

The Hope of Christ compatible with prophecy.

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There are few simple-minded Christians who, in searching into the prophetic word, have not felt the difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly normal posture of the church in daily waiting for Jesus with the long train of successive events presented *e.g.* in the Revelation. The principle, if not the measure, of the difficulty is the same, whether you understand the Revelation to be fulfilled in a brief eventful crisis, or to extend over a course of many hundred years. In either way, can one truthfully expect the Lord from heaven from day to day, if one is looking out for a series of numerous, and some of them unprecedented, and all of them solemn, incidents to occur on earth, the gradual and accumulative evidence of His approach.

But it is certain that in the apostolic times, when the grace of God was proclaimed in its real power and freshness, when His word was most prized and best understood, and produced its loveliest effects, the saints were habitually expecting the Lord to come. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; and they knew it. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Were they, therefore, satisfied? Was not the Spirit Himself, blessed divine Advocate though He be, yet was not He the earnest of glorious things to come? Doubtless they received Him as the Spirit of sonship, and not as a spirit of bondage unto fear (Rom. 8). Yet far from His leading them into rest and contentedness here below in the absence of Jesus, in the same chapter it is said, "Ourselves also, [besides the groaning creation,] which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is the groaning of those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. It is the groaning of those who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and bearing witness with their spirit that they are children of God. It is the groaning of the adopted earnestly yearning for the full results of adoption; of those who, because they have known God's grace in redemption forgiving their sins, look for more, for all, — for the redemption of the body in the actual presence of the Saviour, that they may be like Him and with Him for ever.

The aim, however, of these remarks is not to prove that the personal coming of the Lord is the hope of the church — proofs easily found elsewhere. My desire is rather to convince those who know what is and was meant to be the hope of the church, that God, by no concurrent or subsequent revelation, ever interfered with the practical power of that hope. That He might give fuller details as to the growing iniquity of man, of the Jew, and especially of the outward professing body, and as to His own judgments upon each before the millennial reign; that He might describe in greater minuteness the circumstances of that reign and the events that succeed it, is not only possible, but that which He has done. But that He, on this or any other theme, corrects in one part of His word what is affirmed in another, is that which every Christian ought surely to repudiate from the bottom of his soul, in whatever modified form it may be insinuated.

The word of our God needs no apologies from man. Unhesitatingly believed, every part of it will be found to be perfectly true, though (from narrowness and imperfection in our apprehension) patient waiting on God is needed to avoid the systematising of the human intellect, and to discover in what order God puts things together. Haste in deciding such questions only leads to forcing scripture, which will not yield; and hence the danger of framing one-sided hypotheses, which are only tenable by shutting the eye to the plainest scripture that contradicts them as hypotheses, though there may be elements of truth in them.

To apply this to the matter in hand, it is undeniable that the apostle Paul (to say nothing of others) invariably speaks of the coming of the Lord to take the church to Himself as that which might be at any moment, however He might tarry. But no necessary detention — no chain of occurrences involving a period virtually — no certain lapse of time — is ever presented to the church as keeping Him in heaven. On the contrary, if he writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15), it is "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Admitting that "we" is a representative word, not the persons addressed merely, but those standing in the same privileges; still will any one say that the apostle or the Corinthian saints knew that the moment would be deferred till they had fallen asleep?* Was it not calculated, beyond all cavil, to keep them in simple, constant expectancy of the Lord?

* Nothing, it has been observed, more strongly proves the church's constant expectation of the presence of the Lord for it, uncertain when this was to be, than the fact that it needed a particular revelation to individuals (such as to Paul and Peter), about their departure first, which so far modified their individual apprehensions. The general expectation of the church was not affected thereby.

The Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1), who were trained, from their birth to God, in looking for their Deliverer, were they mistaken enthusiasts? Or, did not the blessed work of the Spirit in their case consist not only in turning them from idols to serve a living and true God, but to wait for His Son from heaven? Did that wise and faithful servant, who knew what it was to mingle the service of a nurse with the affectionate care of a father, — did he consider that blessed hope to be unsuited food for such babes? So far from it, that when he writes to them supplying some things that were lacking, the Holy Ghost impresses this great doctrine in such repeated and different modes as to demonstrate how cardinal a truth it was in the mind of God, and how influential as regards the communion and walk of His saints. It ramifies both Epistles, being not only found at least once in every chapter, but in some chapters occupying the most conspicuous place. (See 1 Thess. 1: 3, 10; 1 Thess. 2: 19, 20; 1 Thess. 3: 13; 1 Thess. 4: 13-18; 1 Thess. 5: 1-10, 23, 24. 2 Thess. 1: 5-10; 2 Thess. 2: 1-12; 2 Thess. 3: 5.)

