

THE PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

No. 11.—July, 1882.

I.

RECENT ETHICAL THEORY.

THE attitude of recent science and of recent speculations in the field of science, with respect to their bearing on ethical theory, has come to be regarded with lively and, to some extent, anxious interest by those conversant with these subjects. The reason for this, which is twofold, may readily be seen.

In the first place, it is felt that now as heretofore a true ethical theory is of primary importance; and this chiefly on two grounds: First, because the right conduct of life is the highest interest alike of society and of the individual, and it is not presumable that an adequate code of ethical maxims can ever spring from a false ethical theory; and second, because a true ethical theory is the finished product, and hence the test and criterion of right thinking in the inferior branches of knowledge. The normal movement of thought is from the physical to the metaphysical, and in metaphysics from the psychological to the ethical. Thus the ethical becomes in one sense the touchstone of all that precedes it. No reasoning can be accounted adequate that will not bear the strain of an ethical application. Whatever makes for wrong doing instead of right doing carries with it its own refutation. The taint of moral defect betrays a previous taint of false logic and false philosophy.

In the next place, it is not to be questioned that much of recent speculation in the field of science wears a hostile look toward all the old accepted tenets of ethical philosophy. The attitude, though less pronounced here than in some other directions, is yet not less certain and decided. The new philosophy, whether true or false, may

II.

IS THE ADVENT PRE-MILLENNIAL?*

IT is agreed by the most of Christians that the Word of God predicts an age of universal righteousness and peace as yet to dawn upon the earth. Instead of the present dominance of sin and error, we are to see a time in which holiness and truth shall everywhere prevail. To give all the Scriptures which teach this, would be to cite a very considerable part of the Old and New Testaments.† Because this blessed period has been identified by very many expositors with the thousand years of the binding of Satan, predicted in Rev. xx. 2, 3, it has come to be popularly known as the millennium. We shall, therefore, use this familiar term for convenience' sake, in the present discussion, to denote the period in question, though without meaning thereby to insist on that exegesis of Rev. xx, which has given rise to this employment of the Word. So also, as it is agreed that the Scripture tells us of a coming golden age when "in all the earth there shall be one Lord and His name one," no less do all evangelical Christians profess to believe, that, according to the same "sure word of prophecy," at some future time, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth in kingly power, as Judge of the living and the dead.

The question which it is proposed to discuss in the present paper does not respect the truth of either of these plain doctrines of the Word; it only involves the order of the predicted events. We inquire, Granted that the Word of God does teach us to expect a

* The present writer has been requested by the editors to prepare an article in exposition of the pre-millennialist position as regards the second advent of our Lord. In complying with this request, he is to be regarded as simply speaking for himself, and claiming to represent authoritatively no body of men as such. At the same time, as regards the fundamental questions involved, he believes himself to be in essential agreement with such conservative pre-millenarians as, *e.g.*, the late Prof. R. J. Breckenridge, the late Prof. Auberlen, the late Dean Alford, and other eminent expositors and theologians of the same school among the dead and the living.

† See, *e.g.* Ps. xii. 8, 9; xxii. 27; Is. lx., lxx. 16, 17-25; Dan. vii. 27, Zech. xiv. 9, 20, 21, and the third petition of the Lord's prayer.

millennial age of righteousness, does it teach us that we are to expect such a transformation of the world as shall realize the glowing predictions of the prophets before the return of the Lord Jesus? To this question the writer is constrained, in common with a large proportion of the ablest expositors of our day, to return a decided negative. Among the reasons which constrain him to this conclusion are more especially the following.

1. We have searched the Bible in vain for any plain declaration of a millennium, which must precede the advent. At best, the assertion of this doctrine rests only on human inference from the Scriptures, and on no direct affirmation of the Word. Silence, of course, is not always proof; but in this case we argue that the fact of the silence of the Scripture affords a very weighty presumption against the truth of the doctrine in question. Those who affirm this doctrine of a millennium before the advent, very properly, if they are in the right, make much of it. It is not a truth which they think ought to be kept in the background. Few doctrines are made more prominent than this. It is asserted to be of very great practical consequence in its bearing upon missionary work, as, indeed, if true, it is. If true, therefore, it is not a matter on which we should expect the Scripture to keep silence or leave all to uncertain human inference. Yet where in all the New Testament is there a single clear declaration to the effect that centuries of truly Christian, national and social life must roll over the earth before the Lord's return can be rightfully expected? The omission is the more significant that the Lord does not seem to have been at all unwilling to indicate, in answer to the questioning of His disciples, what they were to expect before His second coming. Once and again He tells them what they were to look for before His return, but among such events He never mentions the conversion of the world. In the 24th of Matthew's Gospel and the parallel passages, we have a long discourse formally intended to set forth the nature and order of the events which from that time on should occur before His coming, but there is not so much as an allusion to the dawning of an age of millennial holiness among them. He tells us, indeed, that "this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations," but instead of adding, that as the result of this, a blessed age of righteousness would follow, He simply says, "then shall the end come."* How passing strange,

* Prof. Van Oosterzee remarks that the addition of these words "for a witness" "points not indistinctly to a hostile resistance. That all nations must, as nations, have accepted of this Gospel and been brought into the outward church before the Lord comes in glory, is by no means taught in these words."—"Image of Christ," p. 452. See also in his "Christian Dogmatics," Sec. cxlv. pp. 795-6).

if the Lord Jesus knew that the glorious predictions of the Old Testament prophets about the full subjection of the world to Him were all to be fulfilled before He could come again, that He should not have alluded to this inspiring truth in a discourse delivered *for the express purpose* of teaching the Church what she was to expect before the advent! And what is true of the Master, is true also of the disciples. Paul, at a later day, had occasion to take up this same question of the necessary antecedents of the advent. But neither does he suggest, even when formally treating of the subject, that a millennium was to be expected before the Thessalonians could rightfully expect the appearing of the Lord. On the contrary, the only necessary antecedent which he mentions, is the full development of then existing evil into full-grown apostasy and the consequent revelation of "the man of sin."* No more does Peter seem to know of this doctrine than Paul. He had occasion to state the purpose of the present preaching of the Gospel to the heathen, but he does not say that it was to convert the nations, but simply "to take out of the Gentiles a people for his name."† Is that the way in which we are wont to hear the object of missions stated in our missionary journals and conventions? We have known a man to be inferred to be a pre-millenarian for simply using Peter's statement on this subject. Nor does John give different testimony. He has little to say of the last times as such, but he never drops a word which could lead one to suspect that he expected as their grand characteristic a general triumph of the Gospel before the coming of the Lord. An anti-christ he expected,‡ but as to any world-conversion, he is as silent as the rest. Nor is all this because none of these speak of the distant future, but only of the darker future near to their own time. Both Paul and Peter formally state what shall be the character of the times more immediately before the advent, and they both represent them as not good, but evil days, for the church and the world. Peter tells us, 2 Peter iii. 1-5, that the last days shall be marked by a denial of the doctrine of the coming of the Lord to judgment, based upon an affirmation of the uniformity of the laws of nature and a wilful ignoring of the evidence that the world was created by the fiat of a personal God. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 1-5, gives a picture differing from that of Peter in that he is apparently portraying the condition of the visible church, while Peter describes that of the world; but a millennium is no more intimated in the one case than in the other. "A form of godliness" without its "power" suggests

* 2 Thess. ii. 3.

