

# On the Millennium

## Remarks on Dr. Wardlaw's Sermon on the Millennium

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The Prospect 2: 36-40.

In considering this discourse, which is as candid and as able as can be found on that side of the question, the reader will do well to bear in mind the apology which the author has made for himself (*Sermons*, p. 492). He acknowledges certain defects, of which we may frequently see clear evidences. No one, therefore, will charge me, I trust, with presumption, any more than with a hypercritical spirit, if it be needful to point out errors which a more patient discriminating search of the prophetic word must have corrected. The author here fully allows that he is far from being familiar with the subject, however unconscious he is of the mistakes into which he has fallen.

But let it be premised, wherein one can agree with him. Contrary to the interpretation of many popular millenarians, I believe that the privileges and glory of the Church are characteristically heavenly. This, and no other, is our calling. The hope is laid up for us, not here, but *in heaven* (Col. 1: 5). It is in the heavenly places we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1: 3). Our head is, not a living Messiah sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a risen, glorified Christ at the right hand of God above, and we are by God's grace seated in Him *there* (Eph. 1: 20; Eph. 2: 6). And if we look at Christ in Spirit here, it is Christ in or among us the hope of glory (Col. 1: 27); not a Messiah reigning, — a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, which was the constant expectation of the believing Jews, from the time of Abraham downwards — not such a Messiah merely, accomplishing all the old familiar prophecies and ruling *over* the Gentiles, but a Christ in them now, and that as the *hope* of a glory yet unfulfilled, entirely hidden during all the ages and generations of the Old Testament, but now made manifest to the saints of God. This glory will soon be accomplished in heaven; meanwhile, Christ in us, the hope of it, is a secret no longer hidden, but plainly revealed and enjoyed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Hence, while on earth, which is not our element, the Church is really and distinctively a heavenly body — not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. Hence, it is not merely to make all men see what is the fellowship (or the dispensation) of the mystery hid in God previously; but to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3). The Jews had been, and will be, the earthly people and witness of God. And so, finally, we wrestle, not as Israel did, against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6). Blessings, standing, testimony, conflict — all are essentially heavenly; the contrast of Jewish place and privilege, which were of earth. Thus, *to Israel* the promise was of earthly exaltation, the mountain of the Lord's house being established on the top of the mountains and people flowing to it, and many nations, or Gentiles, *as such* (and not an election out of them) coming, and saying: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for *out of Zion* shall go forth *the law*, and the word of the Lord from *Jerusalem*. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" {Isa. 2: 3, 4}. *To the church*, it was no more the honoured mountain, nor yet the city of solemnities, where was the place which *Jehovah* chose to himself for an house of

sacrifice, but an hour when the *true* worshippers worship *the Father* in spirit and in truth. No earthly temple need they, who, having Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone, are growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, themselves in Him builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The glory of a particular earthly people or place had no glory now, by reason of the glory which excelleth, the glory of the Lord above, which we all, the Church on earth, behold even now. Again, far from earthly peace and triumph, to us it was in this world tribulation, not merely as the needed path, but positive privilege; "for unto you," said the apostle Paul, "it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" {Phil. 1: 29}, and if we suffer we shall also reign *over* them: we shall reign *with* Him, joint heirs with Him\* {2 Tim. 2: 12}. Thus it is not to us, as to Israel, every man dwelling under his vine and under his fig-tree, no one making them afraid; but many mansions in the Father's house, and Christ gone to prepare a place for us, and coming again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also {John 14: 3}. Doubtless, the Father will take care that the world may know that He has loved us as He loved Christ: the glory by and bye will manifest and demonstrate this beyond all question. Still, to us, the blessed thing is to be with Christ, where He is. Briefly, Israel is the grand national witness of God's justice on earth; the Church is the body of an exalted Christ, the blessed vessel of God's grace for heaven. *They* had carnal ordinances, visible sacrifices, a human priesthood and a worldly sanctuary; *to us* of the heavenly calling, Christ is our one Priest, Ordinance, and Sacrifice, and that in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. Their weapons and enemies, blessings and hopes, were as plainly of earth and the flesh as ours are spiritual and heavenly. At the outset I would state the unspeakable privileges of the Church, even more fully than is done in the sermon.

