

## The Coming Hour of Temptation

Rev. 3: 10

W. Kelly.

That there is a time of trouble, a special season of tribulation for the world, revealed in several important and plain passages of the word of God, no thoughtful Christian can for a moment question. All may not be clear as to those whose lot will be cast in those days, but that such a season is to befall the world is not to be doubted. That it is also to be a day through which some of God's own people are to pass is equally certain. We shall now enquire what it is that God's word affirms as to both those who shall be there and those who shall be in the grace of God exempted from it.

At the same time a wider question arises than the hour of tribulation. We must not confound scriptures that differ, even if the difference be comparatively slight in appearance. "The hour of temptation" does not appear to me to be exactly the same as that of the great tribulation. Temptation may take the form of severe affliction, but it is not limited to such a type of things. Temptation may assume the character of seduction, as well as of trial in the shape of tribulation. I shall show tonight that there is a well-defined period as to which scripture leaves no just ground of hesitation; that there are preliminary judgments on one side, and on the other snares of all kinds, as well as a storm of trouble that will fall on those who have slighted the grace of God, and cast away His truth.

I shall show further that it is by no means true that none of His people are to be exempted from that "hour of temptation." The verse that I have read proves the contrary. We have the Holy Ghost here addressing to this effect the assembly of God in Philadelphia — the Christian assembly there. More strictly speaking, the angel of the church is before us — who was, it seems, a kind of ideal representative of the assembly — and the promise runs in the most distinct terms: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

It is evident that the import of this is not merely that the faithful are to be preserved. I shall prove that for others preservation is assured; but there is a special exemption promised here. We can all conceive how, supposing the fearful time of trial came, some might go, however secured, through that hour, and others might be kept out of it altogether. The question is, whether the scripture is clear that both of these methods are to be made good — that some are to be exempted from the hour of trial that is coming upon the habitable world, but that others are to be kept not out of it, but through it. I have not a doubt that these two schemes are true, and that God's word explicitly teaches both.

Further, the analogy of the dealings of God in past times leads to the same conclusion. If we look back to the earliest times, when God dealt with the world as a whole, undoubtedly He kept for His own name's sake some through that flood that swept the world away before it; but was that all? Was there merely a Noah and his family preserved in the ark? We all know the contrary. We know of one at least that walked with God before the flood came, and was not insensible to what was coming. He knew it as well or better than Noah; and whereas he walked in communion with the Lord before the season of judgment came, he was taken without seeing death. Enoch was translated from the earth, and taken to be with God above. Thus we have the circumstances of a great divine intervention — a time most striking and unexampled in the previous history of the world. When God was visiting the sons of men, and this with displeasure, for there was manifestly a tremendous judgment coming on the earth, God wrought in a twofold way. He removed one who looked to Himself and walked with Himself before the flood came; He brought others through the flood of waters that they might be a nucleus of blessing for

the fresh conditions of the earth that were to follow the deluge.

We find again, if we look farther down the history of God's people, one similarly taken in special grace out of the world. In the course of the Jewish nation Elijah was caught up to heaven, while his successor, Elisha, was left to testify on the earth. Thus we have clearly God giving more than once a premonition of His will and of His ways in both respects. Therefore, in setting before those who are here tonight, as distinctly as God enables me, a sketch of what awaits the world, at least as to this short season of signal trial, we are not left without signs and tokens of what the Lord has done: this we may do well to compare with that which the Lord is going to do, both in exemption and in preservation.

Nevertheless, be it observed that I do not rest the proof on types. Nothing but direct scripture ought to be the foundation for any man's faith; and I shall cite enough to demonstrate that the word of God is as precise and positive as possible. I shall show that no other meaning is so satisfactory; that it is the simple unforced sense of the word of God. At the same time I shall be exceedingly obliged to any child of God who doubts it if he will only favour me with what he conceives to be a more satisfactory exposition of any one of the scriptures we may refer to. Need it be said that we ought to be above any question of our own opinion in these matters? They are too serious; they too closely affect the glory of God and the well-being of God's people.

Let me add, beloved friends, another thing, that my aim is not at all to excite or entertain any one's mind, but to furnish from the Bible for the Christian's faith what is of very great importance. Clearly if this is what is before God, if He means to remove some of His people from the earth, if He means also to have a people for His name to go through the time of temptation as well troublous as seductive that precedes the day of Jehovah, it evidently must be of the utmost possible interest and moment to know whether we can on scriptural grounds look confidently to the precious blessing of being with Christ Himself when the fearful hour of retributive infliction shall come upon the world.

Whether we open the Old Testament or the New, however we take the passages to be cited, we shall not fail to gather instruction. But to show how little depends upon anything artificial, I shall at this time take the texts simply in the order in which they stand in our common English Bible. The Christian has no interest — we ought surely to have none — but the glory of God.

No doubt by putting together particular passages in an artful way it is very possible to impose on the ignorant, whether by a show of strength or by a concealment of weakness. I am giving the best conceivable evidence that such a suspicion need enter no man's mind in this case.

The first passage then that occurs to me as bearing directly on the subject before us is found in Jeremiah 30. There we read of a day of trouble, a time of sore distress, and we are told who are concerned in it. The seventh verse is express: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." There can be no doubt as to the force of the passage. This is a time of trouble, of special sorrow, and the one who is said to be involved in it is Jacob — a well known designation of the Jewish people. They are thus called in their weakness, and trial, and suffering, and bitter experience of their own faults, but at the same time objects of God's faithful care; not looked at as Israel, a prince with God and men, but Jacob, as learning not a little of themselves.

Accordingly we may see how appropriately the term is used here. This time of trouble will come upon the Jews because of their unfaithfulness. God does not willingly afflict the children of men — never His people, but for higher and more blessed objects. Thus we find trouble referred to in these two ways — the loving discipline of a Father who seeks our better blessing, and along with that, in the Christian's case, as we know, the privilege of suffering for righteousness' sake, or, still more, suffering

for Christ's sake. But such is not the character of this time of trouble. No scripture intimates it. It is never presented as being an honour: it is a time of judicial sorrow and affliction.