† Acts xv. 14.

‡ 1 John ii. 18.

something very different from the Old Testament pictures of the triumph of Christ's Kingdom. To sum up, pre-millennialists claim to be able to point out many passages in which an age of righteousness and holiness on earth is represented as *following* the advent of the Lord. Many of these are so clear that all on both sides agree that such a succession is taught in the Scripture. We ask those who insist that a millennium must yet occur *before* the advent, to point out one equally clear passage wherein the coming of the Lord is represented as introduced or *preceded* by a long and blessed reign of righteousness in a converted world. A Biblical statement to this effect has been often asked for, but to this day, so far as we know, it has never been given. Until such a passage has been clearly pointed out, we must still urge that under all the circumstances the fact that the New Testament nowhere asserts that such a millennial period must precede the advent, affords at least very strong presumptive evidence that no such period is before that time to be expected.

But it is argued that certain passages of Scripture do at least warrant the *inference* that a full triumph of the Gospel is to be expected before the coming of the Lord. Among these Scriptures we may note, first of all, the parable of the leaven, in Matt. xiii. 33. But granting that this parable does teach us that the kingdom of God shall work as an inward transforming power, and that at last all the world shall be subject to its blessed influence, surely this involves no teaching one way or the other as to the precise point before us. The question is *not* as to the transforming power of the Gospel, nor as to its final triumph, but as to *when* and under what conditions the final triumph shall be reached, whether with or without a personal advent of the Lord in His judicial power. On this matter the parable is absolutely silent, and affords no justification for the conclusion which some have drawn from it. It is indeed urged that the illustration of a gradual permeation, as by leaven, excludes the idea that the final supremacy of the Gospel on earth shall be brought about by any such catastrophe as a personal advent of the Lord in judgment. Plausible as this appears, however, the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. ii., interpreted by Daniel of the same general subject of the final triumph of the kingdom of God, should have made expositors less confident than some have been in their conclusions from the parable of the leaven. In that vision also, the expansive power of the kingdom of God was represented under the image of growth. A stone grew until it "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Had that been all, one might have argued there as here, that the illustration excluded any great catastrophe of judgment as another element in bringing

about the final triumph of the heavenly kingdom. But this latter element, which is not mentioned in the parable of the leaven,* is explicitly set forth in this prophetic vision. The image is represented as being smitten by the Stone upon its feet, *i.e.*, according to the interpretation of the prophet, in its latest chronological form. As a consequence of this it is not transmuted, but annihilated, and not until then is the stone represented as so growing as to fill the whole earth. But if the growth of the stone as representing the kingdom of God, did not exclude a great catastrophe of judgment, destroying the world power, in the former case, what right have we to assume that the illustration of the leaven, as setting forth the growth of the kingdom of God, does exclude a similar catastrophe, and necessarily teaches that the predicted triumph of the kingdom must be antecedent to the manifestation of the Lord in judgment? Indeed, the history of the church itself is a sufficient evidence that this much-quoted parable was not intended as an exhaustive statement of the causes which should bring about the final supremacy on earth of the kingdom of God. It is only designed to teach a single aspect of the subject, that from small beginnings the kingdom of God works in the world as an inward, transforming power. That this is true, no one can doubt. But it is equally true that this fact has not thus far excluded many great catastrophes, which have contributed, each in their measure, to bring about at last the predicted end. But if the terms *have not* in fact excluded, for example, such destructive visitations as the overthrow of Jerusalem and judgment of the Jewish state, how do the terms exclude what we insist that the Old and New Testament prophets no less clearly predict, a still more terrible judgment of the Gentile world, accompanied by the appearing of the Lord in flaming fire, as the last antecedent to the full subjugation of the world to Christ?

Others, again, argue that the conversion of all nations before the coming of the Lord, is clearly implied, if not directly asserted, in the terms of the great commission, as given by Matthew, "Go ye, and make disciples of all the nations." Does not this plainly teach that

* The obvious reason for the omission of this element in this parable is the fact that the judgment is mentioned in other parables of the series, as, *e.g.*, that of the tares. This parable of the tares alone, to our mind, clearly excludes the doctrine of a millennium before the advent. We heartily accept the following words of Archbishop Trench as to its teaching: "We learn that evil is not, as so many dream, gradually to wane and to disappear before good, the world before the church, but is ever to develop itself more fully: even as on the other side, good is to unfold itself more and more mightily also. Thus it will go on, till at last they stand face to face, each in its highest manifestation, in the persons of Christ and of Antichrist." ("Notes on the Parables," 11th Amer. ed., p. 85: see also p. 90.)

the nations will be converted, and that by the simple preaching of the Gospel, before the second coming of the Lord? This truly is a strange argument to hear from Calvinists! When we argue against Pelagians, we are accustomed to say that the fact that a command is given, is *not* proof that it is either in the ability of man or in the plan of God that what is commanded be actually accomplished. That Christians are commanded to be absolutely perfect is not to be doubted. Shall we, then, on the same principle that is assumed in this interpretation of the great commission, also agree that we are to expect to see sinless perfection in this life? The truth is, that in neither case is the command intended to teach that the end for which we are bidden to strive will be certainly attained. In both cases alike the command is simply intended to set before Christians the goal at which the Lord will have them aim. Thus if He commands us to be perfect, He means that He will have us aim at this. We are not to relax our efforts so long as we come in the least short of a perfect likeness to our heavenly Father. Precisely so in the other case. The scope of our commission is co-extensive with the world. The disciples were not to preach to the Jews alone, but seek to make disciples of the Gentiles also. So long as there is one nation or one family in any nation that is not yet disciplined to Christ, so long are we to continue laboring. But that the conversion of the nations, in the full, broad sense of that word, will not have been accomplished a thousand years or more before the advent, is suggested, if not indeed clearly taught, by the very terms of the promise annexed, to be with us always, of course with special reference to the work commanded, "even unto the end of the age."

According to others, again, the doctrine of the conversion of the world before the advent is taught in Rom. xi. 25, where we read that "blindness in part is happened to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." These words have been said to teach that "the Gentiles as a body, the mass of the Gentile world, will be converted before the restoration of the Jews as a nation," and, therefore, by necessary consequence, before the appearing of the Lord. This interpretation, be it noted, if lexically possible, is not necessitated, as Meyer, *e.g.*, admits, by the meaning of the words. It is only one interpretation which the words as such will bear. But to this exposition of the passage there are two fatal objections. In the first place, it makes the world at the time of the conversion of the Jews, to be in a converted state, and therefore filled with righteousness; whereas, the Old Testament prophets, whenever they refer to the matter, uniformly represent the state of the Gentile world at the time of