\*Supposing the Church to be meant by Rev. 5: 10, the verse does not state that the Church shall be on the earth, but that these saints *shall reign over it*. Ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς after a verb of reigning, governing, etc., means not the locality where the judge resides, but the sphere of government. The authorised version conveys a wrong idea, which to this day misleads many students of prophecy.

And now to notice briefly the observations seriatim.

1. The *first* is already anticipated. I admit, not only that heaven is *the locality where Jesus is*, but that there depart the spirits of the saints who have fallen asleep in Christ, to be present with the Lord (Phil. 1: 21-23; 2 Cor. 5: 6-8). But the latter of these passages explicitly shows us a blessedness beyond that of the separated spirit with the Lord. Paul was willing (verse 8) rather to be absent from the body (*i.e.* the present body of sin and death) and to be present with the Lord; but *it was not the thing which he earnestly desired*. This was quite another thing — "to be clothed upon with our house which is FROM heaven" {2 Cor. 5: 2}; which is especially contrasted with death and the separate state, and *as decidedly preferred*. "Not for that we would be unclothed, (*i.e.* of the body,) but *clothed upon*, that mortality might be swallowed up *of life*" {2 Cor. 5: 4}; *i.e.* the transformation or change, which is the exact opposite of, and triumph over, death. As to the passage in Philippians, although no one doubts that, personally, it is far better to depart and be with Christ, than to abide in the flesh, let any unbiased Christian read Phil. 3: 10, 11, and say whether it does not manifest that the apostle never for a moment puts the separate state into comparison with the resurrection. *That*, and not the separate state, however preferable to present conflict and temptation in the flesh, was the result and complement of Christ's resurrection. Hence, as in the close of the same chapter, is clear, it is not death that we expect: "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" {Phil. 3: 20, 21}. Is it IN heaven? *That* is the author's view; but the Holy Spirit teaches us that it is FROM heaven. Our citizenship, our only true and worthy citizenship, is there, even at present — it is in *heaven* — *from which* also we look for the Savior. Thus, the very scriptures here

cited, if impartially examined, prove that the apostle did not stop short at the mere blessedness of the spirit with Christ. He waited and longed for the resurrection of the body in the image of Christ, for we are predestined to be conformed to His image that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Indeed, the very creation earnestly awaits the manifestation of the sons of God, which is consequent upon our resurrection.

Next, the objection of improbability does not seem to be of much force, because these matters are not in any way questions of *à priori* likelihood, but of revelation. And here I take my stand that even the author himself, I suppose, admits the fact, that Christ will *at some time* come from heaven. That is, *the principle is confessed*, against which he is here contending. The object of Christ's leaving heaven, as well as the period involved in that action, may be questioned; but *the fact itself*, be it recollected, all admit, and that fact embodies the principle I contend for here.\*

\*In page 497, the author misquotes scripture. He refers, I suppose, to Matt. 25. He speaks of "the heaven of heavens; the place prepared for His people from before the foundation of the world." Matthew speaks not of heaven, but "the kingdom," and that prepared, not "before," but "*from the foundation*," which entirely subverts the author's inference. John 14 again, which speaks of the Father's house, not of the kingdom, says: "I go to *prepare a place* for you;" which differs widely from being prepared before the foundation of the world.