Let us weigh the facts more. They had rejoiced in this hope of our Lord Jesus Christ from their earliest Christian career; they had patiently continued it through the Spirit; and the blessedness of such patience was sweet to the absent apostle, even as their work of faith and labour of love. True, they needed further light as to its circumstances, and the Lord granted it. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the decease of some of their number plunged them into deep sorrow. Not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the salvation of those who were gone. No one that had the gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them) could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had severed their departed brethren from the glorious hope, which they had so brightly burning before them, of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone and doubtless were happy; but would they not be absent from that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting?

Here was the place (may we not venture to say?), if they had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here was the place for the apostle to write: — We have been all wrong in living with our eyes heavenward till the Son of God comes to take us to Himself; He is not coming soon. We need not yet expect Him; for many ages must expire before He comes. Besides, He has already given you some, and He now adds, more signs of His advent. You have not seen these signs yet; you must wait for them, and not for His Son.

The exact reverse is the fact. The Holy Spirit deliberately keeps them in the same attitude of waiting which He had previously wrought and sanctioned in them, though He gives them a comfort of

which they were ignorant as to their brethren who had been put to sleep by Jesus. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [*i.e. go before*] them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with cheering shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall arise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4: 15-18).

But it may be said, If the Holy Ghost did not here correct the excited notions of the Thessalonians, He did in the second chapter of the Second Epistle. I answer that the true question is, Does the Holy Ghost correct Himself? He may supply that which is suited to correct the undue sorrow of the believers in one Epistle, or their fear in another Epistle; but I insist upon it in the strongest manner, that if the church is set in the position of waiting for Christ's coming in one part of scripture, no other part can possibly alter such a position. It is necessarily right, whatever increase of instruction may be given. Let us only be well established in the perfectness of every word of God, and we shall soon see how little the passage warrants the notion that the apostle Paul, in the second Epistle, dissuades them from expecting Him, Whom the first Epistle had confirmed them in expecting.

In the first place, it is generally assumed that the day of Christ (or "of the Lord," for this is the true reading.) is identical with "the coming (παρουσία, presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the verse before. But it is a groundless idea. If it be affirmed, let proofs be adduced. It ought to be quite clear that "the day of the Lord" is a distinct though connected thing. In its full ultimate sense (and no one disputes that such is its force here), it supposes the presence of the Lord; it displays the judgment consequent upon it. But the presence, or coming, of the Lord by no means necessarily supposes judgment. Is there a word of judgment, or wrath, or destruction, expressed or implied in the full description given in 1 Thess. 4 of the Lord's coming for His own? So when the apostle says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2: 19, 20), where is the word of judgment on evil? On the other hand, when "the day of the Lord" occurs, it is, whether used in a full or a limited application, habitually connected with judgment and its consequences (compare 1 Thess. 5: 2-4; Zeph. 1, 2, 3; Zech. 14; Mal. 3, 4). One infers therefore that, though the coming of the Lord may include the day of the Lord, as the whole includes a part, the coming of the Lord is in itself presented in an aspect of grace, not of judgment. Why should the terms and the things be confounded?

* So all the critical editors such as Alford, Bengel, Griesbach, Knappe, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf, etc.; and this only upon external evidence.

In the second place, while it is true that the day of the Lord cannot come before the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin arrive, which are to be judged in that day, yet is there a serious error in the English rendering of the last clause of ver. 2, "is at hand." The word usually rendered "at hand," "near," or "nigh," is ἐγγύς or ἐγγίζω "come near," as is known to scholars. The word ἐνίστημι, on the other hand, is never so rendered in the New Testament, save in the passage before us. On the contrary, occurring several times, it is used invariably in a way which excludes the possibility of such a rendering (more especially when it is, as here, in the perfect tense). The first occurrence is in Rom. 8: 38. It is evident that here ἐνεστώτα cannot mean things at hand. It is contrasted with μέλλοντα, *i.e.* "things to come." It signifies only and emphatically "things present," and is so rendered in the common Bible. See the same words and the same contrast in 1 Cor. 3: 22. Again, in 1 Cor. 7: 26, διὰ τὴν ἐνεστώσαν ἀνάγκην is properly translated "for the present distress." A distress not actually come, but only at hand or coming, would spoil the meaning. The next is Gal. 1: 4, "this present evil world," the

only possible meaning of the word here. The next world, or age, will not be evil, and therefore "at hand," or "imminent," is shut out. Compare also Heb. 9: 9, εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκὸτα "for the time then present" (not "at hand," which cannot be the true force).