Again, the party here shown to suffer in that time of peculiar trouble is clearly a Jewish one — Jacob. At present I shall not, of course, enter into a detailed proof of the impropriety of applying the terms "Jacob," etc., to the body of Christ, the church. Perhaps it may be assumed that most persons in this room have no question on this head at least. They know perfectly well that Jacob or Israel, in the Old Testament as well as the New, means the Jews. They know that the Christian church is otherwise characterised, and that the greatest care is taken to keep the new thing distinct from the old, and to mark the distinction. There are principles in common no doubt. There is a great deal of the truth of God in the Old Testament which applies with equal and sometimes with even increasing force to the Christian. No one need question this. For instance, holiness, obedience, submission to the will of God, delight in His ways, suffering for righteousness' sake — all these terms we get in the Old Testament, and they are found even more emphatically true in the case of the Christian and the church. Therefore none can fairly suppose that I weaken the exceeding value of the ancient oracles. If I am addressing my servant, it is quite right that my child should profit by what is said to the other. Again, supposing a wise father might give instruction to a child, it is all well for any other person to profit by it. But then we must not confound the relationships. In the Old Testament clearly the Jewish people are primarily the object of God's direct dealings. In the New Testament the great object, after the Jews had rejected their Messiah, is to bring out the church of God as a new building, characterised after another sort altogether, nevertheless surely bound to profit by all the ways of God, especially with Israel.

Without further notice I assume, therefore, as a thing beside the present mark, and not needing discussion just now, that where the Jews, Israel, Jacob, Zion, Jerusalem, etc., are referred to, these words really do refer to them, not to Christians. If so, the bearing of the word in Jeremiah 30 is plain enough. The Jews are expressly supposed to be exposed to some exceeding trouble, but with this comfort, that they are to be "saved out of it." They are not to sink utterly in this time of trouble. Here then we have at least an analogy with one of the parties described at the beginning of this discourse. We have not persons kept from going into the time of trouble, but people that are brought through it. In short, we have the Jews saved out of their most dismal day.

If we turn to the prophecy of Daniel, we find, in the last chapter and first verse, an even stronger statement of the same fact: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan. 12: 1 By this of course the meaning of the passage in Jeremiah is strongly confirmed. There is the same time described, but in yet more emphatic terms. The trouble is to be not only "great," but none before so great, and never any to be so great again. It is manifest and certain that there can be only one such time. This is important. There is an hour to come beyond all that has passed upon the earth, and no subsequent hour can equal it. It is this very time of which Jeremiah was speaking; for we find, first, Daniel's people; then, involved in that dreadful hour; and, yet more, delivered out of it. These are precisely the three points in the passage already extracted from the elder prophet.

Thus Daniel and Jeremiah do not merely confirm each other mutually, but add exceedingly to the force and clearness of the truth in question. Nothing can be plainer than this conclusion. It is true that the Jews who are brought out of this hour of trouble are supposed to be persons of whom God has a record. They have a real living relationship with Him. That is to say, it is implied that the mass of the Jews will not be brought out of that hour; but as all then alive are to pass through it, so all will be

delivered from it who are "found written in the book."

And this is the more interesting because it is from this same chapter that our Lord Jesus quotes in the discourse recorded in Matt. 24, as well as in Mark 13. In Matt. 24: 15 we read thus: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand)," etc. Now this is a citation from the latter part of Daniel 12. It is evidently implied that many who read it might not understand; at least our Lord particularly cautions those who read to see that they enter into His thought. "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Never does He discourage from reading; but He would have understanding. His prescient eye foresaw the confusion that would pass over the minds of men, even of His own disciples. He knew well how much earthly objects of one kind and another obscure the spiritual vision. He knew well that there would be all sorts of notions afloat, more particularly about prophecy; so that many children of God mistake, and many more dread, the subject. They feel that there is gross confusion, too much of conjecture, and very little positive truth to build up the soul thereby, and thus they allow their minds often to be prejudiced. Instead of judging the thoughts of men and their systems, they turn aside from that precious word of God which certainly deserves better treatment. Surely it is to their own great loss; and it will be so increasingly; for as darkness sets in, and as all kinds of evil are brought up to the surface of the world, more and more as time goes on, the children of God will need to take heed to every word, and indeed especially to the word which casts divine light on the future.

In fact a man can no more avoid looking forward mentally than he can forbear ordinarily to look forward with his eye. It is the nature of man to do so. He ought to look up; but he certainly looks forward. But if you do not subject your mind to God's word, you will be sure to fill it with your own thoughts, or those of other people. That is, you must either be a student of divine prophecy, or you will be in danger of setting up to be more or less of a prophet yourself. Depend on it that to study believingly, earnestly, humbly, self-distrustingly, the word of God about the future, is exactly the way to keep oneself from being a prophet, and, let me also say, from being a false one. Nobody will turn out a false prophet who is content to be only a student of prophecy.

The word of God then, where Christ, not self governs, is the truest preservative from all error. I admit there prevails great and strange misuse of scripture. I entreat my brethren, whoever they may be, to watch against this with all earnestness. There is no need of hurrying to a conclusion. It is better to acknowledge our own ignorance; it is much better to wait on God and His word, and meanwhile to confess we do not know this or that. Why should there be haste to form a fully and clearly-defined sketch of what is coming? Be content rather to get truth in a detached way; to let this matter that God reveals in His word fall into your soul, and then another matter, as He gives it. Almost all the mischief is done by forming, or attempting to form, a complete theory when we are but learning the elements. It is far wiser to take the revealed facts of the word of God, and gradually to link them together as we become matured. This is the right way with all truth. It is no otherwise even in science. It is the most serious hindrance to progress when men form a hasty hypothesis, instead of first collecting all the facts; that is to say, they thus foreclose the case, and take the place of being masters when they may be but scantily-taught disciples.

In the things of God, indeed, it is true and certain that there is One pre-eminently capable of teaching, even the Holy Ghost; and we may be perfectly sure that He takes the deepest interest in this; for He was given to show us not merely the things of Christ, but "things to come." Let us then thankfully and humbly look up to God, that we may be led into all the truth.

Turning then to the words of our Lord Jesus (Matt. 24), and the use that He makes of the prophet

Daniel, we have the same elements as in the Old Testament, but with especial light and fulness. He was instructing His disciples, no doubt; but evidently a disciple in his then condition might represent either a godly Jew or a Christian. The reason is plain. The disciples were not on proper Christian ground until the death and resurrection of the Saviour, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Everyone knows this who bows to scripture about the matter. The proof is very evident. Going up to the temple, attending Jewish feasts, keeping rigorously the traditions of the law and the ordinances of it — no one can say that all this is Christianity in its due form. But it was the condition of the disciples then, and for some time after.

Consequently the disciples were capable of being used, according to the intention of Christ, to represent those who would be raised up in a day that was coming, substantially similar in point of circumstances to themselves; that is, men converted but still connected with Jerusalem, the land, and the hopes of Israel. Such was their condition at this very time, and therefore they were even more fitting representatives of such a state than they could be of Christianity proper. At the same time the Lord does afterwards give prophetic anticipations of what would belong to Christians, properly so called. It is entirely a question of the manner in which He was pleased to speak, and the subject of which He treats, which enables us to form a sound judgment in which relation the disciples are viewed.

