

ARGUMENTS FOR A PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE CONSIDERED.

It seems on the face of it an unlikely thing that the Church of this dispensation, which is in a peculiar manner called to suffer with Christ for righteousness' sake, should be taken away from the scene when the moment of keenest trial comes. The government of England would never think of recalling her most trusty and best-disciplined troops from the seat of war when engaged in a life and death struggle with some great power. Surely no saints can ever be found better fitted for such a time than those who are called to suffer with Christ as well as to be glorified with Him, and who are capable of "being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joy." (Col. i. 11.) We ought to be slow to believe that we are to be deprived of the honour and glory of witnessing for Christ in that hour when His great adversary will have declared a war of extermination against His people and His truth.

The flesh shrinks from suffering for Christ. When Peter sought to turn aside His Lord from suffering and death, his Master told him that he was minding not the things of God but the things of men. (Matt. xvi. 22, 23.) God has marked out for each saint the same path that the Master trod. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."

The slender arguments which have been sufficient to convince many of the truth of their theory, is a proof that many minds readily believe to be true anything that they wish to be true. "The wish is father to the thought." One argument that has been quite enough to satisfy some is, that the saints are frequently described as looking for or waiting for the coming. They assume that this necessarily means that they were in expectation of Christ's coming as an event which might occur at any moment. There are different Greek words used in the various passages where believers are described as waiting for the coming of Christ, but none of them can be proved to have this precise meaning of being "on the tiptoe of expectancy." Many passages prove the contrary. In 2 Peter iii. 12 we are spoken of as looking for the coming of the day of God; while in the next verse we are said to look for new heavens and a new earth--the eternal state. The same Greek word is used in both cases. Now as the new earth cannot be created till after the Lord's second coming and thousand years' reign, and the period after that when Satan is loosed, "looking for" does not necessarily imply that the event looked for is thought to be in the immediate future. (See also Heb. x. 13, and xi. 10.) In every day life we constantly speak of our looking for events which we know to be some distance ahead in the future. (See James v. 7.)

Stress has been laid upon the word "we" in 1 Cor. xv. 52, and in 1 Thess. iv. 15, as if it certainly proved that Paul thought the coming might occur at any moment. But this is not a fair inference; for it was his habit to speak in the first or second person plural when treating of truths that concerned believers. Hence, in 2 Cor. iv. 14, he puts himself amongst those who will be *raised from the dead* at Christ's coming; in fact, at no time of his life could he have thought that the coming was in the near future. At his conversion he was told that he was to suffer great things, and to be sent far off to the Gentiles. Therefore he must have known that there was a long career of service before him. In writing to the Church at Rome, he speaks of a projected visit to Jerusalem, and then to Rome, and after that to Spain. Prophets too, speaking by the Spirit, had told him that bonds and afflictions awaited him. In bidding farewell to the elders at Miletus, he told them of evils that would arise after his departing from them; and these things would take a little time to develop. Then when Paul had been cast into prison at Jerusalem, the

Lord stood by him at night and told him that he must bear witness also at Rome. (Acts xxiii. 11.) Again, when writing to the Philippians from prison, he speaks of his desire to depart, or the alternative, that he might be liberated and pay them another visit. In both his epistles to Timothy he foretells spiritual dangers of a time still in the future.

The predicted death of Peter was another event that had to transpire before the second coming; and in his second epistle, Peter also forewarns the saints of the time of religious corruption and apostacy that was to set in at some undefined period after his decease. Paul too speaks plainly of his approaching death in 2 Tim. iv. 6. These Scriptures sufficiently demonstrate the inaccuracy of the view that the apostles thought the second coming might occur at any moment.

The different terms used to designate the coming of Christ are supposed by many to support the pre-tribulation rapture theory. However, I shall now show that their use completely refutes the theory which it has been rashly asserted they support. The word rendered coming (*parousia*) is said to mean the secret coming before the tribulation in contra-distinction to the other terms, which, conveying as they do the idea of publicity, must mean the coming after the tribulation. This word *parousia* is the one used in Matt. xxiv., where the coming is distinctly said to occur "immediately after the tribulation." In 2 Thess. ii. 8 it is used for the coming at which the man of sin is destroyed. In 1 John ii. 28 the manifestation and the coming are spoken of as if occurring together, as indeed they are also in 2 Thess. ii. 8. The same word *parousia* is used for the coming in 2 Peter i. 16, of which the transfiguration scene was prophetic, which evidently portrays Christ's manifestation in glory with His people.