All these, notice, are instances of the same tense as 2 Thess. 2: 2. The only other occurrence is 2 Tim. 3: 1, ἐνστήσονται, in the future middle. Here the English version renders it, "shall come." Still, the meaning indubitably is not "shall be at hand," which could have no point, but "shall be there." To be impending merely was little: the grave thing was, that perilous times should be actually present. It may be concluded, therefore, from an induction thus complete, that in all the other instances the authorised version is right, but in 2 Thess. 2: 2 it is wrong. It is not conceivable to uphold both; so that, if right in 2 Thess. 2: 2, the version must be wrong everywhere else. But we have seen, from the intrinsic meaning of the word, as well as from the sense imperatively demanded by the context, that in all the other cases the translators are justified. They were therefore mistaken here, and the proper rendering, in conformity with their own translation of the word in the same tense elsewhere, ought to be, "as that the day of the Lord is present." So the Revisers give, "As that the day of the Lord is *now* present," adding in italics the adverb, which is needless emphasis. The sense is strong and clear without "*now*."

The Thessalonian saints had from the first known much affliction. They had notoriously suffered from their own countrymen, and this to such a degree that the apostle, in his earnest and watchful interest about them, sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. They knew that "we are appointed thereunto." Nevertheless they needed comfort. The apostle had warned them before, that "we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know." "For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." But Timothy brought good tidings of their faith and love, and the apostle could break out into thanks and joy for their sakes before God, and he lets them know it in his first Epistle (1 Thess. 3).

The tempter, however, was not to be discouraged, nor diverted from his wiles. They had been already taught that the Lord Himself was to come, and the saints, sleeping or living, were all to be changed, and to be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and so be ever with Him (1 Thess. 4). They also knew that the day of the Lord was one of destruction and terror, unlooked for by the world: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5).

Accordingly, Satan appears to have distracted the saints by the harassing statement that the day of the Lord was actually there, thus seeking to rob them of all profit and joy in the persecutions and tribulations which they were then enduring. Nor let any think it strange if, in a time of perplexity for the world and persecution of the church, the fears of saints might be wrought upon; particularly as they knew that the day of Jehovah in the Old Testament by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of the Lord, though it looks onward to that anticipatively. Compare, for instance, Isa. 13, where God's judgment of Babylon and the Chaldeans is so designated: "Howl ye, for the day of Jehovah is at hand*; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty," etc. (See also Joel 1: 15, Joel 2: 1-11; Amos. 5: 18, 20; Zeph. 1: 7, 14, 15, etc.)

In the second Epistle the Holy Ghost conveys the needed instruction. "We ourselves," says the apostle, "glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the

Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (chap. 1). The time of retribution is not when Jesus comes, but when He is revealed.

* The words in the LXX. are ἐγγύς γὰρ ἡμέρα Κυρίου. Will men defend a version of 2 Thess. 2: 2 which makes the Holy Spirit contradict there what He has unequivocally affirmed in Isa. 13: 6? The Septuagint and the Greek Testament are in harmony here. It is the English version which is at fault.

For though at His coming the church is caught up, there is nothing yet of retributive character. It is favour, not a process of judgment; whereas the revelation and the day of the Lord are, as is manifest, associated with judgment, and hence there is the public award of God then for the first time manifested to the world; "seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed." Doubtless there is a tribulation, and even the great tribulation in the time of Anti-Christ, previous to the revelation of Jesus; as obviously there is rest to those who sleep in Jesus now; and there will be rest in a fuller sense when our bodies are changed, and we are caught up to be with Him. But both are wholly distinct from the public or retributive tribulation and rest here spoken of. It is the day of punishment with everlasting destruction to the adversaries, as it is the day when Christ comes, not to present the Church to Himself, nor to take them to mansions in the Father's house, but to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed. For "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." It is the open judicial dealing (not the hidden joy or blessedness, before, then, or afterwards,) which here enters into the scene.

Next, the apostle turns to the source of their agitation. "We beseech you, brethren, by* the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled." Assuredly the consolation administered here is not that Christ's coming was a distant thing I Can it be that the theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this fancied long and far-off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful? Can it be that the poor church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness, and folly, and faithlessness to Him? "Lord, how long?"