Let us apply these principles to what we have here before us. What originated the discourse? The admiration expressed by some of the disciples at the beautiful stones of that splendid and wonderful fabric which was then the special adornment of Jerusalem. But the Lord told them that every stone should be thrown down, not one be left upon another. Is this Christianity? It was Christ predicting the downfall of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of their temple. Does this overthrow any of our hopes? It has nothing to do with our place and relationships. It had a vast deal to do with Jewish feeling and thought and expectation.

The Lord accordingly gives first various general warnings which dealt with them as they then were. In Matt. 24: 15 He comes to something much more precise. He launches out into the circumstances that surround the end of the age, and says, addressing them naturally as representatives of those faithful Jews who should be in those days — "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Who can be so bold (to say the least) as to affirm that this is a picture of the church at large? Do you suppose that Christians would ever be contemplated in the land of Judea alone? Clearly not. All is plain if He is speaking about Jews — godly ones no doubt, but Jews in that particular land. It is not at all a prophetic declaration as to the saints of God in different parts of the world. It is here nothing but a view of what would be in a future day in that land alone. We all understand that the mission of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations is to be from that land as from a centre; but in Matt. 24: 15, 16, etc., He speaks exclusively of those in that land. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Their flight was to be so immediate, that if a man was on the housetop, he was not to come down through the house; and if he was out, he was not to come back for what might seem ever so necessary.

I know there are many persons of old and to this day who apply this to the past siege of Jerusalem. But the proper prophecy of the past destruction of Jerusalem is a part of Luke 21, not Matthew 24. There our Lord speaks about Jerusalem as encompassed with armies; but there is no such sign as the setting up of the abomination of desolation, no such rapid flight called for; and, in point of fact, every one who knows history at all must know that there was neither one nor other as in Matthew,

but exactly as Luke says in the past siege of Jerusalem. The Roman lieutenant who came and encompassed the city did not at all demand to be at once heeded after this peremptory sort. There were months that elapsed between the retirement of Cestius Gallus and the arrival of the still greater force under the emperor when the destruction of Jerusalem took place some years afterwards. That is to say, there was plenty of time to get away, family, friends, baggage and all. There was no need, therefore, for so urgent a flight. All this is to me decisive, that our Lord did not in the first Gospel refer to the past historical siege of the city. There He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place." This, we have seen, is never once referred to in Luke 21; but another fact, as follows — "And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." There is not a word here about coming down from the housetop; not a word that forbids the man in the fields from coming back. In short, it is a different and more ordinary state of things, characterised as "the days of vengeance," etc., "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people," but not speaking of the tribulation, as Matthew and Mark do, and consequently without the citation from Daniel. The times of the Gentiles clearly run on after the siege in Luke, and as clearly not after the scenes of which Matthew and Mark speak. There is a flight enjoined, but no such instant flight as in Matthew. There is an analogy, and nothing more, between the past siege and the future of Jerusalem; but the past event, as Luke reports, admitted of a retreat from the city far more quietly, and with greater ease for their escape to Pella, etc. The future siege will demand a peremptory flight from Jerusalem, according to the word of God given by Matthew, who consequently (not Luke) speaks of the *end* of the age.

Coming back, then, to the earlier Gospel, Matt. 24: 20, the Lord says, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." We see that it is not a question of the world at large. The winter would not affect all the earth at the same time; what is winter in one place is summer in another. It is not a universal picture. Again, there is "the sabbath day." Everyone here, it is to be hoped, knows that such is not the name of the Lord's day. We as Christians very properly keep not the seventh day, but the first. A man who does not know thus much has a great deal to learn, it seems to me. Christians deny, and very rightly, that there would be any sin, in case of death, or sickness, or any peremptory call, to walk a mile and a half in order to do good to a neighbour, or to seek the blessing of an enemy. I suppose there are many here in this room who would feel perfectly ready to go twenty miles, if they could visit twenty sick persons in the course of a Lord's day. All Christians surely would not censure but value it. What do I infer from this? That the Lord is not speaking here of Christians at all. He contemplates godly Jews who are to be under the sabbatic law, and who would feel themselves in a grievous dilemma, therefore, if they had to flee on that day. He says to such, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter" (when inclemency might hinder), "neither on the sabbath day" (when legally their flight could not be permitted). Then He gives as the reason for all — "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matt. 24: 21

The conclusion to be formed from these considerations is this, that our Lord was addressing the disciples as representing future godly Jews — "every one that shall be found written in the book," not Jews as such simply, but the godly remnant of the last days, those that shall be delivered out of the final and awful tribulation. He is referring, in short, to the very same period as Jeremiah in his Jer. 30, and as Daniel in his Dan. 12. Our Lord makes this to be still more manifest, from the fact that He quotes from this very twelfth chapter of Daniel. If there could be any doubt about it here, we have His discourse again in the corresponding passage of Mark (Mark 13), where it is said, "But when ye shall see the

abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment." Mark 13: 14-16 Thus we see Mark does not take up the same ground as Luke, but agrees with Matthew.

Remember, there is no discrepancy whatever. No more impudent belief can well be, than to set one part of the New Testament against another, or indeed any part of the Bible against another. Such a handling of scripture is not only dishonest, but profound ignorance. There is not in all the Bible one passage that really contradicts another. Of course, there are passages that may seem at variance; but then, as we begin to get a little more light, these diminish in their number; and hence modesty would feel, if there were but fuller light, all the appearances of inconsistency would vanish away. It is just the same thing in the moral world, nor is it otherwise in the natural world. There are everywhere apparent contradictions and exceptions, but a larger knowledge of things bring these under a deeper rule. So it is with the word of God. Greater spiritual wisdom causes these apparent anomalies to disappear. Sometimes they may be in the translation; sometimes they may be in faulty manuscripts of the original; sometimes, and most frequently, they are in our own understanding. But the great lesson learnt throughout is, that the Bible becomes more manifestly the word of God in its every detail. No doubt the more ignorant people are, the more fault they find with the Bible; the wiser they become, the more they rejoice in it, and bless God for it.

This being so, Matthew 24 and Mark 13 will be found to coalesce with the Old Testament texts we have weighed. All these scriptures suppose godly Jews to be involved in this unparalleled time of trouble, and that they are at the same time to be saved out of it. Thus far then the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly confirm each other. Every Christian man ought to accept this, even if not thus demonstrated; but I trust that what has been alleged may help to prove it in the face of gainsayers.