2. If many millenarians have lost sight of the general analogy of the book of Revelation, Dr. W. appears to have hardly a ray of light upon it at all. Prophetic books are not necessarily literal, nor figurative, nor symbolic. In Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Jeremiah, we find all three styles occurring in each. For example, in Ezekiel 37 we have the valley of dry bones, confessedly a symbolic vision, and later the symbol of the two sticks: but substantial *facts* were conveyed by both. Again, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost. . . . I will open your graves" {Ezek. 37: 11, 12}, are clearly figurative expressions; but they do not the less indicate positive facts. Lastly, we have a number of plain literal expressions in verses 21-28 of the same chapter, some of which are the explanation of the foregoing symbols and figures. Prophecy *is* future history; and God may, and does, communicate it, in the forms which seem good to Him. Is 2 Samuel to be rejected as real history, because the Holy Ghost has begun it with a dirge (2 Sam. 1) and closed it with a song, (2 Sam. 22) alike full of the boldest and most beautiful, but true figures?

It is granted, that the vision which precedes the one in question, is symbolic. But, mark, if we have the symbol, the dragon, we have the explanation immediately after, "which is the devil and Satan;" if the prophet saw in the vision the key, chain, prison, and seal, connected with that old serpent, surely, it does not take much spirituality to discern that, by all this, was meant, not the final crushing under the woman's seed, but a previous intervention of God by an angel, to confine the tempter and destroyer during a certain defined period; that is to say, as in Ezekiel, so in Revelations, we have a symbolic vision with its meaning literally annexed, so far at least as God judged needful to guard against mistake. Now, it is upon exactly the same principle that I understand the next vision. As the key and seal are symbolical of a confinement and security thereupon, the thrones which John saw convey the idea of the kingly dominion which will succeed the binding of Satan. Neither the key nor the thrones were other than prophetic symbols; but they *were* equally symbols — one of what God would do to His enemy, the other of what He would do for His friends during the period of the thousand years.

3. Even if it be agreed that "*the souls of them* that were beheaded" is not parallel to "the souls (*i.e. persons*) that were beheaded," and that such texts as Acts 2: 41; Acts 3: 23; Acts 7: 14; Acts 27: 37, are not quite in point; still, what are we taught? As John (John 6: 9-11) saw in vision "the souls of them

that were slain" not yet re-united to their bodies, but crying: "How long, O Lord," proving evidently, that they were in a condition short of what they longed for, but knew would soon be theirs; so here, after the expiration of the little season, when their fellow-servants and brethren were now killed, as they had been before, we have the description of all these souls joined to their bodies (Rev. 20: 4). "*They lived,*" etc.,\* implies this.

\*Nor can this expression be applied to "the souls," but to "the beheaded;" unless the soul dies, which Dr. W. does not hold. A resurrection of spirits is nonsense. But that those who had fallen asleep — whose souls were seen in their separate state — should live again, is good sense, and the simple meaning of the passage.

But, when Dr. W. asks, "What was the meaning of the symbol?" and answers, "a glorious revival and extensive prevalence of the spirit and character of those who had laid down their lives for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus," it astonishes one that he should have been so pre-occupied with the notions of certain interpreters as to overlook the fact that He who revealed the symbol has adjoined His own explanation — "*This is the first resurrection*". Just as, lower down, in the same chapter, having spoken of the lake of fire, the Spirit of God adds, "*This is the second death;*" the terrible explanation of that terrible symbol.

4. We have to notice the confusion in the first words, "the *figure* of a *resurrection*," as applied to Rev. 20. It is the exact opposite; it is the interpretation, not the thing to be interpreted. Nothing of the sort occurs therefore in this passage. Let us compare it with those here alleged.

Now, first, in Ezekiel 37, be it noted, that the dead state and then the revival of dry bones, is the symbol, and this is interpreted to mean the whole house of Israel brought out of their low estate, (or the grave, figuratively,) and God's Spirit put upon them, and they thus living, and placed in their own land. Here, on the contrary, visions pass before the prophet's eye, and in the one instance, the explanation given is, "this is the second death;" in the other, "this is the first resurrection." In other words, while the resurrection of the bones *is explained to be* a symbolic pledge of Israel's revival in Ezekiel, John's vision *is as positively explained to be* a resurrection — the first resurrection seen symbolically, of course. Secondly, Dr. W. weakens and departs from the plain scope of the explanation given by the Spirit of the early part of Ezekiel 37; for, while nothing is said about the deceased children of Abraham, either in the vision or in the interpretation of it, the latter does decidedly and literally predict the resuscitation and establishment of the same house of Israel, which was then scattered among the heathen. If a literal Israel was scattered, a literal Israel was to be brought back.

