

Haslam's "The Lord is Coming."

W. Kelly.

(B.T. Vol. 18, p. 61-2.)

This little book, like others of the author, contains not a little truth put simply and earnestly, but a good deal also that is crude and misleading.

Part 1. sets forth the coming of the Lord for His saints. The parable of the ten virgins is effectively applied. The church is imperfectly understood, though there is a true if vague glimpse of it far beyond current views. Our brother speaks of saints in pre-reformation times, after the church fell from its due estate, knowing "nothing whatever about the Lord's second coming " (p. 38). This is too strong. They all looked for His coming; but they were as confused about it as the great majority of believers are still who misplace it or overlook its character. The fact is that the same deficiency applies to all other truths, save perhaps the Trinity and the person of Christ. Therein even the darkest in most respects are firm and decided, which is a great mercy from God. Even God's righteousness is to them cloud-land, and God's church a mystery unknown, though revealed, as well as the personal abiding presence of the Holy Spirit: all has been and is at least as ill understood for near 1,800 years as the second coming of Christ.

It is in no way surprising that one who has been learning under difficulties and hindrances should err now and then. Of small mistakes we need not speak; but there are others more serious. It is wrong for instance (pp. 28, 29) to hold out a groundless hope to false professors, as if they may be reached by the "gospel of the kingdom" after the heavenly saints are caught up and before they with the Lord appear in glory. 2 Thess. 2: 11, 12 warns very differently. Those converted by the gospel of the kingdom appear rather to be from the nations outside Christendom, certainly not among such as may have refused the gospel of God's grace that is preached now.

Nor is it wise to enfeeble 1 Cor. 9: 24, 25; 2 Cor. 5: 10; but these are common oversights among fairly instructed brethren.

So again it is a mistake to suppose that the emblems of a judicial sort in Rev. 4 characterise what the Lord is to accomplish as Son of man; for it is as Son of man that He will appear in glory when His saints accompany Him from heaven. And this is also His revelation (ἀποκάλυψις). The division of the book is therefore erroneous, at least Mr. H.'s making the "revelation" of Christ to be Part II. and His "epiphany" or "appearing" to be Part III. They are all in substance also "the day of the Lord," as distinguished from His coming or παρουσία. The fact is that, after the seven churches, in the early judicial future that follows, Christ acts as "the Lamb," not as Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven till the harvest in Rev. 14. He is revealed also angelically (Rev. 8 - 10). It is quite true that from Rev. 4 the saints now waiting for Him on earth are translated to heaven, and intermediate judgments set in.

So far in a general way Mr. E. is not astray. But the details are inaccurate. Thus to confound Rev. 6: 1, 2 in any measure with Rev. 19: 11 is outrageous. The first seal is conquest, and comparatively bloodless conquest, as the second prefigures a subsequent scene of carnage and civil war; then the third is scarcity in what is most necessary to subsistence on earth; and the fourth is plague and other scourges of human life; and all these follow each other consecutively. The four horses and their riders may and do differ; but they are generically alike; and the Lamb, instead of being the agent of any of them, opens the four seals which represent those four initiatory forms of divine providence. They are all alike

human instruments. The Roman empire is not revived till long after, as we see in Rev. 13 or at most Rev. 11. Hence the order of the visions is wholly upset by such an interpretation. Mr. H. sees important points, but does not at all understand the structure of the book, or its relative parts. His "plain narrative of prophetic events in their order" is, to be candid, plain disorder.

But there are dangerous doctrinal aberrations here and there. Take pp. 69, 70 as a sample. The gospel of the kingdom he contrasts with that of grace in this, that the latter sets before men Christ's finished work and reliance on the risen Christ to keep us to the end, the former tells men to show (as if we were not!) their faith by their works, and to endure to the end in order to be saved! the one offering the robe of righteousness that needs no washing, the other requiring men to wash their robes in the Lamb's blood! This is very unhappy. Difference there is. But no soul ever was, or will be, saved by his own faithfulness. Grace does find its richest display now. By-and-by, in the Apocalyptic period of judgment, less light and truth will be enjoyed; but salvation is of the Lord and of grace always. We, no less than they, are delivered from the wrath to come; but it is true that we look for Christ to come and take us to the Father's house apart from judgments, they look for deliverance by the execution of destruction on His and their enemies on earth.