The other terms used are "appearing" and "revelation." In 1 Tim. vi. 14 Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment, &c., until the appearing of our Lord, instead of till the *parousia*, when, according to this theory, he would be removed from the earth some time before the appearing. Again, in 2 Tim. iv. 8 saints are said to love the Lord's appearing instead of His coming, which, if an anterior event to the appearing, would be the first object of their hope. In Titus ii. 13 there is a similar statement. In 1 John iii. 2 we read, "If Christ shall be manifested, we shall be like Him." This inspired statement is not in accord with the theory that we are to be made like Christ some years before His manifestation. 1 Peter vi. 4 has a similar bearing, as well as some other passages.

The word rendered revelation, or the verb formed from it, is used in the following passages in a connection which cannot be reconciled with the secret rapture theory--1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Peter i. 7, 13; iv. 13.

The use of different expressions for the various aspects of the same thing is common in Scripture. We do not argue that a person may be many times spiritually born because we read of regeneration, quickening, salvation, conversion, &c.

It has been insisted that 2 Thess. ii. 7 refers to the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the earth, when the Church, His temple, is removed by the alleged pre-tribulation rapture.

This assertion assumes two things, for neither of which have I ever heard any adequate proof given. 1. That the Church will be taken away before the manifestation of Antichrist. 2. That the restraining one spoken of is the Holy Spirit in the Church. With regard to the latter view, it is incredible that those who will be witnesses for God against the Antichrist will be left to cope with him and his delusions, without the aid of the indwelling Spirit of God. As to who the restraining

one is, there has always been a difference of opinions. In the previous verse, "that which restraineth" must be a power or influence, for the verb is in the neuter; while in this verse, as it is masculine, a person must be intended. My own belief is, that the person is God, and the hindering thing is His restraining power exercised through the governments of states, and perhaps also by the workings of His providence in the affairs of men. A loose translation, which is left in the Revised Version, has obscured the passage. We could not take such an expression as "Taken out of the way" (2 Thes. ii. 7)¹ as referring to the Supreme One. However, the Greek does not present this difficulty. The words are ἕως ἐκ μεσου γένηται = until it shall be from the midst. The statement that the hindering thing was something known favours the view that it is the power of civil government. The truth that the hearts of kings are in God's rule and government might well be referred to as something known to Christians; for it is fully revealed in both the Old and New Testament. God's rule over the nations is sublimely described as far back as Job xii. What then is the meaning of God's ceasing to be in the midst so that the man of sin may be revealed? The Antichrist cannot arise as long as the balance of power is preserved amongst the nations of the Roman earth. "Ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings." (Daniel vii. 24.) At the appointed time God will cease to restrain Satan's workings, who will quickly mature his impious design. In Rev. xii. we learn that Satan is shut out of heaven, and cast down to earth, about the beginning of the three and a half years so often spoken of in prophecy. From some statements in Rev. xiii. it would seem as if God at that time in a great measure gave into Satan's hands the reins of the government of the kingdoms; at any rate, of those of the Roman empire. God reads Satan's thoughts, and has foreseen and foretold what he will do. The devil will now find a willing agent ready to his hand in the person of the Antichrist. "And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. . . . And they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast . . . and there was given unto him authority to continue forty and two months. . . . And there was given him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation." (Rev. xiii.)

God will not cease to rule amongst the children of men from that supreme throne of the universe depicted in the vision of Rev. iv. v., though He shall cease to restrain the workings of Satan in the development of the Antichrist. What a comfort to remember that the Omniscient One is also the Almighty One! John saw in the midst of the throne "a lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." A horn being a symbol of strength, the seven horns represent His irresistible might. "With Him is strength and effectual working; the deceived and the deceiver are His." (Job xii. 16.) The seven eyes signify His omniscience. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth," and "they are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." "The Lord's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men."