As to the other texts cited, it is admitted that resurrections may be spoken of in another sense, by a kind of accommodation; but this does not nullify the two facts, that there is such a thing as a real resurrection of the body; and that the Spirit of God *explains* this vision to set forth such a resurrection.

5. Evidently, Dr. W. is little acquainted with millenarian writers, or he would not charge them with this supposed inconsistency. There are notorious millenarians (Mr. Burgh, for example) who apply Rev. 20: 4-6 *to the martyrs* exclusively. But I have no hesitation in saying that both these writers are wrong in excluding the rest of the saints. It is not true that martyrs alone are mentioned. There are three classes of persons viewed as having part in the first resurrection. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: *and* (I saw) the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God; *and* such as had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received," etc. First, the previous saints, embracing both the Church and the spirits of just men made perfect; secondly, those who identify themselves with the class John had seen in Rev. 6: 9-11; and, thirdly, the sufferers under the bloody apostasy of the beast, (Rev. 15: 2,) the

two last being especially what we may term the Apocalyptic saints, i.e. those of whom the Revelation treats, and whose comfort, guidance and sustainment under their tribulation, we may suppose to have been one main object of the book, by the gracious provision of our God.

6. A great part of the reasoning here falls, the moment it is seen that "the first resurrection" embraces not these martyrs only, but the saints before them also. "*The rest of the dead*" is then perfectly simple: it means the wicked, who had no part (blessed and holy is he that hath part) in the first resurrection.

But one word as to Dr. W.'s explanation. He says, "the remnant" and "the rest" is the very same Greek word. And what of that? It is the same word in Rev. 11: 13 and in Rev. 12: 17. So it is, no doubt, in Rev. 19: 21 and in Rev. 20: 5; but as there is not the smallest analogy in the former case, so neither is there in the latter. In chapter 19, it is the remnant of the beast's armies, after he himself and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire — a *living* remnant, which is thereon slain. But in chapter 20 it is a remnant left by the resurrection of the saints who have their part in the first resurrection — a *dead* remnant, embracing all who do not rise to reign with Christ. 7. These consequences pressed upon us do not follow.

I. So far from limiting judgment to the wicked, I believe, on the contrary, that 2 Cor. 5: 10 and Rom. 14 refer *exclusively* to Christ's dealing with the works of *His own*. There the question is not about our *persons*; we are *not* put upon our trial whether or not we shall be saved. For, 2 Cor. 5 is Christ's appraisal of the conduct of those who are already justified; He reviews the works, good or bad, of those who are cleansed by His blood, but He could not condemn *themselves* without condemning His own cross. The believer *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into *condemnation*. (John 5: 24.) Nay, the Word of God is even stronger; the believer shall not come into *judgment*, εἰς κρίσιν. There is absolutely no judgment of the *person*, no solemn assize as to his guilt, no κρίσις for him: in such a judgment the Psalmist (143) assures us no man living shall be justified in God's sight. But God has already justified the believer; Christ is dead, is risen, is at the right hand, and is interceding for him. On the other hand, it is the judgment, the κρίσις, which is the settled portion of poor man, as we are told in Heb. 9: 27, and it is the details of this last, I believe, which Rev. 20: 11 presents us with. Again, it is clear that Matthew 25: 31-46 does not refer to the dead at all, and even among the living leaves out the Jews entirely. It is the Son of man's judgment of *all the Gentiles* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), and hence the ground and nature of the investigation is quite different from that stated in Rom. 2, which really does state the character of that solemn and final scrutiny. And it certainly appears highly *inconsistent* (I do not say incorrect) to press the force of the last part of Rev. 20 in a plain and literal manner, (however there may be figures interspersed,) in the very same discourse which seeks to evade the force of the portion almost immediately going before. It is not that I doubt the application of the white-throne scene to the last closing session of judgment; on the contrary, I agree with the author in what he says, save in his assumption that the righteous are included in it. No proof is offered. There certainly ought to be; for, to a simple mind, the bare reading of the early part of the chapter conveys the idea that all judgment of the righteous must have been over for one thousand years, (literal or symbolic,) for they have been reigning with Christ during that period, and then the rest of the dead are raised, not to a resurrection of life, but to one of judgment and the second death.