* The authorised version appears to be substantially right in thus translating ὑπὲρ when we bear the context in mind. Such is the rendering of the Vulgate, as well as of Luther. Professor Scholefield also, though choosing the sense "concerning," because of his interpretation, admits the sense "by" to be "an unquestionable one." The fact cannot be disputed that "on account of," "for the sake of," are quite common renderings: which sense of the word, connected with expressions of prayer and entreaty, is pretty nearly equivalent to our "by." None of the passages, such as Rom. 9: 27; 2 Cor. 7: 4, 2 Cor. 9: 3; Phil. 1: 7, cited by Rosenmüller, Schleusner, Macknight, Whitby, or Elliott, is apposite, because not one occurs after such a verb as ἐρωτάω. Let an instance be produced of ὑπὲρ after a word of beseeching, where it can be rendered in any other way. In certain cases, it is used, as Phavorinus says, ὁμοίως τὰ περὶ, but not, I believe, in a connection parallel to the present, where it assimilates to πρὸς, as Stephanus observes, and translates it "per ut Greg. ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ δέομαι, rogo te per Christum. Sic. II. ω. Καί μιν ὑπὲρ πατρὸς καὶ μητέρος ἡσυχόμοιο Λίσσεο, καὶ τέκεος ."

Not so the Thessalonians. Full well they knew that His coming was to end their sorrows and crown their joys. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their

looking, for Christ. Was it not the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming? But Paul was a blessed and faithful servant, who never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the Lord was already arrived — nay more, as a proof that such an idea was false. His ground of entreaty is two-fold. He urges a motive founded upon the Lord and heaven, and a reason connected with earth and the man of sin. There must be our gathering above, and the falling away below.

In the first place the Lord was to come, and they were to be gathered together unto Him, in order that He and they might bring in the day and appear together from heaven. This had not taken place, and therefore they were not to be disturbed as if that day had come, or could come previously. In the next place, he presses the point that the evil must first be developed completely which that day is to judge. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (or the apostacy, ἡ ἀποστασία) first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or object of worship; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." But the apostacy was not then come. "And now (if one may translate the apostle's word a little exactly) ye know what hindereth that he might be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness* doth already work: only [there is] one that now hindereth until he be out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall annul by the appearing of His coming."

* There is a link of importance missed by the English translators between the mystery of lawlessness already working and the lawless one who is yet to be revealed. The germ was there in the midst of professing Christianity. which was at last to issue in so portentous a conclusion. Again, "wickedness" expresses the old and prevalent evil of man in all ages from the beginning. "Lawlessness" is the word used by the apostle, and exactly appropriate to the yet worse and special enormity, when the gospel is denied and the restraint of the law defied.

No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God. It is not wrong to believe that "the Lord is at hand" (ἐγγύς), as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career. It is not wrong to establish our hearts because the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh (ἤγγικε, James 5: 8). Nor does the language of the Spirit, in the passage before us, depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event — alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in verse 2 denote fright and agitation. The enemy sought to instil the idea that the day of the world's judgment was come, and themselves obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear, if Christ had come and they had been translated to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded. Nay, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the Second Epistle, that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord.

But the deceiver had affrighted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present, — "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." The apostle had already told them (1 Thess. 5) that they were not in darkness that the day should overtake them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was already come upon them; using, it

would seem, some false spirit, or word, or letter, to give to it the colour of the authority of Paul himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own? For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth instead of being caught up to Jesus above.

The apostle at once brings them back to the "coming of the Lord" and their gathering together unto Him as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the "day of the Lord." As if he had said, The Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with Him. You are already children of the day: and will come along with it, for you are to come with Him Who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled. Rejoice always. That day is not come. You will go to meet Him Whom the bride knows as "the bright, the morning Star" (Rev. 22: 16, compared with Rev. 2: 28); so that when the day breaks and the Lord appears, you too will appear with Him in glory. He and you introduce the day together — that day of retribution when those who trouble you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest with us, when our Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance.

In harmony with this it is written in verse 8 that the lawless one will be destroyed, not simply by the coming of the Lord, but by a further step of it, by the appearing or manifestation of His coming.* This scene is given at length in Rev. 19: 11-21, where in the prospective vision the seer beholds the heaven opened, and the Word of God, the rider upon the white horse, issuing to judge and make war. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and glean" — the righteousness not of angels, but of saints (compare ver. 8). The saints are already with Him. They follow Him out of heaven? as His army. Christ therefore must have come before this to take them to Himself; for they have been with Him in heaven and leave it together, preparatory to the battle with the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. This then is not merely the coming of Christ; it is Christ appearing, and we with Him in glory. It is His revelation from heaven, taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, when sudden destruction comes. It is the shining forth of the presence of the Lord Jesus, or the brightness of His coming, which destroys that lawless one.†

* The word "coming", here, and frequently elsewhere, is παρουσία which denotes not barely the arrival (like the verb ἔρχομαι in scripture and like the substantive ἔλευσις in Greek ecclesiastical writers), but the circumstance or state of being present; that is, "presence." Nevertheless, as the presence of a person, who is now absent, necessarily supposes his coming, the latter is often and fairly enough given as its English equivalent, though the former is the full meaning.