Israel's restoration, to be, on the contrary, so extremely bad as to call down the most overwhelming judgments upon all the nations among whom the Jews shall be found scattered. Thus we read in Joel iii. of great judgments as to come on the Gentiles at the time of the restoration of Israel, and the moral condition of the nations at that time is described, not as that of converted peoples, but in the following language: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about; put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe, for *their wickedness is great.*" To the same effect does the prophet Zechariah depict the condition of the Gentile nations in the 14th chapter of his prophecy, where he represents the nations at the time of Israel's final restoration as guilty of the most frightful excesses. In a word, nowhere in the Old Testament do the prophets teach us that the Gentiles will be in a converted state at the time of the restoration of Israel, but that on the contrary, they will then be visited with terrible judgments because of their sins. In the second place, whereas, according to the interpretation under discussion, the conversion of the Gentile nations as such precedes the conversion of Israel and is a cause of it, the Old Testament prophets state the reverse order, and make the conversion of Israel to precede the conversion of the Gentile nations as such, and to be indeed in some way the cause or occasion of it. Thus, in Jer. iv. 1, 2, the dependence of the conversion of the Gentiles upon the turning of Israel to the Lord, as the pre-ordained condition, is expressly asserted, thus: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto Me; and if thou wilt put away thy abominations out of thy sight, then thou shalt not remove . . . and the nations shall bless themselves in Him and in Him shall they glory." Even the apostle Paul himself in this same 11th chapter, seems to teach the same doctrine, saying: "If the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them again be but life from the dead?"* We are compelled, therefore, to infer that it is not the conversion of the Gentile nations as such that will have the effect of "provoking the Jews to jealousy, so that they may obtain mercy," but the saving of the complement to the *election out of this present dispensation prior* to Israel's redemption, which will at last contribute to this blessed effect. We thus are constrained on the ground of what seems to us

* See also Zech. ii. 8-11; viii. 13, 20-23; xiv. 9, noting context, especially xii. 10, *et seq.*, in all which reference to the restoration from Babylon is utterly excluded. Bengel, in his *Gnomon*, *loc. cit.*, also makes the conversion of the Gentile nations to follow that of Israel.

the clear and direct teachings of the Old Testament prophets, to maintain that the words of the apostle Paul in Rom. xi. 25, do not prove what they are adduced to prove. But space will not allow further detail. We can only affirm, in general, with regard to all the passages that are adduced to prove that there will be a millennium before the advent, that in no case does any one of them assert that order, nor do the words in any case justify the inference which some have sought to draw from them. We repeat, then, that the Scripture nowhere declares that we are to expect a millennium of righteousness before the Lord can come, and that, under all the circumstances, this silence raises a very strong presumption against this expectation.

2. In the line of the same argument it is to be remarked that the presumption against the asserted order is further strengthened by the fact that the predicted subjection of the nations to the Lord is never held up in the New Testament as a motive to the extension of the Gospel. Assuredly if the conversion of all nations is to be the grand result of all our evangelistic efforts, then it is most fitting that it should be continually held up as one of the great motives to press forward with the work. That in fact it is so used as a great motive to zeal and activity, every one knows who has attended a missionary meeting or reads our religious papers. But it is no less certain that this motive of which we in these days hear so much, is never *once* held up as a motive by our Lord or His apostles. The first preachers certainly had much more need of this encouragement than we have in these days of peace and quietness and much Christian profession, yet the Lord never gives it to them. He sets before them many motives to faithfulness in the proclamation of His Gospel, but the conversion of the world is never one of those motives. The contrast with the modern style of awakening missionary zeal is most suggestive and is in itself a weighty argument. We claim that this fact as regards the practice of our Lord and His apostles is simply inexplicable, except upon the supposition that the Lord anticipated no such issue from the preaching of His servants. How else are we to account for the omission to use this great motive?

3. But not only are the Scriptures silent as to any conversion of the world before the advent, when they might be expected by all means to speak, but they categorically teach what we are utterly unable to reconcile with such a doctrine. In the first place, the teaching of the Word of God as to the uncertainty of the advent is such as absolutely forbids any man to affirm that the advent is impossible in his generation, and that a millennium must come first. "Watch, for ye know

not when the time is," is the sum of our Lord's teaching on this subject. Not once, but again and again, are we charged that we remember the uncertainty of the time. We are told that when the Lord comes, it will be like "a snare," like "the lightning," like "the thief at night." How are such illustrations to be reconciled with the doctrine that a millennium must yet begin and end before the Lord can possibly appear? Were these illustrations only intended for the benefit of those who shall be living after this expected millennium shall have run its course? But how could the coming of the Lord be thus unexpected to believers, when the long millennium, the greatest and the most indubitable of all signs, should have come and gone? And let us note how carefully the Lord chooses His words; so carefully that one would think that this theory of a millennium which must needs precede His coming could never have found a hearing in the church. For He said, expressly including both the near and the distant future in His language, "Watch ye, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh—at *even*, or at *midnight*, or at the *cock-crow*ing, or in the *morning*." And, as if this were not enough, He explicitly declares that these words applied alike to those who at that time heard them, and all others: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." We have a right to insist that those who tell us so confidently that the Lord will not come till a millennium shall have come and gone, that is, until the morning watch, shall explain clearly what the Lord meant by saying that we know not but that His coming may be in an earlier watch? It is the fashion of many such interpreters to expatiate, with a severity not undeserved, on the error of another class of prophetic expositors, who from time to time announce the year in which the coming of the Lord may be expected. They justly charge them with ignoring those plain words of Christ which tell us that no man knows the time. But is not the rebuke often no less deserved by many who in this rebuke others? Do not the same words which forbid us all to fix any date in the *near* future by which the Lord *must* come, equally forbid us to fix any time in the more *distant* future, before which He *cannot* come? Just at this point the controversy comes to have not only a speculative, but a practical bearing. For while we are none of us required to have a certain theory of prophecy, with all the events of the future mapped out in their order, we are required to obey the commandments of the Lord. Of these commands no one is more emphasized than this, that because the time of His return is so utterly uncertain, we should be ever on the watch for Him. After all that has been said to the contrary, we are yet at an utter loss to

see how any man who really believes that a thousand years of universally prevailing righteousness are yet before the church, can possibly obey this particular commandment. We affirm, with the utmost confidence, that this command to watch carries with it, by necessary implication, a command to regard the coming of the Lord as always possibly at hand. To this effect the statement of our Confession of Faith in chapter xxxiii. section 3, has been rightly interpreted as teaching that "the designed effect of the attitude of uncertainty with regard to the second advent in which the saints are placed is, that they should regard it as *always immediately impending*."* How the confident teaching which one often hears as to the coming millennium before the advent of the Lord can be reconciled with the words of Scripture and the above clear exposition of those words as set forth in the Westminster Confession, we have never yet been able to understand.

To all this it is rejoined by Dr. Brown,† for example, that our Lord gave clear intimations of so much that must take place before He would return, that it is plain that He could not have intended that the generation then living should regard His advent as possible in their day. To this assertion it were enough to reply that our Lord expressly said that the disciples then living did not know but that He might come "in the even," in that earliest watch of the night. It is perfectly certain that He did not intend any intimation of delay to be so explicit as to neutralize these words. Nor, indeed, is there anything in the terms of any prediction of a delay in His appearing, to indicate the length of that delay. We read these passages now, in the light of eighteen hundred years of history. But the early church had no experience to guide or suggest to them such a long interval as has proved to be intimated in these predictions. Is it said, "After a *long time* the Lord of those servants cometh"? True, but the "long time" of the parable was comprehended in the lifetime of a man; and what was there to make them think it must needs be more in the fulfilment than in the parable itself? Did He say that "the Gospel must first be published among all nations"? True again, and we see now, how much time, through the remissness of the church, that preaching was to require. But how should they have known this? How should they have known, any more than we ourselves to-day, how extensive a preaching was to be understood as necessary to the purpose of "a witness" to all nations? Already, within thirty years,

* Commentary on the Confession of Faith, by Professor A. A. Hodge, D.D., p. 536.