I have now given my reasons for understanding 2 Thess. ii. 7 to mean that God will, for a brief season, cease to exercise that hindering influence by which the revelation of Antichrist is checked till his proper time has arrived. "And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming." (2 Thess. ii. 8.) The word "coming" here is "parousia," which is said to be especially used for the coming for the Church. Therefore there is nothing in this chapter on which to build the theory that the Church is to be taken away before the rise of Antichrist. On the contrary, many read the passage as a warning against such a thought; at least, the first four verses. (See

¹ 2 Thes. ii. 7. "For the mystery of Lawlessness is already working (only there is at present One that restraineth) until it become developed out of the midst, and then shall the Lawless one be revealed," &c.--B. W. N.

note at end.)

We shall now consider a passage which I have been told is the strongest one in favour of the pre-tribulation rapture. "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.) The point to be determined here is the meaning of the expression "keep from." The word translated "keep" occurs very frequently in the New Testament, but I think in only one other passage in combination with the preposition here translated "from." This is John xvii. 15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Here we find this very expression used, and so far from meaning removal from the world, actually used in opposition to the thought of taking away. We are left in close proximity with the evil one and with evil, whichever the word means; and therefore "keeping from" must mean preservation from the power and influence of evil. This verse ought to be enough to settle the point; nevertheless I have heard the statement made that the preposition ἐκ conclusively proves the Church is kept out of the hour of trial, so as not to be in it at all. An endless number of passages can be cited from Greek writers as well as the New Testament to demonstrate the falsity of this assertion. The force of ἐκ depends upon the connection in which it occurs. For instance, we speak of hanging an object on a peg. The Greeks here used this preposition ἐκ = "from," instead of "on" the peg. In this verbal association removal from contact with the object is not signified. Instances might be multiplied endlessly. The preposition ἀπο has much more of the force of "removal from" than ἐκ, and yet when used with the word keep, we do not understand the expression to mean removal from the presence or proximity of an object. "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. iii. 3.) Now though the preposition ἀπο is the one used here--and it has more of the force of removal from the object spoken of than ἐκ--yet we do not take this verse to mean that the Lord would remove His people from the world, but rather that He would preserve them from the power of evil in it. Therefore, in all fairness, we must conclude that "keep from" does not mean "take from," unless there was some very strong doctrinal objection to giving the expression the same force as in the two passages I have drawn attention to. In Acts xxvi. 17 is a somewhat analogous expression: "Delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee." Here we have ἐκ used without implying removal from contact with the thing spoken of; in fact, its force depends upon the verb with which it is used. Before leaving this subject I shall quote one other verse which contains a somewhat analogous expression of Rev. iii. 10, and yet it is never understood as meaning deliverance "out of" without passing through the trouble. "It is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. xxx. 7.)

The question arises as one of practical interest, What does this promise of keeping from the hour of trial mean, if it does not mean removal from the earth?

The parallel verse (John xvii. 15) indicates that preservation from all the evil influences of the hour is what is meant. On turning to a lexicon, we find that the proper meaning of the word is "keep carefully," "guard;" and that it is never used in any sense approaching to that of "take," "remove." The common Scriptural expression "keeping the word" evidently means "remembering His commandments to do them." (Psalm ciii.) The Greek word is variously rendered in the New Testament: keep; watch (Matt. xxvii. 36, 54); observe (Matt. xxviii. 20); preserve (1 Thess. v. 23); hold fast (Rev. iii. 3). What God is as a keeper of His people is fully told in Psalm cxxi. The

words in 2 Thess. iii. 3, "The Lord shall establish you, and keep you from evil," are almost the same as verse 7 of this psalm; and probably Paul had it in his mind, as perhaps he had verse 8, when penning 1 Thess. v. 23. In that hour of trial God's wondrous keeping power will be experienced in fullest measure by those who, before that hour comes, have been faithful in a day of less trial. The promise is conditional upon their keeping His word before that time comes. The Lord's keeping is made conditional upon His people's keeping His word in many other passages--Psalm xxv. 10; ciii. 18; Prov. iii. 21, 26; John xiv. 23; xvii. 6, 11, 12; Jude 20, 24; 2 Thess. iii. 2, 3. But this keeping may mean something more than preservation from spiritual evil. It may be that the being kept alive on the earth till the coming, so as to be changed without tasting death, will be granted as a reward for peculiar consistency and faithfulness in life and testimony. I do not mean that any will escape persecution and testing. Paul's case illustrates my thought. He was promised deliverance from the people and the Gentiles, and yet he was to "suffer great things." So those who remain to the coming "must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God." It is possible that the being thus preserved alive may be the meaning of Luke xxi. 36--"But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Also earlier in this conversation He seems to speak of two classes; those who will be martyred, and others "Not a hair of whose head shall perish," but to whom He says "In your patience ye shall win your souls," or, as in margin, "lives." (See Rev. xiii. 10, xiv. 12.)