But this is not all. We come now to the Revelation, where we find a passage or two of a different nature. First of all is the one with which we began tonight: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. 3: 10 What have we here? Jacob? Daniel's people? Not a trace of them. Every one knows — it cannot be questioned — that the Lord Jesus is here writing a letter by His servant John to the angel of the Christian assembly or church in Philadelphia. Here at once we find ourselves on different ground. Jews are not addressed, nor is it by a Jewish prophet, either before or during the captivity. It is now the Lord Jesus, who has a double relation. He is the Messiah, the hope of Israel, but at the same time the Head of the church. I have already shown that in the passages of Matthew and Mark He is instructing His disciples as to Jewish expectations connected with the land of Judea and the temple. It is clear that they had the sabbath-day, and the number of arguments might be largely increased in proof that Jewish disciples in the latter day are referred to, and such only. But now we find none of this. In all the scriptures that concern the Jews, they are supposed to go through this hour of temptation, but at the same time they are to be saved out of it. They go through that hour; they are protected of God; but none the less are they in the temptation, although they survive it, protected by divine power. Here, contrariwise, when the address is to Christians, the word is, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." The Jews were far from keeping this; they had rejected Himself; they despised the word of His patience. But one of the great distinguishing features of the Christian is, that he suffers with Christ, and, more than this, that he is content to wait, as Christ waits, for the great day. He is not anxious for the glory of the world now; his portion is not here; the Christian is waiting, as becomes the bride, for the exaltation of the Bridegroom over the earth. The bride knows that the

Bridegroom is exalted in heaven, and her heart is where her treasure is. Christ is glorified at the right hand of God; and her present joy is to know well that He who is her Bridegroom is coming, and that He will first gather to Himself His bride, and that in due time He will display His bride with Himself in glory. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Col. 3: 4 It is not merely that He shall take us away to be hidden in glory. He is hid in God now, and we shall be shortly. But when Christ appears in glory, those who are waiting, and are content to wait, keeping the word of His patience, will be displayed in the very same glory as the Lord Jesus. Such is the Christian's expectation. Christ is to come for us, and when Christ is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.

Entirely falling in with this sketch of the difference between what a Jew expected and what we are now expecting, the Lord directs His servant to write thus to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." Christ is patiently waiting to come; He looks onward to the future as much in heaven as He did when He was on the earth. He has not left His manhood behind Him because He has risen from the grave; on the contrary, the resurrection is that which binds indissolubly His manhood with His person. He took manhood in His incarnation, but He has manhood bound up for ever with His own eternal glory. As He retains manhood now in the glorified state, what a pledge this is of our blessedness with Christ when He comes again! We wait for that moment; and because we keep the word of His patience He says, "I also will keep thee," not from the tribulation only, but "from the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Mark, He does not say, "I will keep thee from a certain place of trouble, or from a given sphere where the tribulation is to fall." We can understand that a man might be taken out of a particular locality under judgment. For instance, supposing Europe, or the Roman Empire, or the Holy Land, to be peculiarly the spot on which the tribulation is to fall, we can easily understand how persons outside the doomed limits would not suffer temptation in the same way. This has been a favourite theory; and I have heard of devotees who have gone east and west in order to get out of the scene of dreaded trial. But this is folly, and a total mistake as to the word of God. What the Lord Jesus says is not, "You are to go from the sphere," but "I will keep thee from the hour." Nay, it is a far greater promise, and infinitely more precise, than saying, "I will keep thee from the place of the temptation," etc. Those who keep the word of His patience are not to be there when the hour comes; that is to say, it is a complete removal (not only from the circle but) from the time of the trouble. The church of God will be exempt; the faithful will be kept from it. By the faithful I mean all the children of God.

I beseech all that are here to guard against certain and self-complacent notions opposed to this, and too widely spread in America, and sometimes nearer home. They will have it that such exemption is a reward for believing in pre-millenarian views, and that those Christians who are not so instructed are to pass through the future hour of trouble, — some going so far as to teach that they will be in torture for 1,000 years. I beseech you, brethren, treat these notions as they deserve; treat them as bad and base, as altogether opposed to revelation, and the greatest dishonour both to the person of Jesus whom they love, and above all to His work, on which their souls rest before God. Oh, is not this idolising knowledge? It would not become us, assuredly, to slight the study of prophetic truth in which we have found, if one may speak about ourselves, not a little profit and enjoyment. But at the same time to suppose that those who may love Christ quite as well as we do, but who do not hold just views on prophetic truth, are to be tortured for it so many years, perhaps a thousand years, — to suppose God will punish His children thus because they have not been pre-millennialists, let such thoughts be utterly condemned and banished!

I admit that the Lord Jesus is said to come for them that look for Him; but why? Because the Spirit of God assumes that all Christians look for Him; and so they do. Some do it, no doubt, more intelligently than others; some, no doubt, do interpose their opinions on the millennium, as well as others on the tribulation. I do not agree with either. I am sure that all such interferences with the constant hope of Christ are wrong; and men suffer loss through it. I believe that those who assume, contrary to scripture, that there is going to be a great and long reign of good over the earth before Jesus comes are under no small delusion. At the same time, while disapproving of that notion, I consider that the idea of torturing for a thousand years God's children, in order to punish them for not being pre-millennialists, is about as bad a notion as could be entertained by Christian men. I am not now speaking of those whose scheme directly lowers our Saviour by clouding His Deity, or allowing the smallest spot of suspicion to rest upon His humanity or His relation to God, because one ought not to regard such as Christians at all. They cannot be acknowledged as such while anti-Christian. They may turn out Christians, carried away for a time, of course, just as a drunkard, or any other sinner. A person may fall into a desperate sin, and after all the Lord may bring him out of it. Neglect of prayer and of the word of God, tampering with the world, etc., may draw him into any evil, as grace can restore. At the same time, if a man goes on in sin decidedly and deliberately, whatever you may hope and desire, you cannot, and ought not, to call him a Christian. It is the same with false doctrine: only I suppose that false doctrine is yet more evil and dangerous, because more deceptive than anything else; but no one can adequately judge of false doctrine, unless as taught by the Spirit of God.

This then may suffice to show how, so far as the Jews are concerned, the uniform testimony of the Old and the New Testaments is, that they are to go through this time of temptation, but that the godly ones are to be preserved. The word of our Lord Jesus in Rev. 3: 10, is addressed clearly to Christian ears, representing the faithful that should be found waiting for His coming to receive them to Himself, which is the normal position of all Christians. Nor could the Spirit of God contemplate such an anomaly as those who loved Him not so looking for Him. This scripture holds out the blessed prospect of such association with Him as will exempt them from the time of predicted tribulation and the hour of temptation also. If I do not misunderstand the latter phrase it would seem to take in the preliminary sorrows, as well as later seductions and unparalleled final judgments. These do not all come at once. There will be deceits used as well as persecutions before the crash and the frightful crisis come. There is clearly defined in this very book a difference and progress in evil and trouble. This being so, the promise here given serves without constraint to comprehend and cover all, including the time of earlier trouble and deceit no less than the pressure of special affliction.