But, plainly, Rev. 20 records two resurrections; one in verses 4-6 which is called the *first* resurrection, and evidently distinguished from the other resurrection in verses 12-15 of those whose portion is the *second* death. It is inconsistent to interpret the former figuratively, and the latter literally, as was long since urged by Bishop Newton.

II. The judgment of the works of the saints before the tribunal of Christ is not represented as being during the thousand years, much less during the scene which follows it (*i.e.* the great white-throne judgment of the rest of the dead). I believe that it must precede the actual reigning; because the diverse places and rewards in the kingdom hinge on, and pre-suppose, to my mind, a foregone examination of the things done in the body, according to which each is to receive. The five cities and the two, in the language of the parable, depend on the use of the talents, and can hardly be awarded, much less enjoyed, till the Lord has examined the conduct of His servants.

The judgment of *the quick* goes on during the millennium, as in Matt. 25.

The judgment of *the dead* (*i.e.* of such as had not part in the first resurrection) succeeds, as we have seen in Rev. 20: 11.

Now, what is the difficulty to the receiving the plain revelation, that about the close of the reign with Christ, but previous to the white-throne judgment, Satan is allowed to go out and deceive *the Gentiles*, or nations, which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and gather them to battle against the beloved city? I see none. So that the next head,

III. is not only needless, but contrary to any supposition ever heard of among sober-minded millenarians. This last rebellion is before the wicked dead are raised. Nor does "the camp of the saints" and "the beloved city" mean the glorified saints, in my opinion, but the city where God, the Jehovah, has set His name, when His people (the Jews) are all righteous. Nothing can be more simple, as it appears to me. The only difficulty is to conceive how so sensible a person could have so strangely bewildered himself.

8. According to Dr. W., "the resurrection of *all the dead*," is stated or implied to be for the purpose of their being tried before the great white throne. But I answer, that even this necessarily excludes those who are and have been reigning *in life* by one, and with one, even Christ Jesus. It is admitted that the expression, "*the dead*," embraces all those who died but had not part in the first resurrection; but this is absolutely all which can be proved, by fair reasoning, from the context.

As to John 5: 28, 29, observe, that while the *day* of the Lord in 2 Peter 3 evidently embraces events separated by one thousand years — the morning and evening of that great day — and cannot be reduced to a twenty-four hours' day; so here, somewhat similarly, "hour" cannot be restricted to a period of sixty minutes. Nay, in verse 25 of the same context, "hour" embraces a lapse of more than eighteen hundred years. Why may it not be extended similarly to one thousand years, three verses lower down? As all Christians believe that this hour of quickening *does* run on from Christ's time till the present; surely, it is perfectly in keeping to hold that the hour of judging *may* occupy the millennium. And other Scriptures show that it does so precisely.