Mr. H. ought to have known (p. 87) that the unquestionable text of Rev. 5: 10 is (not "we," but) "they shall reign." It is the glorified rejoicing that these also are to reign who suffer after their translation. These are to have a higher place than either the sealed of Israel, or the palm-bearing Gentile multitude, or the followers of the Lamb on Zion, blessed as they each and all shall be.

The chief error prophetically is his confounding the head of the Beast or Roman empire with the Antichrist who is the head of the Jews in Palestine. No doubt the Western emperor will support the Jews, as the king of the north (the last representative of the Graeco-Syrian power as in Dan. 8) will oppose them. Mr. H. makes the Western emperor of Dan. 7, the Eastern horn or king of the north, and "the king" of Dan. 11: 36-39 to be the same individual. They are really three. distinct persons, two of them allied, the other hostile. The little horn of Dan. 7 is the head of the revived Roman empire, and consequently the one answering to the Lucifer of Isa. 14; for Nebuchadnezzar was the first representative of that imperial system, of which the little horn will be the last. But "the king" who abruptly appears in Dan. 11: 36-39 is the Antichrist, set up by Satan over the Jews in the land, and the object of assault to "the king of the north," who is the same power that is symbolised in Dan. 8: 9-12 and explained in ver. 23-25. It is the last Roman emperor who comes before us in Dan. 9: 27, "the prince that shall come," the future protector of the Antichrist.

What is said of the ephah of Zech. 5 and of a future Babylon seems nothing but imagination, and derived from no good source. Assuredly Antichrist will reign not there, any more than in Rome, but over Palestine, and be attacked by both Egypt and the Syrian power. Such is the plain sense of the closing verses of Dan. 11. It is the Western empire that is represented in Rev. 17: as upholding, till with his ten vassal horns he turns and rends, "the great whore." But this is not "commerce," any more than a future city in the plain of Shinar. It is Rome, that idolatrous and corrupt system which, pretending to be the bride of Christ, committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and made men drunk with her wine, and persecuted the saints to death.

The emperor of the West, and the Antichrist reigning in the Holy Land, are in the strictest alliance. but distinct, the one greater civilly, the other religiously, both the slaves of the dragon, the old serpent. It is the Antichrist, not the Western Beast, that is referred to by our Lord as coming in his own name, whom the Jews would receive, as they rejected Him Who came in His Father's name. The little horn of Daniel 7 becomes virtually the Beast, and is viewed in the Revelation as the last head of the

Roman empire. "Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble," not Antichrist but his enemy, the last king of the north (p. 151), See Dan. 11. Antichrist is the false prophet and king in the land. He does not attack his own people or capital; he is assailed by his north-eastern foe. And when the Beast comes to his aid, both are cast alive into the lake of fire, as is their great enemy subsequently. See the end of Isa. 30.

As Mr. H. is not at all free from the confusion which prevails as to the evil powers then to be on earth, so he misunderstands the distinct righteous companies in the Revelation. Neither the sealed Israelites nor the palm-bearing Gentiles in Rev. 7 are martyrs or even dead but living men, as are those on Mount Zion in Rev. 14. The earlier martyrs seen in Rev. 6: 9-11, the later in Rev. 15, both raised in Rev. 20: 4 after the translated saints come forth and sit on thrones.

It is really grave heterodoxy that any saints have to work and do for themselves what has been fully and freely done for us" (p. 138). This is no gospel at any time, but mere self-righteousness. What can Mr. H. (an evangelist too) be dreaming about? Is it not inexcusable error?

The sixth seal is wrongly applied to the Lord's appearing. It is quite an early judgment, which so alarms men that they say the day of His wrath is come. When it actually arrives, they are hardened and bold; but this is not till considerably afterward.

If these remarks wound, they are the wounds of a friend. If the flaws were corrected, the book would be much more helpful as well as a truer testimony in the Lord's eyes.