† In his work on "The Second Advent."

Paul could write to the Colossians, as if perhaps these words might have been already fulfilled, and say that the Gospel had gone forth "in all the world" (Col. i. 6). We must not read into these passages ideas of time which the words themselves do not of necessity convey, and could not have conveyed to the minds of those who first heard them. But Dr. Brown refers with great confidence to the words of Paul in 1 Thess. ii. 1, 2, where, according to the authorized version, he exhorts the Thessalonians that they "be not soon shaken in mind, . . . as that the day of Christ is at hand," and tells them that that day cannot come "except there come a falling away first." Here, it is urged, is a passage which effectually sets aside the whole force of this argument from the uncertainty of the Lord's coming and the consequent duty of regarding the advent as "always possibly near." Paul, we are told, here expressly forbids the Thessalonians to regard the advent as at hand, and tells them of an evil development which was to precede the advent and would occupy centuries in its growth. Therefore, it is inferred, we are no less at liberty to say that a thousand years of holiness must yet come and go before the Lord can come. To this argument we answer, in the first place, as above, that, however plain it has become to us that the predicted development of evil was to require centuries for its course, there is not a single word in the prediction which should necessarily suggest this. The prophecy contains not a single chronological note, absolutely nothing which, prior to fulfilment, could compel any one to believe that the advent was impossible in that generation. The utmost that the passage could teach was that the advent was not—to use the translation preferred by the American revisers—"just at hand." This might easily be true, and yet the advent, to human knowledge, be so possible within that generation as to make it no less imperative to watch for the indications of its more imminent approach. And that, as a matter of fact, this prophecy, and others which contain these intimations of a delay in the advent, were not understood as necessarily involving any lengthened period, generations before the advent, is a simple matter of historical fact. It was generally believed that the prophecy of "the man of sin" was to be fulfilled in a personal Antichrist, whose whole career would of course be run within a short human lifetime. And it is the notorious fact that the primitive church, with this epistle before them, did generally regard the second advent as quite possible in their own time. With this we might end the discussion of this passage; but it will not be amiss to add yet further considerations which still more completely dispose of Dr. Brown's attempted answer to the

present argument. If the interpretation suggested in the authorized version be taken as correct, it supposes a state of mind among the Thessalonians of which we have no example in the primitive church. In later days it has often been that Christians, under the influence of false teaching, have been "shaken in mind" and "troubled" by the belief that the day of Christ was at hand. Of such a feeling in view of the possible nearness of the advent, the early church seems to have known nothing. On the contrary, to them the advent was an object of the most eager desire and affectionate longing. The sooner it came, the greater reason for the believer to rejoice. The glimpse of the feelings of the Thessalonians, which is given in the first Epistle, shows us that they shared this universal feeling. How then could Paul have written as the authorized version represents him to have written? The difficulty disappears so soon as we adopt the more accurate rendering of the text of the revised version, "Nor yet be troubled, . . . as that the day of the Lord *is now present.*" Thus, what troubled the Thessalonians was *not* the possible imminence of the advent, which could only have filled them with gladness, but what had been suggested by some false teachers, that the day of the Lord was "*now present,*"* and had brought with it no personal return of the Lord, and no resurrection of those whom they had laid to sleep in Jesus. In other words, their error was closely akin to that of Hymenæus and Philetus, of which we elsewhere read, who "concerning the truth had erred, saying that the resurrection was past already." This brings the epistle into full harmony with the historical facts as to the attitude of the Thessalonian and other primitive churches with regard to the advent, and with this interpretation, even more undoubtedly than before, the counter argument of Dr. Brown against our present position vanishes. We conclude that there is really no such limitation placed anywhere in Scripture upon the teaching of the Lord as to the uncertainty of the time of His appearing as makes it impossible for any given generation to regard the advent as possible, and, therefore, to be watched for in their day.

4. But we find in the New Testament another class of statements even more distinctly exclusive of the theory of a millennium of righteousness before the advent. We have in the Gospels and Epistles many passages which professedly describe the condition of the world between the first and the second advents. These descriptions are neither few, nor vague, nor of varied character. They are, on the contrary,

* See Ellicott's Commentary on 2 Thess.; also, Bengel's Gnomon, *loc. cit.*

numerous, distinct, and uniform in their representations. All alike they represent the condition of the world during the absence of the Lord as marked by the dominance of moral evil. Thus, for example, the present order of things as existing in time is called an *αἰὼν* or "age," commonly rendered "world." This *aiou* is represented as continuing till the second coming of the Lord, which is hence called "the end of the age" (Mk. xiii. 39). With His appearing begins another "*aiou*," or "age," called, in distinction from the present, *ὁ νῦν αἰὼν, ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων*, "the age or world to come." What has now the New Testament to say as to this present age, thus represented as stretching from the day of Christ's earthly life quite to His second coming? Absolutely nothing but evil. We are not told that it is partly good and partly bad, or that it was bad in the time of Christ, but might be expected gradually to grow better till it became good. On the contrary, it is condemned throughout. Its wisdom is declared to be a wisdom which comes to nought and is, therefore, folly (1 Cor. ii. 6); its moral characteristic is said to be darkness (Eph. vi. 12); it is called this present *evil* age (Gal. i. 4); it has its god, who is, however, not the true and living God, but the devil (2 Cor. iv. 4); Christ came and gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from it (Gal. i. 4); to it, therefore, we are not to be conformed (Rom. xii. 2); nor, like Demas, to love it (2 Tim. iv. 10), lest Demas' end be ours. Any exception or limitation to this mode of representation is not to be found in the New Testament. How is it possible to reconcile with this the modern doctrine that a large part, if not the largest part, of this present age* is to be marked by the binding of Satan, and such a blessed state of things as the Old Testament prophets so fully predict? With such general statements as to the character of the present age agrees the teaching of many of the parables. Thus we have, for example, the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matth xxii. 1-14), the object of which is to set forth the historical transfer of the preaching of the Gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles. The state of things depicted is represented as reaching to the time of the marriage, when the king comes in to see the guests. It thus covers this whole dispensation. And the application which the Lord himself makes of the parable, as regards this present dispensation, is that "many are called, but few are chosen." But what meaning have these words as they stand in that parable, if for a large part or the most of the time, all are called, and all, or nearly all, are chosen?

* Some have expressed the belief that we are to interpret the thousand years on the prophetic notation of a day for a year, and that the millennial age will therefore last 360,000 years!

5. The argument, to our mind, becomes if possible still more conclusive, when we note the more specific predictions, touching the course of things from the apostolic age to the second advent. On the one hand, it is predicted that the Gospel should be preached "for a witness" to all nations, and that "*then*"—most significantly it does *not* say when all the nations have accepted the Gospel—but "*then*," when the world-wide witness shall be complete, "the end shall come." The words are such, plainly, as on the one hand to admit of very considerable delay, or, on the other hand, of comparatively little. We do not know how the Lord draws national lines, or how much preaching in any given nation is necessary in the mind of God to serve the defined purpose of "a witness," or, as Peter puts it, "to take out a people." The words do then predict a universal preaching of the Gospel, but do not state what shall be the saving result, more or less. That in any case it shall not result, in any true sense of the word, in the conversion of all nations, in the establishment of any such spiritual reign of righteousness as so many in our land and age expect, seems to us abundantly clear from two classes of predictions, namely: the predictions of the apostasy and the man of sin, and the predictions touching the Jewish nation.