Again, 2 Thess. 1: 7-10 states no more than all instructed Christians, who look for Christ's premillennial advent, rejoice in. From 2 Peter 3: 10, we simply gather, that in the day of the Lord (without revealing whether at the end or at the beginning of it) "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," etc. But 2 Thess 1 and Rev. 20 give us this further light, that, while flaming fire will accompany the Lord's revelation from heaven, taking vengeance when He comes to be glorified in His saints, yet will this be but the precursor and monitor of the conflagration at the close of the reign on the earth. Dr. W. is, therefore, mistaken in imagining that we separate the vengeance and the glory by a thousand years; but we do affirm, what while all these Scriptures are true, they do not furnish the same, but different, aspects of the truth, and we simply seek to discern things that differ. This, in my humble judgment, the author has failed to do.

1 Thess. 4: 15-17 refers exclusively to the resurrection of the righteous. There is not a word about a general resurrection. It is the same thing with 1 Cor 15. But I should have thought this at least confirmative of a first resurrection, in which the wicked have no part.

I cannot allow the justice of what is said of Acts 3: 19-21. The obviously correct rendering of the passage is: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, unto the blotting out of your sins, that \*times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send τὸν προκεκηρυγμένον (or with Griesbach, Scholz, etc. προκεχειρισμένον) ὑμῖν Ἰ.Χ. whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* of all things," etc. Now, the very formation and nature of the word ἀποκατάστασις proves that it cannot have here, or any where else, "the same effect with *fulfillment*." Supposing even that the verb ἀποκάθιστημι meant to fulfill, still it will hardly admit of question, that the amendment here proposed is wrong; for *words so formed*, as a class, refer not to an act past and completed, but to the doing of the act implied in the verb. In other words, it would mean the *fulfilling* or fulfillment, but not an action already finished; and, therefore this verse would teach the retention of Christ in heaven, not till the prophecies have received their accomplishment, but *till the times of the fulfilling itself*, *i.e.* the reverse of what the sermon would aver. But the truth is, that in the eight passages where that verb occurs in the New Testament, there is not one passage where it can be shown to mean "fulfill;" there is not one where it may not be safely rendered "restore." "Reconstitute," in some cases gives the force well. Using this, then, the meaning of the verse in question would be, "until the times of reconstituting, or restoring," *i.e.* not, in any sense, till the act was done, but *being done*, or *doing*. So far from subverting, this text falls in with and supposes the coming of Christ from heaven, for the purpose, or at least at the time, of God's effectuating in the earth the latter-day glory, Jewish glory, as predicted by the prophets. The Church, as we have seen, is blessed in another and higher sphere.

\*Compare Matt. 6: 5, προσεύχασθαι, ὅπως ἂν φανῶσι κ. τ. λ. the ἂν in both being required, because of the dependence on an infinitive, and not on the principal verb. The authorised version and the Vulgate are both wrong in their translation of this clause.

Death is *not* the last enemy "to each individual soldier of Christ," for it is positively revealed that "we shall not *all* sleep, though we shall all be changed;" and this too in the very same chapter from which Dr. W. quotes. But, viewed, as it was meant to be, as the last enemy *dispensationally*, let the reader compare these three Scriptures, 2 Tim. 1: 10, 1 Cor. 15: 54, (cf. verses 23, 24,) and Rev. 20: 13, and then answer if it be not plain that there are here three stages; first, the conquest over death at Christ's resurrection, and life, and incorruptibility, brought to light through the Gospel; secondly, the conquest over death at the resurrection of Christ's people at His coming before the reign; and, thirdly, the annihilation of death at the end of that reign, when He shall have put all enemies under His feet — Gog and Magog, and if there be any other — the last of which is death.

Luke 20: 34-36 is misapplied. Studied with a simple mind, it is highly corroborative of a special resurrection, a resurrection of the just quite distinct from that of the unjust. "They that shall be accounted *worthy* to obtain that age and the resurrection from the dead" is any thing but a general rise of dead persons. It is clearly eclectic. It belongs to *the worthy*. It is, in short, the first resurrection. Besides the saints of *the heavenlies*, there will be a converted, spared remnant of Israel, God's holy seed *on earth*. These are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them; they marry and are given in marriage. They are men in unchanged bodies, and of them especially the sweet promises in the prophets speak. But they are clearly not the children of the resurrection, for they are not risen.