Accordingly the Lord declares that those that keep the word of His patience will be kept from that hour of temptation which shall come upon all the habitable world. And for what purpose is this hour sent? That others may be tried by it — "to try them that dwell upon the earth." In the Epistle to the Philippians the Holy Ghost brands the earthly-minded as being enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose end is destruction." (Phil. 3: 18, 19) I hope no one will contend that this is said of a Christian, however it may be of those who had once taken that place. That a Christian may venture near the brink of evil, that he may tamper with the unclean thing, that he may be for a while drawn in more or less, is possible; but it is beyond dispute that the Spirit of God contemplates those who, professing the name of Christ, altogether abuse it; and their end is certainly and literally destruction.

Here first, in the book of Revelation, the apostle John, at the command of our Lord, characterises a class of persons who should be found just before the hour of temptation not only setting their minds upon earthly things, but if possible yet farther gone in that evil direction. They are called dwellers upon the earth. They had given up the blessed place of holy separateness as pilgrims and strangers in the

world. Such is the uniform description of Christians; nay, in a measure, of the elders who obtained a good report by faith, as the Old Testament shows, although the light then vouchsafed was by no means so full as it is in the New. What intelligent soul would maintain that it was? If the Old Testament gave all the light needed now, where is the value and where the reason of the New? If it was the same thing, why not call it all the Old Testament? why the New Testament at all? The common faith of Christians knows this, if they do not frankly confess it. The one is divinely inspired no less than the other. There is no difference as to this; but there is the striking contrast that Israel's case is the history of a people under the law and government of God on the earth, while the church is a people led by faith out of all worldly connection to follow in the path of an earth-rejected Saviour glorified in heaven, and to wait for His coming as those who know their portion with Him above. This is the calling of the Christian, properly speaking.

But whenever did God bring in a blessing without the enemy seeking to turn it to a corruption? If there had not been Christianity, there could not be Anti-christ. There is invariably with the light of God the shadow of the adversary. Accordingly scripture is most explicit that the falling away must come. The falling away from what? From Christianity, to be sure; and very likely from the divinely-inspired testimony in general — from that of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Nor do I conceive there will be long to wait for this. Time was when the only persons who used to attack the Bible were wicked men such as Bolingbroke and Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. Now, I am grieved to say, it is fashionable for clergymen — university professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries — to be infidels. God forbid that I should single out invidiously any one individual, or any one denomination, because it is easy to see that it is found in all the nations and tongues by which Christianity is at all professed. Scepticism is confined to no class, and is as rampant in Popery, though perhaps more open in Protestantism. Honest I can call it nowhere. It professes anything, while it believes nothing. The hard thing would be to say where it has not penetrated. Not that all are as boldly bad as Bishop Colenso; not that all are infidel after so cowardly a sort as the Oxford Essayists and Reviewers. But it is plain that the spirit of infidelity reigns in quarters that yesterday, one may say, would have been ashamed and horrified; and one of the most alarming signs is the powerlessness of Christendom in meeting it. I feel often that the answers to infidelity are only less infidel, if always less, than the assaults on the faith. Witness the address of Dr. Raleigh on religion and science to which the Congregational Union of London have committed themselves. I desire only to use such facts for the warning of those exposed and for humbling ourselves before God, while cleaving to the word of His grace. The devil is now making people bolder in the highest places, as for a good while in the lowest. You may depend on it that it is mainly in the middle classes is found the chief value for the revealed truth of God at the present moment. The higher classes are largely saturated with infidelity; the lower classes no less so. In modern times it has been seen that God, while never unmindful of the poor, has most used people between the highest and the lowest to stand for the truth, and to reject error. I believe it is so still, and that the extremes of society are those that go most rapidly to ruin. While this is no doubt true, it is patent that the extremes are advancing rapidly to a moral meeting-place, and that the number of those who are thoroughly devoted to Christ, and who have perfect confidence in the truth of all that is written, is by no means large in any land whatsoever. We may be thankful for what the mercy of God has done in our own country, but I am persuaded that the inroads of infidelity become gigantic at this present time, and that the strides it is taking everywhere are as rapid as they are vast. If this be so, it is a deeply important matter for us to be on our guard, and so much the more as the moment hastens when these things are about to be realised. Remember, I do not venture to say a word as to defining that moment. God may prolong His patience. Man is apt to be hasty in his thoughts. Just as he procrastinates in his duties, so is he apt to be precipitate in his expectations. It is unwarrantable for any man to predict the day which no

one knows, says the Lord. God has kept all this in His own authority. At the same time there are moral intimations; and as none ought to be blind to the signs of the times, so the church of God ought pre-eminently to heed the tokens of what is coming — to read them in the word first, of course, and to seize their living counterpart in what is working round about us. It is not difficult to see that it is the tendency of the present moment to obliterate ancient landmarks — to cast down established distinctions, especially where there is a high or exclusive claim to revealed truth — to put all things divine and human on a common level.

However this may be, here we have the clear promise, held out by the Saviour, of a people that are to be kept from the coming hour of temptation. Observe, it is not merely a question of the place of tribulation. From elsewhere it is clear that the centre of the worst tribulation is to be Jerusalem. So true is this, that even if the godly but escape to the mountains, they are out of the area of that burning fiery furnace then seven times heated. This is certain from our Lord's own words. They may escape in a very short time to a place where the tribulation cannot fall upon them. Therefore it is evident that the unparalleled tribulation for the Jews can only have a very contracted sphere indeed. I shall show presently that there will be a larger sphere also.

But in the message to the church in Philadelphia we have a distinct assurance of exemption, not merely from the place, but even from the hour; and this not of tribulation only, but of temptation, which takes in, if I mistake not, the preliminary troubles and seductions as well as the tribulation that comes as a scourge for such flagrant apostasy and rebellion. Thus the promise is of the largest character, and at the same time of the utmost precision. It is a positive certainty to those that really wait for Christ. It is not a question of a mere doctrine. If the heart be not toward Him, what more value in seeing the pre-millennial advent than anything else? It is obvious that there are a great many souls who have the doctrine clearly enough, of whom none can say that it does them much good after all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object of the soul, anything else is comparatively powerless; but where Christ is in the heart as one believed in and loved, and hence patiently waited for, then, no doubt, His coming is no less sweet than purifying. Everything is seen to be precious that directs to Him, and the word of God about Him. Where truth is held apart from Him, there will be nothing to soften the spirit — nothing to maintain liberty, obedience, and a sanctifying object.