The classical passage touching the apostasy to be expected, is, as every Bible student knows, the prediction of Paul, in 2 Thess. ii. As regards the present argument it is quite immaterial what particular development of evil is here predicted. That question is quite independent of the present argument, which is briefly as follows. The apostle in this passage undoubtedly predicts a certain development of evil which at the time of his writing was yet to be manifested before the coming of Christ. Of this "mystery of lawlessness," as he calls it, he makes two affirmations, which, we insist, are such as by no sound exegesis can allow us to maintain that according to the doctrine of Paul, a millennium of righteousness was, or is, to be expected before the Lord's appearing. These affirmations are the following: First, that the evil had already begun to work in the days of the apostles; second, that it was to be brought to an end, *ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ*, "by the brightness of His coming." It seems to us simply incontrovertible that the apostle does here represent the development of evil of which he speaks as unbroken from his time quite to the advent. That a universal conversion should do away with the evil predicted, before the coming of the Lord, is impossible; for the apostasy in question which is to be destroyed by the appearing of the Lord, is represented as historically and spiritually identical and continuous with that which Paul says was working even in his

day. It cannot, therefore, refer to any new development of evil yet to begin and run its course *after* the expected millennium. But this continuous and uninterrupted presence and working in the world and the church of the mystery of lawlessness from Paul's day to the advent, utterly excludes the possibility of a thousand years or more of everywhere prevailing righteousness before that time.

So plain is this that the force of the argument can only be evaded by denying, as Dr. Brown has done, that the phrase, "the brightness of His coming," refers to the expected personal advent. It must refer, say some, to a coming of the Lord by the Spirit, or, as others will have it, to a providential judgment, destroying the apostasy at the beginning of the millennial age. We regard this, however, as an utterly untenable exegesis of the passage. It can only be maintained by disregarding alike the whole context of this and the foregoing epistle, and the usage, absolutely uniform, of the terms employed. The terms involved are two, *παρουσία* and *ἐπιφάνεια*. As to the former be it noted, first, that in the phrase, "coming of the Lord," etc., as we often have it in our English version, are represented two distinct terms in the original. Sometimes the word "come" stands for the Greek *ἔρχεσθαι*, and when it does, we freely grant that it does not of necessity denote a literal coming of the Lord. It seems perfectly clear that while this Greek verb denotes sometimes, no doubt, the future visible and personal appearing of the Lord, in other places it no less clearly denotes a coming of the Lord by His Spirit, as in John xiv. 23, or in the ways of providential judgment, as in Rev. ii. 5, 16. While this is true, however, of the word "coming" when it represents the Greek *ἔρχεσθαι*, it is not true of that word when standing for the Greek *παρουσία*. Leaving the verse now in discussion out of the question, the word *παρουσία* occurs elsewhere twenty-three times in the New Testament, and in each of these places denotes and can denote only a personal and physical presence of the person of whom it is predicated. Thus Paul says, 1 Cor. xv., he was glad because of the *παρουσία* of Stephanas, and, 2 Cor. vi. 7, because of the *παρουσία* of Titus. He tells us that the Corinthians said that his "bodily presence," *παρουσία*, was "weak," and hopes for the Philippians, that by his *παρουσία* again among them their rejoicing may be more abundant, Phil. i. 26, and that meantime they may obey not as in his *παρουσία* only, but also in his absence. In 2 Thess. ii. 9, we read of the *παρουσία* of "the man of sin." So in all the other sixteen places where the word occurs, it is admitted to refer to the personal advent of the Lord. Of these sixteen instances, five occur in the preceding part of the epistles to the Thessalonians, and indis-

putably refer to the personal advent of the Lord. Indeed, that *παρουσία* of the Lord, as every one admits, is the specific subject of these two epistles. When it occurs, says the apostle, "the dead in Christ shall rise," and the living saints shall be translated. Concerning the same *παρουσία* he exhorts them again in 2 Thess. ii. that they be not shaken in mind or troubled; and tells them that that day of the *παρουσία* shall not come except there come the apostasy first and that man of sin be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy with the manifestation of His *παρουσία*. And we are asked to believe that, suddenly in this, the sixth instance in these two epistles of the employment of this word hitherto denoting that which is their special subject, the apostle uses the word in a sense entirely different from that in which he had always employed it before, and that without the slightest intimation that he now referred, not to the *παρουσία* of which he had all along been writing, but to a spiritual or providential *παρουσία*, entirely distinct from it! How can any one believe this? The case becomes the stronger that what has been said of *παρουσία*, may also, substantially, be said of the word *ἐπιφάνεια*, which is coupled with it. Like *παρουσία*, that is only used in the New Testament of a visible manifestation. Its usage is even more precise, for in each of the five other places in which it occurs, it is applied only to the personal appearing of the Lord *himself*, once to His first advent, four times to the second. It would be impossible, we believe, to find in New Testament Greek any phrase which should more precisely and unambiguously denote the visible, bodily appearing of the Lord. And yet, in order to escape the otherwise inevitable conclusion that there will be a personal advent before the full subjection of the world to Christ, we are asked to believe that Paul again, in the case of this word also, used it in a sense which it has nowhere else in the New Testament, to denote either a temporal judgment by purely natural and providential causes, or the manifestation of the Lord by His Spirit! We are free to say that if this phrase, *τῆ ἐπιφάνειᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ*, as here occurring, does not refer to the glorious, visible appearing of the Lord as that which is to destroy "the man of sin," there is to our mind an end of certainty in Scripture language, and we should feel an emotion akin to despair in endeavoring to determine with any confidence what the words even of the plainest Scriptures might certainly mean. The passage, therefore, as we conclude, teaches, in the most explicit language possible, that there will not be any universal subjection of the world to Christ previous to His personal appearing. The apostle expressly represents the development of evil which culminates at the

appearing of "the man of sin" as *continuous* from his time to the second advent of the Lord. How can the argument be set aside? It stands thus: No universal subjection of the world to Christ, such as the Old Testament predicts, with the "mystery of lawlessness" working and the apostasy standing. But, according to Paul, this evil development stretches continuously from his day to the advent. Therefore, there can be no universal subjection of the world to Christ prior to the advent.