Is the next statement, in page 516, true? All agree that "the earth *shall* be full of the knowledge of

the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" but instead of reading in the context (Isa. 11) that the Gospel works its way to universal extension, we find that the rod out of the stem of Jesse must *smite the earth* with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips *slay the wicked*. (Compare verses 4 and 9.) 2 Thess. 2: 8, instead of teaching that this was done at the death of Christ, or was to be done by the progress of the Church, reveals, alas! a dismal progress of iniquity; shows that not peace and happiness, but the falling away, must come first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; declares that even then this evil was working as a *mystery*, or hidden form, of lawlessness; but, upon the removal of a hindrance, the Lawless One would be revealed, whom THE LORD would consume (not by the gradual influence of the Gospel, but) by the Spirit or breath of His mouth,\* and would (not save by the preached grace of God, but) destroy with the brightness or epiphany of His presence.

\*Compare with Isa. 11: 4 and 2 Thess. 2: 9, Isa. 30: 33: "The breath of the lord, *like a stream of brimstone*, doth kindle it." Surely this is not the Gospel, but the judgment; not grace, but destruction.

Matt. 13: 31, 32 and 33, conveys the idea of *progress, gradual progress*. But of what? of a good thing or of a bad? Is a great spreading tree, where the birds of the air (compare verses 4 and 10 of the same chapter) come and lodge, is the nest of the wicked one according to Christ? It may bear His name, but is it the mind which was in Christ Jesus? Lofty, ambitious, soaring — may aptly describe Christendom; but is it Christianity? I trow not. (Compare also Dan. 4.)

The parable of the leaven is still plainer. It marks diffusion over a certain defined quantity, three measures. But it is the spread of *leaven*; and the instructed scribe knows that leaven is every where the symbol of that which is corrupt. Let the reader compare 1 Cor. 5: 6-13 with Ex. 12: 15, 17, 18, 19, 20. Lev. 2: 4, 5, 11; Lev. 6: 17. Also Matt. 16: 12. Gal. 5: 9. Again, we find where the mingled state was to be described, the presence of evil was marked by that of leaven. Lev. 23: 17. This parable, then, proves the exact contrary of that which is here drawn from it. It is the progress of corrupt, not of sound, doctrine, if we are to read the parable with a spiritual eye.

2 Thess. 2: 1, 2, in no degree sets aside the possible immediateness of the coming of Christ; but, on the contrary, exhorts the saints by the coming of Christ and their gathering unto Him, not to be troubled, as though *the day of the Lord were then present*. It would seem that false teachers were troubling the Thessalonians with the thought that the day of the Lord was *actually come*, and *they* in the midst of tribulation, instead of being caught up to meet Jesus in the air. "No," says the apostle, "I beseech you *by His coming and by our gathering unto Him*, that ye be not troubled." You have no reason; you will be with Him; you will come along with Him.—The day of the Lord (compare 1 Thess. 5: 1,) is *that part* of the coming of the Lord which looks with judgment towards the world. It is associated with vengeance. The presence of the Lord embraces it, it is true, but embraces much more, especially that sweet thought of the Lord's calling the Church to meet Him. *This latter* is never called the day of the Lord. In this very chapter it is the comfort to the saints against the terrors of that day. And that day shall not come except there come the apostasy first, etc.; that is, certain terrible events were to happen before that day; but not necessarily, so far as revelation informs us, before the Lord's coming or presence. These events might, or might not, be before the Church was taken away, for the Father kept the times and seasons in His own power or authority; but *they must be* before the day of the Lord.