We may rest assured the fulfilment of this promise will richly compensate for the trials of that hour. Like the three who for their faithfulness to God were cast into the fiery furnace, the faithful at this crisis may be granted a peculiar manifestation of the presence of the Son of God. God has especial grace for times of peculiar trial. Peter, in forewarning saints that they may be called to go through a fiery trial, speaks of joy as being their proper heritage at such a time. As at the beginning of this dispensation, so at the close, God's people will rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer *shame* for His name. The objection, that the thought of having to pass through suffering before the rapture is so depressing and gloomy that it cannot be true, is a proof of spiritual degeneracy. The New Testament everywhere teaches that to suffer for Christ is the Christian's privilege, joy and glory; and that we must pass through tribulation if we are on the path to the everlasting kingdom. Neander records how during one persecution the Christians courted death, that they might obtain the martyr's crown. From this cause the executions became at one time so numerous, that they became an actual embarrassment to the Roman magistrates. Christ is still able to make His people more than conquerors over the fear of death. It is for us to see to it, that in this day of comparatively small trials we are unswervingly faithful to Him and his word. "For he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (Luke xvi. 10.)

It has been stated that Rev. iv. v. confirm the secret rapture view. It is said that in these chapters we see the Church in heaven represented by the elders and living creatures; and as these visions precede those of the time of the Antichrist, it is insisted that these visions corroborate the view that the Church is removed to heaven before that time. This conclusion is not a safe one. In the prophetic books the visions are not given in the sequence of time, and the Revelation is no exception to the rule. For instance, in chap. xvi. we have the pouring out of the vial upon the seat of the beast, and upon his kingdom; while in the following chapter we see the beast and his kingdom at the height of their power, evidently before the vial judgment had been inflicted. Many other visions run on to a point of time in advance of the time of the event portrayed by the vision that follows. This principle will account for the vision of redeemed ones before the throne in chapters vii. and xiv., though, according to Rev. xx. 4, the first resurrection

does not take place till after the persecution of the Antichrist.

"Now, in v. 10, the reading *has been* at fault: "us" and "we" should be "them" and "they." "Thou hast made THEM unto our God kings and priests, and THEY shall reign on the earth"--the "they" and "them" referring to those "saints" in v. 8, whose prayers were presented. It is the Church in glory speaking of ISRAEL, who will at that time "reign on the earth"; while those in glory--the risen and glorified saints--act above as priests and intercessors for Israel; *i.e.*, for those saints in Israel who will then be "kings and priests *on the earth.*"

"It is a Millennial scene; a prophetic, Millennial picture; and before the visions of woe were unfolded before him, John was to be instructed and refreshed by this Millennial scene of the risen saints, glorified and brought into this intimate connection with the Eternal Throne: Israel on the earth made "a nation of kings and priests unto God," angels joining in the triumphant song; and all creation--delivered from its present groan--uniting in the ascription of praise "unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for evermore." (v. 11-13).

"This took place in vision, when the Lamb that had been slain left the throne in the shelter of which He had been hidden, and took the intermediate place between that throne and John as the creature. And when the time comes for Him Who is now hidden in that throne to come forth and to assume the intermediate place between the throne in glory and the earth, *then* will the other part of the vision be fulfilled, and the Millennium will begin! This scene was a great foreshadowing and earnest of its full accomplishment, and we have many foreshadowings of that time in the Word of God. The song of Hannah; of Hezekiah; and many others, are all earnest pledges of what is yet to be.