But we reach the same conclusion no less certainly by another and quite independent line of prediction. It is agreed by all that so long as the Jewish nation remains cast out in unbelief with the curse upon them, there can be no millennium. It is by a large proportion of commentators also agreed that the conversion of Israel, and perhaps their restoration to their own land, is to be the grand event which will mark the initiation of the millennial age. According to Dr. Brown and many others who follow him, this restoration of Israel, however, is to precede, by more than a thousand years, the personal appearing of the Lord. We claim that, on the contrary, the Scriptures represent the rejection of Israel as continuing to the coming of the Lord, and place their conversion again and again in immediate connection with that event. First of all, we may here note the eschatological discourse of our Lord in Matthew xxiv., and parallel passages. Whatever differences of detail we may meet in interpretation, there is little, if any, doubt that the predictions of tribulation which we find in that chapter before the 28th verse do have reference to the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 A.D. But the 29th verse reads: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, . . . 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." In this statement many have seen a great difficulty, in that, at first sight, it seems to predict a coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven in immediate connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. To meet this difficulty, many have been the expedients. Certain rationalistic commentators boldly say that Christ expected or taught that He would come on that occasion, but was mistaken. That, of course, we may dismiss. Others have assumed that the coming is undoubtedly the second coming, but that we have here a sudden and unmarked transition from the Jewish to the final judgment. But this overlooks the force of *εὐθὺς*, "immediately." Others, again, hold that the words in question have a double sense; that, in other words, the Lord speaks

of the destruction of the Jewish nationality in terms borrowed from the scenes of the second coming. This, it is assumed, He might the more fitly do, that the Jewish judgment was, without doubt, a type of the greater judgment yet to come, when He shall indeed appear in glory. But this, and every interpretation which would find in these words either an exclusive or partial reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, is exposed to certain fatal objections. First, while, as admitted above, the English phrase, "the coming of the Lord," does not of necessity refer to the second advent, yet usage is not thus variant as to the phrase, "coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven." No phrase in the New Testament has a more precise and definite meaning. It can be shown that always and only, in every other place, it refers to the personal, glorious appearing, and that only. This alone should make us hesitate long before assuming here a meaning so at variance with the ordinary usage of the phrase. But, quite apart from that, the reference of these words to the destruction of Jerusalem is absolutely excluded by the fact that the coming in question, whatever its nature may be, figurative or literal, is expressly said to take place "after" the Jewish tribulation. It is thus as plain as possible that it cannot be identical with it. When now we ask history whether there was any great judgment "immediately after" the destruction of Jerusalem, which might fitly be described by such startling and exceptional phraseology as a "coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven," history answers that there was then nothing of the kind. What are we then to make of the passage? Luke's account gives us the true solution of the difficulty. According to Luke's version of the discourse, our Lord did not make the term "tribulation" to include—as so many, with Matthew alone before their eyes, have hastily assumed—*only* the destruction of the Holy City and the accompanying calamities. On the contrary, according to Luke, the Lord specifically included in the tribulation predicted, not only the destruction of the city, the massacre and enslavement of the people, but a scattering of the Jews among all nations, and a treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles "until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 24). These words clearly forbid us to limit the tribulation to the scenes immediately connected with the siege and capture of the Holy City by Titus. So far from this the tribulation comprehends the whole long series of calamities which have befallen the Jewish nation from that day quite to the present time. The tribulation predicted has been, and is still, a present, visible fact of history. The Jews are still captive among all nations—a nation without a country. Despite the endeavors and

intentions of a Julian and a Napoleon to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the city has continued, as the Lord foretold, to be trampled underfoot, first by the Romans, then by the Saracens, and then by the Ottoman Turk, as to-day. But this present time of Israel's tribulation is, sooner or later, to end. This is foretold by almost all the prophets. The very phrase, "*after* that tribulation," in this passage, teaches the same truth. The coming spoken of, whatever it be, is therefore clearly future, and is to follow closely upon the cessation of Israel's present tribulations. But what is to happen when the Jewish tribulation ends? How could words be plainer than this solemn declaration: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened. . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. . . . And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." "*Immediately,*" ἐὺθὺς! The word occurs eighty times in the New Testament, and always denotes the closest consecution of one event upon another. How, then, we can find room to thrust in here a thousand or 360,000 years of millennial glory between the termination of the Jewish tribulation and the advent, without the most violent and unwarrantable "*eisegesis,*" we are quite at a loss to see. In a word, then, the argument stands thus: There can be no millennium while Israel's tribulation lasts. But the Lord tells us that the ending of that tribulation shall be "*immediately*" followed, not by a millennium of peace and righteousness, but by distress and perplexity of nations, and other solemn omens of His instant appearing. Millennium, therefore, there cannot be, this side of the glorious epiphany.

This interpretation, which takes the words in their ordinary and obvious sense, is further confirmed by other Scriptures, which distinctly synchronize the repentance of Israel and the second appearing of Messiah. Thus, in Rev. i. 7, we read, "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." That these words are an announcement of the second advent is generally agreed. But if the first phrase undoubtedly refers us to the sublime vision in the book of Daniel, where one like unto the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven to receive for himself a kingdom, the latter phrase (found also in Matt. xxiv. 30) is no less certainly a literal translation of the Hebrew of Zechariah xii. 10. The event described by Zechariah is thus directly connected by the apostle, as also by the Lord, with the glorious appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven. But, without doubt, what the prophet Zechariah there describes is the future national repentance of Israel, when there shall be poured out upon

them "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," and "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son," and "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." It is easy, of course, to seek to evade the force of this by asserting, as many have done, that the Lord and the apostles did not mean to indicate an interpretation, but only an application of the words of the prophets, without thereby signifying anything as to their actual meaning. But this is a mere assumption, and requires to be rigidly proven. The *onus probandi* is on those who make the assertion. The principle of interpretation therein assumed seems to us perilous in the extreme. If we may set aside New Testament intimations as to the meaning of Old Testament prophecies in this fashion, when they refer to the second advent, what good reason can be shown why the rationalist should not in like manner deal as he does with New Testament applications of Old Testament passages to the first advent? Are we told of great difficulties if we accept these interpretations? That may easily be granted; but where in all these eschatological prophecies do we find difficulties greater than those which appear in Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin who should bring forth a child, as applied to our Lord by Matthew?

The words in question, therefore, we conclude, in full accord with the foregoing argument, synchronize the repentance of Israel with the second advent of Israel's Messiah. It is beholding Him that becomes at last, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the whole Jewish nation, as did His visible appearing to Saul of Tarsus, the "one born out of due time," the occasion of a deep and true repentance.*

This argument is further confirmed when we observe the phraseology used by Zechariah in the context of the same prophecy and the application of the same by the apostle Paul. For in ch. xiv., Zechariah tells us that in that day of Israel's redemption, the feet of the Lord "shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east"; "and," he adds, "the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee." Not to urge the fact that the minute topographical detail of the passage and its context would seem utterly to resist all attempts to explain this away as a merely figurative appearing of the Lord, we find that the apostle Paul, in 1 Thess. iii. 13, directly applies the latter phrase to the future glorious advent of the Lord with all His saints. If any further confirmation be needed as to

* See Prof. Plumptre's "Exposition of the Epistles to the Seven Churches," p. 27.

the teaching of these and yet other passages* that might be cited, we have it in the discourse of Peter to the Jews in Acts iii. 19. According to the accurate rendering of the revised version, he used the following language as an argument why the Jews should turn from their sins: "Repent ye and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things." In justification of this rendering adopted by the revisers, it may be observed that the received version has disregarded uniform usage in making the final particle *ὅπως* to have a temporal sense. The meaning of the word absolutely forbids the old rendering, "that your sins may be blotted out *when* the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," etc. The Jews, then, are herein exhorted to repent *in order* "that God may send the Christ who hath been appointed for them, even Jesus." As to what the words may mean, we have the authority of Prof. Addison Alexander for saying that the sending of Christ "cannot refer to our Lord's first appearance as a Saviour, which had already taken place," but must refer "either to His visible return hereafter, or to His presence in the hearts of individuals." He thinks that the latter is a better motive to repentance, and, if we understand him, he is therefore inclined to prefer it, but candidly adds that "the reference of the words to the second advent agrees with all analogy and usage, as the Father is not elsewhere to send the Son, as He is said to send the Spirit into the hearts of men, as a matter of inward and invisible experience, but into the world as a literal external fact of history."† It, then, is a fact that this passage, according to "all analogy and usage," represents the second appearing of the Lord as immediately conditioned in the Divine plan by the repentance of the Jewish nation.‡ Peter teaches that whenever Israel repents, Christ will come, and thus confirms the conclusion before reached, that there will intervene no long millennial period between Israel's conversion and the advent.