† If the reader is disposed to investigate further a subject so full of interest, he may derive much instruction, through the grace of God, by examining carefully the following Scriptures:

First as to ἀποκάλυψις Rom. 8: 19; 1 Cor. 1: 7; 2 Thess. 1: 7; 1 Peter 1: 7, 13 and 1 Peter 4: 13, compared with the cognate verb, Luke 17: 30; 1 Cor. 3: 13; 1 Peter 1: 5, and 1 Peter 5: 1. Next, as to ἐπιφανεία a Thess. 2: 8; 1 Tim. 6: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 1, 8; Titus 2:13. Lastly, as to φανερόω, Col. 3: 4; 1 Peter 5: 4; 1 John 2: 28, and 1 John 3: 2.

It is only needful to remark that, though (as already proved) we are not here below until the appearing of Christ, it is only then, and not before, that the result of faithfulness, or the want of it, will be manifested. The labourer is to work patiently, and it may be hiddenly, in view of that day. Though still the παρουσία, it is more than the presence of the Lord; it is the revelation, appearing, or manifestation, as the case may be. Be it noted, further, that the appearing of Christ is still His coming, although His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing. Thus, when Christ comes to take the

church first of all, it is His coming, but not His appearing, save to them that look for Him. But when afterwards He is revealed in view of the world, vindicating the ways of God both as to His enemies and His friends, it is still His coming, while, as a distinctive thing, it is His day, or the epiphany of His presence, as it is termed in 2 Thess. 2: 8. The recent Swiss version renders the entire verse thus: "Et alors sera révélé l'inique, lui que le Seigneur détruira par l'esprit de sa bouche, et rendra impuissant par l'apparition de son arrivée (ou présence)."

Matt. 24: 23-31 falls in with this view. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." It is His coming in connection with His earthly rights. Rejected of this generation as the Christ, He comes as Son of man (in which capacity He is never presented as coming to take the church). "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." These are demonstrably not the church, because they are gathered subsequent to His appearing. The church, on the other hand, will have been translated before. For "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Our manifestation in glory cannot be after His manifestation. Christ and the church are to be manifested together.

Hence the signs specified in this chapter are demonstrably to elect Jewish disciples indices of His appearing. They are not to be regarded therefore as interfering with the posture of the church continually waiting for the Lord from heaven. They are signs for a remnant in special relation with Judea, who will be awaiting the coming of the Son of man. No signs of this or of any other description were ever put before the church, as such, whereby to judge of the near approach of Christ to take her to Himself. On the contrary, what the Holy Ghost taught the church is, to a simple mind, inconsistent with such indications: she was to be expecting always, because she knew not the moment of His coming. The apostle (1 John 2: 18) would have even the babes to know that it is the last time; and this, not from the spread of the Spirit of Christ, but from the presence of many antichrists. But, although they had heard that the Antichrist should come, no signs to be seen, no evils to reach the climax, no specific tribulations, are ever put before them, as events necessarily retarding the coming of the Lord to take the church. For the Bride the one heavenly sign is the presence of the Bridegroom Himself. But for a converted remnant of Jews, of whom the Lord has graciously thought in the instructions of Matt. 24, there are signs which will be assuredly given in due time before the coming of the Son of man.

Now it is precisely here that the Revelation affords so distinct a light, showing us the position of the glorified in heaven, Christ having come and taken them to Himself; and afterwards, during the interval of our absence in heaven before we appear along with Him, God's dealings, testimonies, judgments, and deliverances on earth. The Epistles gave us simply the fact of the rapture of those saints, but did not inform as to the length of the interval before the appearing and the kingdom. That such an interval existed might have been gathered: but whether long or short, or how filled up, does not appear in the Epistles. The Revelation furnishes that which was lacking upon the subject, and connects, without confounding, the church caught up to the Lord on high, with certain witnesses to be raised up during the closing term of the age on earth before He appears in judgment.

As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said in general, that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. Certainly it is not an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than

in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, Who of course was then as ever the faith-giving, quickening agent, was not yet given, i.e. in the new unprecedented way of personal presence as sent down from heaven, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and life eternal (John 6: 35, 47, 68, 69), were not yet baptised by the Holy Ghost into one body. (Compare Acts 1: 5 with 1 Cor. 12: 13). In a word, the church was not yet built nor begun to be built: "Upon this rock," says the Lord, "I will build my church (Matt. 16: 18).