"What some maintain is, that this chapter represents the saints being in glory *before* those dark parts of the Revelation *begin* to be fulfilled; and the statement appears plausible at first; but the whole scene is evidently Millennial, and therefore prophetic every part of it; for, *at the same time* that the risen saints are seen as represented by the "elders" and "living creatures," Israel is seen as "reigning and made priests unto God upon the earth:" the very contrary to being about to be placed under Antichrist, and all the woe and judgment detailed in the subsequent visions of the Book! *At the same time also*, all creation is seen giving thanks and ascribing praise and glory to God! The whole scene takes place *at the same time*; and the whole must consequently be a prophetic, Millennial picture; for surely, the time of woe described in the next chapter cannot take place after all creation is delivered, and every thing in Heaven and Earth is heard giving thanks to God!"

Another view which is held by some at the present time is, that the faithful portion of the Church will be removed before the tribulation, and the rest left behind to pass through it and to be caught up at Christ's appearing in glory. Hence, there would be two raptures, as well as a supplementary resurrection for those who shall die or be killed during the tribulation. In the passages that treat of this subject we find no hint thrown out that there would be such a partial rapture, or such a subdivision of the first resurrection into two, or, according to some, even more acts or stages. In 1 Thess. iii. 13 the apostle prays that the saints may be found blameless "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with *all* His saints." Again, "Those which are alive and remain" are to be caught up. Again, in 1 Cor. xv., "They that are Christ's" are said to be raised at His coming. This coming is to take place "at the last trump," and at the time when the saying of Isaiah xxv. is brought to pass, which chapter describes the appearing of Christ to deliver and comfort His earthly people. I have recently heard it dogmatically stated that 1 Thess. iv. was the

coming before the tribulation, and 1 Cor. xv. the coming after the tribulation. Such a statement it would be useless to refute. Two "second comings" and two or more "first resurrections" are both contradictions in terms.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins has been adduced as a proof of a partial rapture. It is true that the foolish virgins are not said to be cast into a place of punishment, but this does not prove that they do not represent wicked professors. Christ, in His parables, always keeps true to the incident in human life or in nature that He adopts as an illustration. As far as the parable permits, He depicts the anguish of professors who are shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our Lord's words "Verily, I say unto you I know you not," clearly prove foolish virgins represent false professors and not erring believers.

It has been observed to me that by doing away with the secret rapture, I do away with the tribunal of Christ for the bestowal of rewards, which, according to the secret rapture scheme, occurs between the two stages of the coming. However, the Scripture also does away with this notion; for it distinctly connects the giving of rewards or recompense with the public appearing in glory. (See 1 Peter v. 4; Matt. xvi. 27, 28; xxv. 14-30; 2 Thess. i.; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Rev. xi. 18, &c.) In Heb. x. 35-37, in speaking of rewards, the apostle quotes the promise of Christ's coming in Habakkuk, which is of course, His coming to Israel, and which, according to the view I am advocating, is the time of our rapture.

It has been insisted that, in Rev. xix. 14, the armies that are in heaven which follow Christ in His descent are the Church, and that this is a proof that they have been removed to heaven at some previous moment. I can find no scriptural grounds for feeling sure that these armies are the redeemed. It is so often recorded that Christ will, at His coming, be attended by angels (and, according to Matt. xxv. 31, *all* the angels), that it is in keeping with Scripture to understand these armies to be the angelic hosts. Nebuchadnezzar contrasted the armies of heaven with the inhabitants of earth. Their being clothed with fine linen does not prove that they are the Church; for white raiment is the clothing also of angels. (Matt. xxviii. 3; Acts i. 10.) Their being described as the armies that are in heaven, and their following Christ from heaven, suggest that they are angels; for the Church meets Him in the air, and therefore in the vicinity of the earth. Earlier in the chapter the announcement is made that the marriage of the Lamb is come. This may denote that the moment of the glorification of the saints has arrived, which, as I have suggested, probably precedes by a brief space their rapture. Then this vision of Christ, and the heavenly hosts descending, follows. We know from 1 Thess. iv. that He is met in the air by His glorified Church; so that all Christ's saints are with Him, whether angelic or human, ere He reaches the mount of Olives. The title "saints," or "holy ones," belongs to angels as well as to redeemed men. (See Deut. xxxiii. 2; Dan. iv. 13, 23; viii. 13.) In the prophecy of Enoch, in Jude, the Lord is described as coming "with His holy myriads;" and as the words are the same as in Deut. xxxiii. 2, angels are probably here signified, as well as the redeemed who shall join them.