But this exhibition of Scriptural argument, if by no means ex-

* As, for example, Dan. xii. 1-3, 6, 7, where the end of Israel's tribulation is explicitly synchronized with the resurrection of the righteous; and also Is. xxv. 8, with context, as applied by Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 54.

† See his "Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles," *sub loc. cit.*

‡ So did Samuel Rutherford understand the Scripture. He writes, "I have been this time by-passed, thinking much of the incoming of the kirk of the Jews. Pray for them. . . . That were a glad day to see us and them both sit down at one table, and Christ at the head of the table. Then would our Lord come shortly with his fair guard to hold his great court." ("Letters," p. 49.)

haustive, must suffice for the present occasion. We conclude, in full accord with the direct statement of the Apocalypse, that the time when "the kingdom of the world" becomes "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," is the "time of the dead to be judged," "and the time to give their reward to . . . the prophets, and to the saints";* that is to say, it is the time of the glorious appearing of the Lord to execute judgment, and not an epoch a thousand years or more before it. The modern doctrine of a millennium of righteousness between the present time and the second advent, we are thus compelled to regard as certainly contrary to the teachings of the inspired Word. We look not for a millennium first, but for "that blessed hope, His glorious appearing."

6. We can add on the present occasion but one more argument. A doctrine may be rightly judged by its fruits. Let the now prevailing theory of a millennium of righteousness before the advent be tested in this way. We claim that the effect of the general reception of the doctrine of a millennial age before the advent has proven the occasion of a very general departure from the apostolic type of preaching and teaching concerning the advent. Thus, from the apostles there are few doctrines of which we hear more than of the second advent; it is equally certain that from the pulpit of to-day, in our own land at least, there are few doctrines of which we hear less. And the contrast is no less evident in the form in which it is set forth, when spoken of at all. In the writings of the apostles and the early Christians the advent is undeniably always spoken of as possibly near. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," is the key-note of apostolic preaching on this subject. But when does one hear preaching of this tone from the lips of one holding the now prevailing view upon this subject? It is affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that in these respects the preaching of our time in America has sadly fallen away from the apostolic standard. It is affirmed, moreover, that this declension from the apostolic type of preaching is directly and demonstrably due to the general acceptance of the doctrine that a millennium must intervene between the present time and the appearing of the Lord. For the change is quite a modern one. One needs only to go back to the writings of Luther, or even of Rutherford, or Knox, or Baxter, to find the advent spoken of in a very different tone from what is commonly heard in these days. The declension may be traced back, we believe, quite distinctly to about the time of the first promulgation of the modern doctrine by Mr. Whitby

* Rev. xi. 15, 18, Revised Version, Cf., x. 7.

in the early part of the last century. And it is plain that the connection between the doctrine in question and the modern type of preaching on the advent is not accidental, but logical and necessary. For how can a man who on the one Sabbath tells his people of a glorious millennium yet to come before the appearing of the Lord, speak on the next Sabbath of those among his hearers "who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord"? But this is not all, For while, on the one hand, in almost all the preaching of the day, we hear much of a good time which is coming before the advent of the Lord, we find the apostles continually warning the church that the last days, however much of "the form of godliness" there may be, shall be not good days, but evil and "perilous times." Where men are now often even heard warning their people against the idea of some modern interpreters of prophecy that the appearing of the Master may be near, we hear Christ, even two thousand years ago, warning His disciples against ever saying in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming," or looking forward in this present age to times of peace and safety. The earnest piety and loyalty to Christ of many who preach after this manner no one can justly dispute; but that only makes the irresistible logic of this erroneous theory only the more evident, that even the best of men have not found themselves practically able to resist its influence upon their preaching. That the facts are as indicated, no observant person will dispute. And from the fact of this contrast in these points between the modern and the primitive style of preaching, we argue, and believe that the argument is one which cannot be answered, that whatever may be the exact truth on many matters of detail, and however we may be mistaken or be in the dark on many points, it is, or ought to be, self-evident that any theory of interpretation, which, both by the laws of an inevitable logic and as a matter of historical fact, thus constrains even the best of men to deviate so widely from the tone of the apostolic preaching on these subjects, is proven by that very fact to be erroneous. We are not bound at once to explain all difficulties, or to frame for ourselves at once another theory, but without waiting for that, we are bound to reject and keep forever clear of all such theories as logically and practically hinder us from preaching precisely as the Lord and the inspired apostles preached.

From the above considerations we are compelled to conclude that the numerous prophecies in the Old Testament of a reign of righteousness on earth cannot possibly refer to a period of time before the advent of the Lord, but must find their fulfilment, in some sense or other, after that event. That in our endeavors to adjust these

prophecies in their mutual relations and frame to ourselves a consistent and clear picture of the precise nature and order of events which shall succeed the advent, we shall meet with difficulties, and that some of these may even be beyond our power as yet to solve, those who have most studied these questions, will be the most ready to admit. But this is only what, in dealing with subjects of this nature, we might reasonably expect, and even though many questions may be asked which we cannot answer, difficulties urged which we cannot explain, it will by no means follow that the arguments adduced above are nullified. Great as the difficulties may be on the hypothesis for which we have argued, yet if to be rid of these we set aside the plain Scriptures cited, and affirm in the face of them an age of universal holiness before the advent, we find ourselves involved in difficulties greater far. To review objections in detail would prolong this article far beyond a fitting limit. We must content ourselves with one or two suggestions which bear in a general way upon many of the most serious difficulties which have been urged against the doctrine advocated.

Let it be observed, in the first place, that the doctrine of a pre-millennial advent, as such, contradicts or sets aside no essential truth held by the consensus of evangelical churches. It is fully admitted that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, the one unto life, the other unto condemnation. It is no less unreservedly admitted that in the sense understood by evangelical theologians of all churches, the righteous who shall rise at Christ's appearing and reign with Him, will rise in "spiritual bodies," and will not re-enter upon old earthly occupations after the old earthly manner. "They shall neither marry or be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels of God." The doctrine of the reign of the saints with Christ involves no denial or qualification of this plainly revealed truth, as some have mistakenly imagined. It is also admitted that all, both the righteous and the wicked, shall "appear before the judgment seat of Christ," to be judged "according to the deeds done in the body," and that the awards in either case will be eternal and irreversible. All essential eschatological truth is thus fully admitted, nor is any additional doctrine held which conflicts with it. Assertions sometimes made to the contrary, rest either upon misapprehensions, or are true only as to the vagaries of individual errorists. Again, the difficulties which many find in the doctrine, are, we believe, very many of them due to a failure to bear in mind the principle of prophetic perspective. That two events are mentioned together or in immediate succession does not prove that they

will occur simultaneously in immediate succession, except it be directly so stated, as, *e.g.*, in Matth. xxiv. 29, where it is said that the consecution will be immediate. We believe that under the application of this principle a very large part of the difficulties which Dr. Brown* and many others find in the doctrine of a pre-millennial advent disappear. Illustrations might be multiplied.