On the other hand the Acts historically, and the Epistles doctrinally, describe a different state of things as then existing: Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were thereby constituted one body, the church. Christ had taken His place as Head of the body above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, Who is Head over all things. Such is the mystery of Christ, which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for a time drops out of sight in consequence of the calling of that heavenly body.

The doctrine of the church is clearly concurrent with the one hope, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him — along with this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord, for which I am here contending, stands or falls. None of the school of interpreters commonly called "the Protestant school" understood by the church anything more, at best, than the Augustinian notion of an invisible company from the beginning to the end of time. None of them therefore has an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The consequence is that, if they read of saints in Daniel, in the Psalms, or in the Revelation, they are at once set down as of the church. If they read of "this gospel of the kingdom" in Matt. 24, or of "the everlasting gospel," it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls "my gospel," the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any speciality in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct, and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that the Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the church that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant; viz., the day of the Lord, the Son of man seen by all the tribes of the earth, and coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Nor is the truth of the church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only; it is equally an object of dislike to most of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heterodoxies, which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study toward the beginning and the close of the years 1830 to 1850, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the church cannot but affect Him Whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and in the long run, that which dishonours the Spirit goes far to disfigure or deny the Person and work of Him of Whom the Spirit is the vicar.

In the Epistles, it is beyond doubt that the church is continually addressed as if there were no understood, necessary, revealed hindrances to the rapture at the coming of the Lord. How could this be if the church be the same body as those saints who are described in Daniel, the Psalms, etc., as being

destined to certain fiery trials still future from a little Horn which is to wax greater to the highest degree, and his satellites who are yet to appear? How comes it that the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the coming of the Lord, never hints at this tribulation, as one through which the church must pass; but always presents His presence as an immediate hope which might occur at one unknown moment to another? That this inspired man understood the just application of these prophecies, better than any since his day, is that which few Christians will question. They were scriptures long revealed and familiar to Jews; and the Lord Jesus in Matt. 24 had very significantly linked His fresh revelations upon that occasion with the predictions of Daniel. Yet the Holy Ghost, in His constant allusions throughout the writings apostolic to the future hopes of the church, never once refers to those terrible circumstances as a future scene wherein the church is to enact a part. On the contrary, the way in which the coming of the Lord is put before the saints, as a thing to be constantly looked for, seems incompatible with it. We have examined the only statement in the Epistles which might appear to interpose such a barrier; and we have seen that, so far from contradicting the thought of immediateness, the apostle seeks to relieve the Thessalonian saints from all uneasiness about the day of the Lord and its troubles, by the blessed hope of His coming and their gathering unto Him, two things in his mind indissolubly bound together. It is a gathering unto Him, which must be before He appears to the world for its judgment, because He and they are to appear together. It is certain moreover, that there must arrive the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin, not before the coming, but before the day, of the Lord. His coming will gather the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below.

The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which "the prince that shall come" plays his terrible role. "And he shall confirm a covenant" [see margin and compare Isa. 28: 15] "with the many" (*i.e.* of Daniel's people, the Jews) for one week. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or consumption, as in Isa. 28: 22), "and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9: 27). That the desolator is not the Roman prince is manifest. He is hostile to both. The latter prince is described as one "that shall come," after the Messiah had already appeared and been cut off (as is plain from verse 26). There is also the certainty that "the prince that shall come" is the chief of the Roman people. For his people "shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." We all know who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple — the people of this future prince.

The latter part of the twenty-sixth verse does not continue the thread of the history farther than the general expression, "and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." In the last verse we are transported to the epoch of "the prince that shall come," and his actings during the last week of the age. This period is shown to be broken into two parts, during the former of which, according to a covenant, Jewish worship is resumed; but "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

Nor is it in chap. 9 only. If Dan. 7 be consulted, it will be seen that there is a certain little Horn rising after the ten Horns of the fourth Roman Beast, before whom three of the first Horns fell — "that horn that had eyes and a mouth, that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows" (ver. 20). "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (or, of the high places), and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time" (ver. 25). Is it not evident that in chap. 7 is a Horn or king whose blasphemous pride brings judgment upon the Beast or Roman empire? that his interference with times and laws (that is, with Jewish ceremonial order) continues for three years and a half? and that for the same space of time, or the last half week, "the prince that shall come," the Roman

prince of chap. 9, overthrows this ceremonial worship? For the Jew is still unbelieving and unpurged.