It has been said that Enoch was a type of the Church, and accordingly that his translation, some time before the flood, teaches the translation of the Church to heaven before the tribulation. But where is the scriptural authority for taking Enoch as a type of the Church? The Lord mentions the case of Noah and Lot as typical of that of His people at His coming, but is silent respecting Enoch. Every Old Testament person or event is not necessarily typical.

Christ's appellation, the "MORNING STAR," is said to indicate that He will come for His people some time before He rises upon the world as the "Sun of righteousness," "in His own everlasting

and heavenly glory: that which shines in all the brightness of *unearthly* glory. It is a higher emblem even than the sun, though that is high; because the sun's rays are adapted to this Creation; in one sense, identified with it as part of our system. But the "star," how little we know of its radiancy and the character of its glorious excellency! It is so distant. It shines on the earth, and so far, is connected with it, but it belongs to a distant, unknown sphere; and emblem therefore of distant unearthly glory; a glory whose radiancy is not apprehended on earth. So will it be with Christ when He comes in the perfectness of His heavenly glory as He first appears to this dark earth; when He comes, not *first* to be as "the sun arising with healing in His wings";--He *will* be that afterwards to Israel and the Earth, in mild beneficent glory suited to this earth when brought into a condition in which it can bask in the rays of that glory--but, how different the character of that glory which "eye hath not seen," when He will be revealed "in the glory of His Father, and in His Own glory, and the glory of the Holy angels"--revealed as the quickening One--Jehovah from heaven! That will be the character of the glory in which He will be revealed as "the bright and morning star" suddenly breaking on this dark earth! At the moment when darkness is deepest, this radiancy of heavenly glory will be manifested, and believers will be taken to be with Him and to share in the brightness of that glory! So well may He say, "I will give him the morning star"; even fellowship with that glory that pertains to Himself as "the morning star": unsuited in one sense to earth, but suited to that sphere of unsearchable glory in Heaven. As the "love" is unsearchable, so the "glory" is unsearchable that pertains to the redeemed of God!"

This dispensation, which set in at the first coming of Christ, is viewed as compared with the past ages, as the last watch of the world's night. "The night is far spent; the day is at hand." "Now once *at the end of the ages* hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) We read in this passage of His appearing a second time, but never do we read in Scripture of a third appearing. "He shall appear a *second* time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation." (Heb. ix.) Hence we are at the end of the ages of the world's night; our Morning Star has already arisen. 2 Peter i. 19 is generally understood to mean that we should study the prophetic Word till Christ comes. However, it is susceptible of another interpretation, which seems to me more natural. When Christ returns² He will not rise "in our hearts;" for our eyes shall see the King in His beauty. I take the verse to mean, that by feeding on the prophetic Word we may obtain such a clear conception of the coming glory that we may have a foretaste of its bliss now, and may have the Day Star shining in our hearts continually; so that "we shall abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."

We are now in the last time. Christ has been once offered to bear the sins of many, and we are looking for His *second* appearing. There are certain *signs* which are to be the harbingers of its approach. "Take heed that ye be not led astray: for many shall come in my name, saying I am He; and The time is at hand: *go ye not after them*. And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified: for these things must needs come to pass *first*; but the end is not immediately." (Luke xxi. 8, 9.) Christ does not here say "The time is at hand;" but, on the contrary, He warns against all who may say so before the events He is about to mention shall have transpired. Having told what must first occur, He adds "But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh . . . Behold the fig tree," &c. (Luke xxi. 28, 29). The force of this discourse is evaded, as I have before noticed, by the subterfuge of putting it aside as Jewish. Also the words in Heb. x. 25, "and so much the more *as ye see* the day approaching," plainly signify that we may discern by signs the near approach of

² "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts, . . . until the Day-dawn and the Day-star arise."--2 Pet. i. 19.

the Lord's coming.

