. When the saints have thus been caught up, iniquity will ripen on the earth; the marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven; the maddened and infatuated nations will gather together against God and against the Lamb; patience, long tried, will give place to righteous retribution; Christ will come forth, attended by His saints; the lake of fire will receive the chiefs in iniquity, who shall be cast alive therein; their armies shall be slain; judgment upon judgment shall overtake and extirpate all but those whom grace shall spare. And then shall the earth rest from its six thousand years of toil and wretchedness under the usurper's sway — rest beneath the peaceful sceptre of earth's long-rejected, despised, and insulted Lord. And when He thus triumphs, my brethren, we shall triumph. When He reigns, we shall reign. When His sceptre diffuses liberty and joy throughout creation's vast extent, we shall be honoured and privileged to be the vessels for the display of His glory, the channels for the distribution of His royal munificence, the agents in the application of His healing and gentle influences. But, beyond all this official dignity and external glory — yea, beyond the benevolent satisfaction of dispensing blessings to the inhabitants of a renewed and happy earth — shall be the joy of the presence of Him who has made His home our home, His portion our portion, His joy our joy! From the moment we meet Him, this shall be, in its fulness. and without alloy or hindrance, ours. *He is our*

hope. Earth is a wilderness, not merely, no, nor chiefly, because of its trials and its hardships, its sorrows and its pangs, its disappointments and reverses — *but because He is not here.* Heaven would not be heaven to the saint, if Jesus were not there. He, His presence, and, as that which introduces us to it, His coming, is our hope — the hope of the Christian, the hope of the Church. May our hearts cherish it as we have never done! May its brightness so attract us, that earth's fairest, loveliest, most enchanting scenes may be weariness itself to our hearts, as detaining us from the Object of our hopes! May that Object so animate us, that earth's heaviest afflictions — the narrowest, most rugged, and most thorny portions of the narrow way — may be welcome to us, as the path that leads us onward to the goal of our expectations, the home of our hearts, the Jesus whose presence makes it what it is, whose love made Him tread a narrower and a darker path than this, and whose smile of ineffable satisfaction shall crown the faith that has trusted Him, the love that has followed Him, and the patience of hope which has waited for Him, throughout this dreary journey, along this narrow way, amid the darkness and solitude of this long and dismal night.

No attempt is made to give here the proofs from Scripture of many things which, in the latter part of this paper, have been stated. The illustration and proof of these statements, as well as of many other topics of equal interest, will form the object of ensuing papers.