Now the Revelation not only takes up the last half of Daniel's week (Rev. 11, 12, 13) but shows what is the place of the church during this period. This truth it was not given to the Jewish prophet to reveal; because it was that which supposed and fitly followed the revelation of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. Paul had given us the church waiting for the presence of the Lord. What is it that the Holy Ghost adds by John? What is the main outline seen in the Revelation?

After the vision of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1 we have "the things that are," in epistles to the Seven Churches, so conveyed as to apply not only at that time, but as long as the church subsists on earth. Then comes the properly prophetic part, "the things which should be after" the church-condition had passed away. Throughout the prophetic portion of the book, the church is never described as being on earth. At the close of the third chapter it altogether disappears from earthly view. Instead of the churches being any longer traced here below, a door is opened in heaven; and the prophet is called up there to see "the things which must come to pass after these," *i.e.* after "the things which are," or the church regarded in the completeness of its varying phases on earth. Besides other things (the throne, and One that sat upon it being the centre of the vision), John sees, not seven candlesticks, but, suited to the new circumstances of heaven, four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and on their heads golden crowns.

Thus we have, in vision, the place and functions of the saints after they shall have been taken up to meet the Lord, and before their manifestation with Him in glory. Here is the simple reason. The way in which He and they are here represented emblematically is totally different from what is revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, etc.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Rev. 19: 11, and in Rev. 20: 4-6. For can the scene in Rev. 4, 5 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the glorified being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God? It is a quite distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling have even now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length, and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. For it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

But quite distinctly the purpose of the Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God (whether the facts be expressed or understood), — but dealings which involve a certain condition of things that was future, if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the seven Epistles — "the things" in short "which must be after" those actually subsisting at this time. Nor can Rev. 4, and Rev. 5 be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the church. How could the departed who are with Christ be in fairness symbolised by twenty-four elders? that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so to be ever with the Lord. Accordingly, here they are represented as in heaven, the Lord being also there; and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government.

In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odours, "which are the prayers of saints." And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them,* *i.e.* these saints, to their God, kings and priests. And they should reign over the earth. The fulfilment is seen in Rev. 20: 4-6: the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolised by the elders, but also of the Apocalyptic sufferers after that on earth.

Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings, thunderings, etc., suit neither the day of grace nor the millennial state. Earth is certainly not then brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of a peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by-and-by, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it. It is judicial.

* In the text preferred by some critics, which omits αὐτοὺς "them," the sense is general, laying stress on the Lamb's having redeemed "out of every tribe," etc. It is the blessed fact so glorious to Him, rather than bringing its objects into prominence. But as most accept the pronoun, the observation founded on it is left.

But those above exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed chief-priests. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at the time when (as all confess) earth is still unreconciled, however there may be the anticipative song of every creature in the next chapter. If this be true, it follows that the Lord's coming to meet the saints takes place between Rev. 3 and 4 (if the thought be pursued, which I doubt not, that Rev. 6-19 will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis), room being left there for His coming described in 1 Thess. 4 and elsewhere.

Then the properly prophetic part begins, when of course the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the glorified. It is plain that another character of testimony from that of the church properly is announced. For God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now; that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Rev. 19: 11 ushers in.

On this coming state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light. For it seems plain that the saints of the Most High or heavenlies, of whom we read in Dan. 7, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the glorified and before the Lord's appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This, be it noted, is the Spirit of prophecy. Yet, though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in "the first resurrection."

Let it be remarked, that this term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time. It simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. The truth of this seems manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection; yet He nevertheless rose before the church more than 1800 years at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the church is gone.

The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till

Rev. 19. They enter into God's ways and judgments, as interested in whatever affected His glory, as may be seen in Rev. 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 19. But in chap. 19 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear. The time for the marriage being come (and how evidently the church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried!), the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is only then announced as made ready.

The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in the eleventh verse, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful. These expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by "the armies," if any one should have a doubt. It is the glorified who were in heaven, following Christ in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen white and clean.

Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The prophet sees the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know, as it ought never to be doubted (vers. 17-21).

In Rev. 20 follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetic revelation of the sitting on thrones, or, at least, of the living and reigning with Christ, during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from what we saw as to some of them in Rev. 4 and 5. But they all reign with Christ for a thousand years.

It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the church properly so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the glorified are seen in completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders (chap. 4, 5), we hear in Rev. 6: 9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance. The announcement to them is that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the church, but saints on earth after the glorified are in heaven; their sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile saints, it is not named here.