The gospel of the kingdom, which Christ said must be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations before the end of the age (Matt. xxiv. 14), they say will be a different gospel from that now preached. This distinction reminds us of that made between the "coming" and "appearing." Christ's coming to the world must necessarily be an appearing. So the gospel of the grace of God, by which we are introduced into the kingdom in its present form, and become heirs of the future kingdom which is to be set up in power and glory, is also the gospel of the kingdom. It is called the word of the kingdom in Matt. xiii. 19, where it is shown to be the seed-principle from which the kingdom in its present phase, as depicted in the parables of that chapter, results. Paul speaks to the elders at Ephesus in Acts xx. 25 of how he had preached the kingdom of God amongst them. In the last chapter of Acts his preaching at Rome is spoken of as an expounding and testifying of the kingdom of God.

Another passage, which is thought by some a strong one for the secret rapture, is worthy of notice. I mean the words of the angels in Acts i. 11. Some insist that the words "in like manner as" plainly indicate a secret rapture before Christ's public coming, because, they say, none but His people saw Him ascend, therefore only His people will see Him when He returns for them. But surely the statement that our Lord will return in like manner as He ascended does not intimate anything as to the condition of the spectators of the event, but is intended to give us information respecting Himself. If the words "in like manner" be thought to refer to every detail of the ascension, they militate against the secret rapture. Our Lord ascended directly from the earth till lost to sight in a cloud; whereas at the alleged secret rapture He only descends as far as the air, and does not come to the earth for some years. His ascent, too, being from the mount of Olives (Acts i. 12), suggests His coming in glory as described in Zech. xiv. 4, where it is said "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives." But I do not think it likely that these details are referred to by the angel's words, but merely the comforting truth of the personal return to Christ. I only notice them to show that even the expression "in like manner as" refers to the details of the scene, and would be adverse to the secret rapture view.

Another fine-spun argument is based on the word mystery. It has been argued that a mystery being a truth not before revealed, it follows that the coming of Christ spoken of by Paul in 1 Cor. xv. is distinct from that spoken of in any scriptures before his day. If the words "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment," be attentively read, it will be seen that the new revelation is, that some will never die. Another "mystery" is also used as an argument of a similiar kind. It is said that in Eph. iii. the Church is described as a mystery hid in God before Paul's day, and on this account that we are not to understand any Old Testament scripture as referring to the Church in the present dispensation. But the mystery is not the Church itself, but the peculiar manner in which the members of it are now united into a body by the indwelling Holy Spirit. "We are members of His body. . . . This mystery is great; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph. v. 30, 32; see Col. i. 27.)

Because of this view respecting the Church, I have refrained from noticing Old Testament passages that bear on the subject of the Second Coming, as I know that they would not be received as evidence. Though that subject is referred to in connection with Israel's deliverance in the Old Testament, we do not find anything out of harmony with the doctrine that the rapture takes place at the same time. For instance, Isaiah lxii. 11 is referred to in Rev. xxii. 12, where Christ speaks of coming to reward His people. Again, Isaiah xxxv. 4, xl. 10, and lxvi. 15 seem to be referred to in 2 Thess. i. 6-10. In Daniel xii. the resurrection is mentioned, and the wise are

said to shine as the brightness of the firmament at the time of the deliverance of the people of Israel. Psalm l. corresponds with the judgment of professors and the blessing of the righteous portrayed in some of Christ's parables. In Isaiah xxvi. we also have the punishment of the living wicked mentioned as occurring at the time of the resurrection of those that are Christ's--"as *My dead body shall they arise*" (*i.e.*, Christ the Head). (R.V.) In Daniel vii. the saints of the Most High are spoken of as being oppressed by the Antichrist. Also in the Apocalypse, saints who testify for Jesus are mentioned as on the earth at that time.