Moreover, I must utterly reject the notion that death and the coming of the Lord, are "in effect and decisiveness the same thing." It does seem wonderful that such a remark should have been written, when the passages under consideration (1 Thess. 4, 5, 2 Thess. 2) confute it. Instead of the apostle there teaching what Dr. W. says, he uses the coming of the Lord as the blessed consolation against death. He

does not say, "we must all die, and therefore ought to bear the stroke patiently;" nor does he teach them that they should rejoice because the separated spirits of their deceased brethren were gone to glory. He, on the contrary, brings the hope of *the Lord's coming*, as a present thing, as the most influential of comforts, as, in short, the divine remedy for sorrowing saints in such circumstances. That is, instead of identifying as in the sermon, he positively contrasts the Lord's coming with death. And, surely, there cannot be a greater contrast than there is between death and the victory over death, viz. the resurrection of the saints at the last trump. Compare 1 Cor. 15, especially verses 54, 55. It seems as if the Spirit wrote the passage to neutralize such an error — "*When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, THEN (and not before) shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*" Death, in scripture, is the thing vanquished; not the victory. Nor does the apostle here detain himself for a moment with the incomplete state of the separate spirit. It is *the resurrection* which is the victory — the resurrection of them that are Christ's in His presence. It is the resurrection which vindicates Christ's claim to these vile bodies of ours. When they lie crumbling or crumbled into dust, what so unlike and so unworthy of the Firstborn in glory? But *He will come* and change our *vile* body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Far from being death, — the enemy, — the destroyer, His coming is that of *the Saviour* who swallows up death in victory. And it is *His power, His victory*. May we never be satisfied short of it!

This same chapter (like 1 Thess. 4) suggests another and most convincing proof of the fallacy of this popular notion. It is agreed that the Lord's coming is a motive pressed upon all the Church: none can doubt it. But in 1 Cor. 15: 51, it is clearly revealed that "*WE shall not all sleep,*" or die. Death, and the Lord's coming are in no sense the same thing; the latter affects us all without exception, the former does not. Death affects us as individuals, and our happiness, in departing to be with Christ, goes not beyond ourselves. But the coming of the Lord at once acts upon the *whole* Church; and what will be the joy of *all* the members when *we all* throng to meet Him in the air? Is this the same as death? So in Heb. 9: 27, 28, it is laid down that, while "it is appointed *unto men* once to die, and after that the judgment," the portion of *the saints* is contrasted in the very next verse: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," and instead of death (or judgment either, in the sense here spoken of) being set forth as the lot of the believer, it is written, "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." No! I look not for death, but for Christ, and Christ is not death, but life, — our life. Can contrast be more definite?

To say, then, Ought not the remembrance — that death is, in effect, to every one of us, the same as the coming of the Lord to judgment — to bring home to us, with quite sufficiently persuasive power, the admonition of the Lord, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come: " to say thus, is to be wise above and against what is written. For the remembrance is not true; and it is the truth only which sanctifies. But we have just seen that it is untrue to affirm that death and the Lord's coming are, in effect, the same thing to *any one*, for in themselves they are different, and in Scripture they are ever contrasted. The addition of "*to every one of us*" makes it as singular a contradiction as can be well conceived to the apostolic words — "we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord." That is, some believers will meet the Lord when He comes, without passing through death at all. May it be ourselves, beloved! And one may go further, and affirm, that to say, the remembrance of death ought to bring home to us, with quite sufficiently persuasive power, the admonitions of our Lord, "Watch, therefore," etc. is not to be the disciple, but the teacher of Christ. Now, I believe that *what He said*, and that only, is the right weapon to faith. The sheep hear *His voice*, and He said, "Watch, therefore," not for ye know not what hour ye shall die, but "*what hour your Lord doth come;*" and so uniformly — *never once* on the ground of death. It is for the coming of the Master we are set to watch, with lamps burning and loins girded. But death is in no way the *Master*, any more than the Bridegroom;

far from it, death, (however humiliating in itself, inasmuch as it is the last effect of Satan's power touching us,) is now one of our *servants* through the grace of our Lord Jesus. Cast into the waters, He has made them sweet for us; and, life or death, all are ours!