In Rev. 7 we have a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel, sealed with the seal of the living God; and after this an innumerable crowd out of all nations, etc., who are characterised as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These groups are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other; and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the glorified. For we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders (*i.e.* the confessed symbol of the glorified) still represented as a separate party in the scene* (ver. 11).

* I cannot concur in the view put forth in the most voluminous and elaborate comment of modern times upon this book, namely, that the sealed hundred and forty-four thousand are identical with the innumerable palm-bearing multitude; the latter embodying the idea of the different generations of the former in a corporate form! (for the idea of the church as one body here below by the presence of the

Holy Ghost is utterly denied, and unceasingly distorted, in this system of interpretation). But Mr. Elliott allows that the twenty-four elders represent the church in the character of a royal priesthood. No one denies that the glorified, in different scenes, may be set forth by different symbols. But how comes it not only that these distinct symbols are in the same scene, but that one of the elders is found explaining who, what, and whence the multitude are? and that the description is of those who, among other things, come out of a particular tribulation, and thus form a peculiar class? Nor is this denied by Mr. Elliott, who connects "the great" with the fifth seal, as the complement of the sufferers there, though another and distinct body. Again, if Israel, in verse 4, are to be understood symbolically, why not "all nations," in verse 9, which are plainly distinguished from the preceding company? And if the election out of Jews be the emblem of Christians, how come these same persons immediately after to be characterised as an election out of Gentiles? Where is the consistency of treating the former as symbolical, and the latter as literal? and the more so, as it is in the latter picture that various mystic personages appear, such as the four living creatures and the elders.

Under the trumpets again it is that we find the prayers of "all the saints" alluded to, who are of course supposed to be still on earth (compare Rev. 8: 3, 4, with Rev. 5: 8), and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9: 4).

Further, in the eleventh chapter are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed; in the twelfth, the woman persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. This evidently is accomplished by the Beast of Rev. 13, who makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

The fourteenth chapter consists of a sevenfold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Zion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment for the Bestial worshippers; the blessedness from henceforth of those dying in the Lord; the harvest of the earth (out of which had been redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as first-fruits to God and the Lamb); and lastly, the vintage of the same. The reader has only to weigh verses 12, 13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest, the portion too, not of the glorified (for we shall not all sleep), but of a special class of sufferers here below, while the glorified are hidden above.

In Rev. 15 (preparatory to Rev. 16, i.e. the seven outpoured bowls of the wrath of God) is heard the song of the conquerors over the Beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of the nations. Compare also Rev. 16: 5, 6, 15; Rev. 17: 6; Rev. 18: 4-6.

Now it will not be forgotten that to those who kept the word of Christ's patience (Rev. 3: 10) the promise was to be kept (not in, or during, but) "from" the hour of trial, and so out of the fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth. But in the preceding scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the glorified to heaven, there are saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles, who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Rev. 20: 4 as having part, equally with those glorified, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses, first, the general place of the glorified in the millennial reign, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." Next come those killed in the earlier persecution of the book (Rev. 6: 9-11), "And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God." Thirdly are the later

witnesses for God, "and those who had not worshipped the beast," etc. (Rev. 15: 2). Those saints, who were called and suffered after the rapture of the glorified are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ's body before He comes for His own, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the Beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews, or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. The two later classes suffer, are out off, but are not forgotten. "They lived and reigned with Christ the thousand years," as well as the first general class.

Thus the truth, brought to light in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honoured servant to enunciate — viz., the blessed condition and holy employ of the glorified round the throne and the Lamb, after their removal from earth, but previous to their appearing with Christ in glory.

The central part of the Revelation thus appears to corroborate, on an irrefragable basis, the truth that the glorified will be taken away and fulfil the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord. During that same time other saints are still groaning, who shed their blood like water here below (Ps. 74, Ps. 79).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book, and confirms the view, so bright to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord, without one earthly obstacle between. Thus is kept unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming *with* all His saints, not *for* them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies; not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence, it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Cor. 15 he says, "Behold I show you a mystery," and in 1 Thess. 4, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear I "I am the Root and the Offspring of David; the bright, the morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come." It would be to lose or at least to misuse the prophetic sayings of this book, were we to have any other hope than that Jesus is coming quickly (Rev. 22: 7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the awful end, we can thus detect the principles now at work.

But it is a mistake to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord; to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God I such is not the language of the Spirit. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But who will say that it is conceivable to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time to have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day?

That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4), is clear; and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13). But "this same Jesus" is far more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. He is known to the church, at any rate, as the bright, the morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to those who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night I "And the Spirit and the bride

say, Come." The weakest Christian too can join: "and let him that heareth say, Come."

"He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus."

W. K.