I am speaking, of course, not merely of being screened from the judgment, but of the power of salvation and of joy in the Lord now. Plainly this promise is most full, and it is at the same time no less precise as to the exemption of a people from this hour of temptation. Need it be added who these are? They are Christians, and none others. None but Christians were here addressed by our Lord. To them distinctly is the pledge made, that those who keep the word of His patience, the Lord will keep — not during, nor through, nor in, but — "*from* (or "*out of*") the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"; to try such as may have borne the Christian name, baptised persons, but their heart not in heaven, nor with Christ; earthly-minded, earthly-dwellers, spite of the true light and the revelation of glory in the face of Christ.

But this is not all. In Revelation 7 we have another word, and here we have, as is well known, "the great tribulation." I am giving the critical reading; for remember, in cleaving firmly to scripture — and I do not see there is anything else worth contending for in this world — it is a duty to ascertain, wherever a various reading exists, what has the weightiest claims to be received as the true: we have no need to shut our eyes to any representative of the mind of God. In short, the purest state of the text must be sought as well as the most faithful version. To perpetuate a traditional blunder is not faith, but mere ignorance or obstinate superstition. Therefore I accept, and exhort all my brethren to accept, every help that God affords for the elucidation of His word. To this end every discovery of an ancient

Biblical manuscript, every help toward a more accurate version that can be gathered from the study of the languages in which God wrote His word, is most valuable. I do not say that everybody ought to set up for a judge in these matters.

In fact, very few scholars, or even Christian scholars, have this sort of competency. It is easy enough to suggest changes of scripture, and supposed emendations of text and translations. We have all heard of 20,000 corrections collected by a diligent physician. It might be a wholesome check if any competent person dealt with that magazine of misapprehensions, as Bode did with the errors made by Mill and Bengel through trusting the Latin renderings of the old Oriental versions. What a tiny residue would come out from the subjection of the 20,000 to a really critical ordeal! In general you may dismiss at least nineteen out of every twenty supposed corrections of our authorised Bible. They are merely the crude guesses of tyros, the suggestions of such as may be scholars in profane Greek or Latin, but who possessed little or no familiarity with the Bible.

Again, it is monstrous for persons to sit in judgment on such matters, unless they do so as Christians. I deny that genius or scholarship will enable a man to understand aright either the Hebrew or the Greek scriptures. The best of scholars have made the grossest of mistakes here. Take Dr. Richard Bentley. Did not he and the like commit very painful blunders in scripture? I admit the scholarship of the famous Master of Trinity in his own sphere. He was, no doubt, a man of very unusual power, and of the largest attainments in the remains of Greek and Roman letters; but then, as a rule, no man is at home outside his own business. I do not trust people who speak confidently on what they have not made their own. I value the simplest artisan in his own craft more than the ablest philosopher who prattles about it. No doubt, if a shoemaker were to talk of philosophy, he would not be likely to throw much light on the subject. He might be a genius, undoubtedly, and to this you must give ample weight; but still, in general, one could not expect that men outside their own proper functions would be the most competent to give an opinion of value on matters foreign to them.

On doctrine I hold the opinion of a scholar to weigh about as much as that of a shoemaker. Not only is erudition in itself of no account in spiritual things, but scholarship in one branch does not give competence in another. The Attic nicety, which appreciates Sophocles, may be at fault before the abrupt passes and parentheses of the apostle Paul. But the first of all requisites, even for those familiar with Greek, for understanding the word of God is unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the sole power of comprehending and alone gives qualification to judge of divine things; and He dwells only in those who have faith in Christ. At the same time let none suppose that I exclude the use of every aid that can be brought in really and honestly to enable a Christian to read the word of God as closely as possible approaching its original form. It is, to my mind, a positive duty to welcome and apply every such help, let it come from what quarter it may.

To those who accept this principle there can be no doubt that the true reading here is "They which come out of *the* great tribulation." The omission of the article is wrong in the common text, and must be given in English to represent fairly the sense given by the best authorities. It is not always so; but it is needless to say that there are definite means of judging, and there is no question at all about its necessity here. To those who know these matters this is a ruled point, not without the effort of prejudice in some to resist the conclusion, but in vain. "These," said the elder to John, "are they which come out of *the* great tribulation." This is important, because if you read it simply "These are they which came out of great tribulation," many a Christian might say, "You and I have known great tribulation. This is a choice scripture, and it evidently applies to you and me." Alas! how often we are misled from the prime source of all mistakes — that is to say, interpreting the Bible by our own feelings, circumstances, and sphere. This is not the way to understand the word of God. You must look at it in connection with

Christ, and not with self. Such is the only canon that will conduct a man in safety and light and joy right through the Bible by the grace of God; thus only can one be an intelligent disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Quite different is the way in which persons in general are apt to deal with the Bible; that is, they judge from their own things, and not from the things of Jesus Christ. Connect the word as well as facts with the Lord, and what a difference it makes! There may be Christians so unintelligent as to find in the Bible nothing but Christians and their enemies; but the man who reads scripture, looking at Christ, not at himself and his church, will say, "Well, there was once a people of Jehovah before the Christian and the church of God; the Lord had Israel then the object of His care, and they broke down utterly. Then He gave imperial authority to the Gentiles, and they turned it against Him, compelling the Jews, under pain of death, to worship their idols, and give up the true God. And now the Lord Jesus, having come, has been rejected by both; and having accomplished redemption, has sent out the gospel and set up the church; and what is the result?" We have before us in scripture the revelation of the end of all, and we have the working of these destructive principles in our own day. To leave room for all is of immense importance. It clears the way for understanding these and other scriptures. The fertile source of mistake is the desire to make all bear upon ourselves.

We have seen the Jewish portion; we have heard the promises to Christians; now we must be introduced to a third party. Nor is there the least reason why we should be in the dark about it; for in the latter half of Revelation 7 we read as follows: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of *the* great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7: 9-14)

How many believers here and elsewhere I can hear asking if this be not a picture of the church. Let me assure you that it certainly is not so. With the utmost desire not to contradict any one flatly, we must feel that there are times when it is much better to be plain and short. I must therefore take the liberty of affirming that demonstrably a Gentile multitude is meant, and not the body of Christ, the church. The proofs are clear and decisive. Every intelligent reader of the book, whatever his view of its interpretation in other respects, agrees in this, that "the elders" and the "living creatures," one or other or both, are the symbol of the church in heaven. How then could one of these elders describe this multitude, if all, elders and Gentile multitude, formed part of the same church? How could the party described and the party describing be the same body? Surely they must set forth a quite distinct thing. The elders were seen long before the multitude.