Thus, it is assumed that the phrase "day of the Lord" denotes a period comparatively brief, and then since, if so, it is plainly impossible for the numerous events of most diverse character which pre-millennialists understand the Scriptures to assign to that day, to take place in so short time, we are told that the pre-millennialist doctrine involves inevitable absurdities and contradictions to plain Scriptures. And yet it is clear that while often two events may be of such a nature that to affirm their simultaneous occurrence would involve contradiction, yet, if time be extended so as to allow of one succeeding the other, the alleged contradiction disappears. To illustrate: it is often objected, that since a resurrection and judgment of the wicked is admitted to take place at the close of the millennial period, therefore the pre-millenarian doctrine makes Christ to come again a thousand years or more before "the judgment day," whereas the Scriptures teach that He will not come until that day. The whole force of this objection, in all its various forms, is derived from the unproved assumption that the "day of judgment" is a brief space of time, an epoch rather than a lengthened period. But we do not thus understand the Scripture. As soon as Christ comes, with the resurrection and translation of the living saints, judgment undoubtedly begins "at the house of God," but surely it does not therefore follow that it must very shortly end. As a matter of fact, pre-millennialists commonly regard "the day of the Lord" as covering a lengthened interval of time, from the first to the second resurrections, characterized by successive and very diverse acts of Christ as King and Judge both of the living and the dead. That the words "day" and "hour," so often applied to the judgment, or the time of Christ's *parousia*, by no means of necessity imply a short period, every Bible student should know. So, while it is true that the phrase "the last day," for example, denotes a known and *definite* period, it by no means follows that it denotes a *brief* period. Nor does the word "hour" any more of necessity imply a brief space of time. For if we read in John v. 28, 29, of an *hour* "in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come

* In his book on "The Second Advent," *passim*.

forth," so do we also read in the immediately preceding context, ver. 25, of an "hour" which "now is," in which the (spiritually) dead "shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and they which hear shall live," and again of an "hour," John iv. 21, 23, when neither in Jerusalem nor in the mountain of Samaria, men "shall worship the Father," etc. But in point of fact in each of these last two instances the term "hour" is proven to have covered already a period of more than eighteen centuries. Why may not the "hour" which is to be signalized by the resurrection of all the dead from the graves, for all these words teach, also denote a period of centuries? Similar remarks may be made as regards the Greek word *παρουσία*, denoting strictly the "presence," as distinguished from the *ἔρχεσθαι* or "coming" of the Lord. The latter term necessarily excludes lengthened duration, but surely the former does not. The *παρουσία* or "presence" of the Lord, may easily be either brief or greatly prolonged. Paul's *παρουσία* in Corinth, 2 Cor. x. 10, lasted two years; the first *παρουσία* of our Lord, thirty-three years; the *παρουσία* of "the man of sin," 2 Thess. ii. 9, if, at least, with the Westminster divines, we understand the Papal succession to be predicted, has continued already over twelve hundred years; if so, why may not the *παρουσία* of the Lord, spoken of in the previous verse, cover as long a period? And that Christ's coming will introduce a period or *aion* of lengthened duration, is distinctly intimated in Acts iii. 19, 21, where we read of "times of restoration," and "times of refreshing" from the presence of the Lord, to be introduced by His future advent. Analogous expressions, where we have *καιροὶ* or *χρονοὶ*, are "the times of the Gentiles," Luke xxi. 24; "times of ignorance," Acts xvii. 30; "the last times," 1 Peter i. 20; in all of which these plurals indicate a lengthened dispensational period. There is, therefore, no reason to assume that the "day of the Lord" must be a brief period, but rather that it will probably prove to have a lengthened duration. And that being granted, if we mistake not, a very large part of the difficulties urged against the pre-millennialist eschatology cease to be insuperable.

We note further but a single common practical objection. We are often told that pre-millennialism tends to discourage all missionary zeal. But the objection holds good neither in logic nor in fact. It does not hold good in logic, first, because the conversion of the world is in no case the only or the highest motive to missionary work. The love of Christ, constraining to obedience to His last command, is a higher and more powerful motive than a certain numerical result. Again, the pre-millennialist believes as much as those who

differ with him, that the Gospel must be published among all nations before the kingdom will come. Nor does he miss the inspiration given by the hope of seeing many saved. On the contrary, we believe that God is visiting the Gentiles, not merely for an unfruitful witness, but "to take out of them a people"; that Scripture (as also experience) teaches that mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit are included in God's plan for the present dispensation; and that, as the result of all this, however few relatively may be saved out of any given generation, the saved from the present age shall at last be found to be "a great multitude, which no man can number." But beside all these motives, common to all of us alike, pre-millennialism furnishes others of great power and peculiar to that doctrine. It makes the appearance of the glorious kingdom a practical possibility of the near future, as the contrary doctrine cannot. To convert the world is not in man's power; but to witness to all nations is in the power of the church, even in this generation. We believe that, if but that be done, the Lord will come, and with Him the great victory of the ages, the first resurrection, and the everlasting kingdom. If other motives have power alone, how much the more with these super-added? Finally, the sincere belief in the possible imminence of the advent, which allows of no interposition of a millennium before that event, so far from hindering men from the mission field, is a mighty quickener to the conscience in deciding on a field of labor. Will a man argue, "The Lord may be near, therefore I will neglect His great commission"? So much for the logical issue of the doctrine. And the objection to the doctrine is as baseless in fact as in logic. In reality the facts are the exact reverse of what objectors tell us we should expect. They furnish an argument for the doctrine, and not against it. No age, probably, has seen greater missionary activity than the second century of our era; but that was, without doubt, just the age when the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent was held more extensively than at any subsequent period. As a matter of fact, pre-millenarians are found in a much more numerous proportion among foreign missionaries than among the ministry at home, and there are no missionaries who are working more joyously and hopefully than they. Illustrations are numerous. In the North India Missions of the Presbyterian Church, the majority (a few years ago, to our knowledge, two-thirds) are pre-millenarians. The largest mission in China is the "China Inland Mission." It numbers some seventy foreign laborers, who, we are told on the best authority, are pre-millennialists, almost to a man. The missionaries of the E. London Institute in Africa, on the Congo, are, we understand, generally pre-mille-

narians. That same East London Training Institute, under pre-millenarian teaching, has sent out one hundred foreign missionaries within six years. Is there a theological school in America that can point to a record better or as good? The recent munificent gifts of Mr. Robert Arthington, of Leeds, England, to the foreign mission work in steamers and in money, are noted with thankfulness among all churches. But he, again, is a man who is inspired by the pre-millennialist faith. So also, as regards Mr. Moody, Major Whittle, and like-minded Christian laymen, who of late years have done so much to take the Gospel to the masses, it is the well-known and suggestive fact, that they (to a man, if we mistake not,) are pre-millenarians. The objection, then, that pre-millennialism hinders missionary activity, has as little foundation in fact as it has in sound reason. As a matter of fact, the belief in the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent is, to a degree little suspected by many, one of the great living forces which is to-day, the whole world over, sending earnest men to save the lost among the heathen, both abroad and at home.

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