The context too will make their difference still plainer; and this is not an unimportant key to understand scripture. Never take a passage without examining its context. What is its bearing here? A numbered multitude we first hear of from the twelve tribes of Israel. I know the fondness of many for what they call spiritualising; but it is hard to spiritualise each of the twelve tribes of Israel; and the whole of these are brought before us distinctly and separately, as if on purpose to set aside such mysticising; for this is its true name and nature — not a spiritual but a mystical use of the scriptures.

After the Holy Ghost has shown us the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of the twelve tribes, the prophet then sees an innumerable multitude of Gentiles, distinct from both the elders and the four living creatures. If the elders mean the heavenly redeemed in Revelation 4, 5, I suppose they must mean the same body till the last chapter in which the symbol occurs (Rev. 19). Wherever they appear, do they not mean the same thing?

I here take the lowest ground. Is it not a fair inference that, if a symbol is found in different passages in the same book, it is to be taken in the same sense consistently? That is to say, if the elders are the glorified saints in one passage, they are the same in all passages. How then could this multitude of Gentiles be so, any more than the multitude of Israel? In short, therefore, Rev. 7 shows us a numbered company of Israel, and then a countless crowd of Gentiles, separate from each other as well as from the elders, and characterized as coming out of *the* great tribulation. There is not the semblance of truth that these Gentiles are composed of the successive generations of God's people throughout different ages of the world. On the contrary, they are not supposed to be risen but alive; to the prophet's eye a number numberless, gathered out by grace at a particular epoch, when *the* great tribulation comes here below. This, long known to a few scholars, is established now conclusively by the critical researches of all competent to speak, no matter what their bias.

And why should it seem incredible, or even strange, that God should begin to deal with Israel as such, again? As to this, there really ought to be no question, if we believe the various scriptures read at the beginning of this discourse. And if God will keep them, why not the Gentiles too? Nay, is it not certain that He means to bless the Gentiles as such? Is it asked what He purposes to do for the church of God? We have already seen about it. Those that keep the word of Christ's patience are promised to be taken out of the hour of trial, and those whose earthliness covers the Lord with their own shame are the persons on whom the severest judgments are destined to come. "The hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," does not mean simply Jews or Gentiles, but rather such as have professed the name of the Lord falsely. That true members of Christ's body will be left here below is an idea not only without foundation, but contrary to the clearest principles of truth, and to express statements of scripture. The evil servant and the foolish virgins mean not the true but the false.

And let me add too another point of interest. We find in Rev. 12 one scripture more which gives a cause, and an occasion too, for this fearful time.. All this needs to be duly taken into account. You are aware, no doubt, that the reason why the things of this world constantly appear to gain the victory over the truth, as far as what is bad triumphs, is the power of Satan, the great personal enemy of the Lord. Scripture affirms that the hour approaches when that power is about to be broken (not merely to faith, as ever since the death and resurrection of Christ, but) publicly in the world. Satan, according to the language of Rev. 12, will be cast out of heaven. From the seventh verse it is thus written, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Manifestly this is a state of things at which we are not yet arrived. It would be false doctrine and practically serious to say that such is the fact. A plain reason against it is, that Ephesians 6: 12 declares that the conflict in which the Christian is now engaged is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, not with flesh and blood. As Israel had to fight with the Canaanites, so our special conflict is with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Anybody who intelligently reads the Greek Testament will know, and even those who can enquire of those who do will hear it confirmed, that the expression

ἐπουρανίους means not merely "high" but "heavenly" places. No matter where you examine elsewhere, it invariably means "heavenly places"; and, in point of fact, it never does bear the sense of "high" simply, nor do I believe it to be possible. Any man who knows the language will hardly deny that "high places" is a slip or an evasion. I suppose our translators did not know what to make of the passage. They may have supposed that it would sound strange to hear of wicked spirits in "heavenly places," and so they thought to tone it down or to obscure it a little, and so put in "high places."

However this may have been, it is far from my wish to fasten any unworthy motives on them. They have erred occasionally, but were, many if not all, excellent men and able scholars, and I believe did their work with fidelity, though with a certain measure of hindrance, especially on the part of the king. We know he was superstitious on some points, and would not allow them to alter ecclesiastical terms which notoriously foster much misconception and prejudice. I do not mean to insinuate that James I. had anything to do with the mistake alluded to in Eph. 6, nor does it particularly matter who it was that suggested or kept it up; but the fact is certain, that we are said by the Holy Spirit to battle "with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places," as Israel with blood and flesh (that is, their Canaanite enemies).

It is certain then that Satan has an astonishing facility of wiles to hinder Christians from enjoying their proper heavenly privileges; but we know that, subtle as he is, it will all speedily come to an end; and this is in part what is described in Rev. 12. It cannot come to an end as long as we are committed to the conflicts spoken of in Eph. 6. None but Apocalyptic dreamers could sustain such a thesis for an instant. For, observe, what we read here is, that when that crisis comes there will be "a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev. 12: 10) Has there ever been any time so striking for God's blessed intervention in the past history of the church that would answer to this? Is it really true that, when Constantine adopted Christianity, salvation came? Surely not. Who is so worldly-minded as to say this? Alas! such things have been said; but, after all, the idea only requires to be viewed in the light of scripture in order to feel that it is egregious and unfounded. To suppose that the downfall of Satan occurred in the fourth century, or that the coming of salvation was when Christendom began, or any such like scheme, is to draw largely on one's own fancy. Yet sober men, in other respects learned, sensible, and even godly, have put forth such views.

They were right good Protestants withal — a singular fact that Protestants should concede that in the days of many a dark superstition, afterwards embodied in popery, salvation came, and the kingdom of our Lord and the authority of His Christ! But there is no incongruity too astonishing for the minds of men. However this may be, it is added that "The accuser of our brethren is cast down." At this point Satan will have lost the power of calumniating as well as of hindering the people of God. Hence the call to joy — "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is evident that there are dwellers in heaven then — saints who are no longer found here below on the earth — entirely agreeing with what we have remarked elsewhere. But further: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." It is the time of great trouble; that is, the time of the unparalleled tribulation that has been already before our thoughts. Thus God will have accomplished His purpose of taking away men to be with Christ in heaven, having put away their sin and given them a nature capable of enjoying His own rest. They dwelt there in spirit when they were on earth; they looked to follow Christ to heaven when they were poor pilgrims here; they waited for Christ longingly, and they are at length to be with Him whom they loved. After this comes the downfall of Satan's power, and the putting forth of his wrath on

earth for a short time. Who can pretend that this vast change has taken place? Surely if there had been a most fearful and unexampled raging of Satan here below, one would think that the world ought to know and feel it. It is a strange theory that such an immense change could have taken place without anybody being the wiser for it, and nobody particularly the worse. Be not deceived. The dread reality is yet to come. Accordingly we read of a tremendous persecution, and the rising up of the two beasts described in Rev. 13.

There is no need to enter more into detail on this subject. I have endeavoured to give a simple and unvarnished view of what the scriptures teach us of the hour of temptation as well as of the tribulation. It has been shown, I trust clearly, that the Jews are to be in the innermost circle of the trouble, though the godly are warned of the Lord to escape from it. Thus our Lord's words have the closest connection with the declaration of the prophet Jeremiah that, though so sorely tried, they are to be delivered; but how is not explained. Daniel mentions the intervention of Michael, but adds no more. Our Lord fully explains. He tells them that, when they see a certain sign, those in Judea must flee: what is that sign? The abomination of desolation. There need be no doubt what this means, according to analogy, a certain idol, the setting up of which in the sanctuary of Jerusalem will be the signal for the infliction of this unprecedented tribulation. An incident of the tribulation, or, at any rate, another element of trouble to man, and especially to Israel on earth, will be Satan's great wrath for a short time on his dejection from heaven. Antichrist will show himself openly; Satan will work by him, also by the great imperial power of the Roman empire, as he never did before; and God will send men a strong delusion, that they should believe what is false.

As men throughout Christendom will be misled deliberately and wilfully to refuse the truth, God will allow evil to rise up beyond all precedent, and will let Satan have his destructive way, such of His people as are in Judea being saved from complete ruin by instant flight according to the word of the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, is to be the centre, not merely of the great tribulation, but of the greatest; as being guilty of abandoning law and gospel with Christ Himself, always resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did, so shall fall there such retribution as never was. But the Gentiles, guilty in their measure, are not to escape the storm; they may not endure the worst of it, but they must taste the bitter fruit of their doings in "the great tribulation" of Rev. 7, whatever may be the grace of God in bringing out of it a countless throng to enjoy His tabernacle over them during the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus.

Thus God will cause a great and numberless crowd of Gentiles to come out of that tribulation as truly as He will save the godly Jews; but observe, not a word is said about the church in either. How are we to account for a silence otherwise so strange if the church were really there? If God bound Himself to save Jacob; if He is pledged to bring out a multitude of Gentiles, why not a word about the church? Nay, rather, how could He speak of His church then on earth; for you are aware that in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile. One great feature of the church is the blotting out of such distinctions, and the formation of one new man, which is neither. Thus, whereas we were Jews or Gentiles before, we have put all this off, and as many as are baptised into Christ have put on Christ. We are baptised into one body — the body of Christ — such is the inspired description of the Christian; so that we who receive the Holy Ghost now abandon our Gentilism or our Judaism, as the case may be. Thus the key is given clearly and at once. The elders will have been — at a moment kept silent in the Apocalypse — translated to heaven, and they are seen there before the trouble comes, not only before the fury of the tribulation bursts, but before the preliminary judgments of God on earlier evils, and the efforts of the devil to ensnare the saints by deceit, and draw them into the final apostasy.

As to this it seems to me that the general bearing of the word of God is abundantly plain, without

pretending of course, to enter into every minute point. We are only learners; and a great joy it is to learn of God and in His own way. May the Lord bless the testimony of His truth, and give every Christian to have not the least anxiety, but to cherish perfect confidence in His word and Spirit! The Thessalonians were troubled by a misuse of prophecy. Mischievous men, who knew not at all the grace of God, troubled and shook their souls by a false apprehension of the day of the Lord — the day of judgment for living men on the earth. It is a total mistake to suppose that their delusion sprang from a too eager or enthusiastic hope of the coming of Christ. The mischief was, that their hope had been displaced and practically annulled by terror from false doctrine about the day. Excited hope was not the delusion, but dread, as if the day of the Lord was present. It was *not* wrong to believe that the day was at hand; but this is not what the false teachers insinuated, nor what the apostle reproves. Our English version, unfortunately, is exceedingly to be regretted here; and I appeal to every scholar with an unbiassed mind whether ἐνέστηχε does not mean "is present" (contrasted often with merely being "at hand," and never really admitting of such a sense). They falsely taught, then, that the day of the Lord was actually come; and this was the delusion (for which they dared to allege a pretended letter of the apostle) that distressed the Thessalonian believers. 2 Thessalonians 2 dissipates the notion.

It is another instance of what our translators occasionally did. They could not make sense of the passage according to the plain meaning of the word, and so they ventured to do what no man ought to do; they gave up the real meaning of Scripture, and substituted another meaning, which they thought would make better sense, and must have been intended. Nobody is at liberty so to deal with God's word: it is not translating, but interpreting. Beloved friends, let us cleave to scripture, whether we understand it or not. If we do not, let us frankly confess our ignorance, but faithfully adhere to the words before us. What the Thessalonians were drawn into was the idea that the day of the Lord had already come. The false teachers seem to have construed the persecutions under which they were suffering as a proof that the day of the Lord was actually there. This the apostle treats as a falsehood, and the more as they claimed his authority for it. No one ought to listen to these men, nor were they to be troubled about such a rumour. He beseeches them, by their blessed hope of being gathered to the Lord at His coming, not to be frightened by the cry that the day was come.

Why indeed should a Christian be alarmed about anything? He is entitled to look death in the face, and to have boldness in the day of judgment, as John expressly says. And do you think that a man who can honestly and according to the truth and will of God thus contemplate the most solemn certainties of the eternal future should be justly alarmed at anything here below? A Jew or a Gentile ought to dread the tribulation if he faces the revelation of God about it ever so briefly; for the tribulation will be a retributive dealing with the unfaithfulness of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, and especially of those who abuse the name of the Lord. But for this very reason it does not apply to the Christian at all. This is the moral truth of the case, and therefore I may well press it on all who have not duly weighed scripture as to it. I entreat you to cleave to the Lord's name and to His word. Value every help, and seek the best you can. If danger menaced your body, I daresay you would have recourse to those who, as you believe, could do you most good: I do not think you ought to do less, if the question is of your soul and God's own truth and glory.

May God bless you who believe, and give you hearts truly and humbly to cleave to Him and to the word of His grace, assured that He will exempt, according to His own word, those that keep the word of Christ's patience, and that He will also in the darkest days preserve Jews and Gentiles according to His word through the awful judgments that are coming upon the world.

W. K.