The writers of the secret rapture school are addicted to the habit of building upon theories, which at the best are but inferences, instead of upon truths plainly revealed in Scripture. Where is it stated in plain words that the Church is to be taken away before the tribulation? God would not leave a doctrine of such moment so obscurely revealed that it can only be put together by a series of hypothetical arguments, unsupported by a single explicit statement of holy writ. Where are we told that a new order of believers is to arise to occupy the place of testimony vacated by the Church at its alleged removal before the tribulation? If it be once conceded that the Bible needs to be supplemented and expanded by assumptions and hypotheses of this kind, a door would be opened for a most dangerous system of exposition, on a par with that of Origen's allegorical method, which prepared the way for the innovations of the Church of Rome. It would be easy to demonstrate the unsoundness of the theory that a new order of believers is to arise after the rapture; but it is unnecessary to do so, as that theory stands or falls with the one I am assailing. I give a sample from Mr. Kelly's *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, page 111, of the way in which these fictitious semi-Christian believers are referred to by these writers. Speaking of John's presence in heaven in the Apocalypse, he writes, "It may be also that the prophet John is here found in this position in the main, because the book of the Apocalypse was not merely intended for the Church which was to be translated to heaven, and then symbolically seen there, but it also meant to help a body of witnesses to be found on earth after the Church is removed, who will go through tremendous suffering the last times. He (John) is a representative man; but rather it seems of those who are to enjoy the spirit of prophecy here below in Israel after the removal of the Church to heaven, than of those who as sons are entitled by grace to communion with their Father's heart." All these assumptions are dependent on the secret rapture theory, which is itself only an inference.

It is painful to me to differ respecting the Second Advent from many whom I find it an easy matter to esteem better than myself. As the arguments in favour of the secret rapture are mere inferences, and as it is directly contradicted by many plain statements of the Word, I have been reluctantly compelled to view the doctrine as a perversion of the truth of Scripture. If it be so, I hope that this pamphlet may be helpful by drawing attention to some fallacies in the arguments for it, which I have criticised in this chapter.

I have been told that the secret rapture-idea, even if false, cannot do harm, but on the contrary, must have a good effect, because teaching that Christ might come at any moment. But every perversion of scriptural truth must tend to distort other connected truths. One evil that has resulted from it, is the habit of Judaizing New Testament scripture. False doctrine, too, inevitably promotes conflict of opinions, and that tends to foster those deplorable divisions which exist in the Church. When the time of the Antichrist arrives, this view may be the means of keeping some believers in an unprepared state and be the source of bitter disappointment. There are many signs that indicate the near approach of that momentous time. Christendom is fast ripening its tares. We see in the face of an open Bible the ritualistic movement gaining strength in England. It is a kind of spurious Judaism--a religion suited to the natural man. (See Jude

19.) Its innovations are mostly taken from the Mosaic ritual which God has abrogated for this dispensation. This reminds us of the words of Christ, "They say they are Jews, and are not." The parables of Christ, which I have noticed, show that nominal profession will go on to the end--to "the time of harvest." Some may have difficulty in understanding how this can be. We are never told that the Antichrist will persecute mere professors, but only those who refuse to worship his image, and receive his mark, &c. Now as "all that dwell on the earth³ shall worship him,--*he* whose name hath not been written in the Book of Life," it follows that professors will bow to the image of the beast while retaining the name of Christians. This crowning insult to God on the part of those who profess to be His servants, will be very gratifying to Satan. As Jude is speaking in his epistle about the intrusion of ungodly professors amongst God's people, the ungodly ones mentioned in verse 15 as being punished at the second coming, seem to be these tares by that time matured in wickedness. In Rev. xiv. 9, 10, it is said that the followers or worshippers of the Antichrist are beyond hope; and in Isaiah xxvi. 10 God explains why the wicked must be gathered out of His kingdom at the beginning of the millennium: "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Clemency would be useless in the case of such hardened rejecters of light. This is to be the end of that latitudinarianism so rife at the present time, which is liberal at the expense of the most fundamental truths of the Bible.

Respecting the coming of the day of the Lord, and the certainty of the previous rise of the Antichrist, Paul writes, "It will not be till the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed. . . . Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. ii. 3, 5). Are we as well taught in "these things"? It is to be much regretted that at present, when the day of Antichrist may be close at hand, so many of God's people are badly instructed in the Scriptures which are intended to prepare them for that eventful and dangerous time. When that dark day of "strong delusion" arrives, there will be found wise ones who "shall instruct many," and who "shall understand" (Dan. xi. 33; xii. 3, 10). Let us seek this wisdom by careful and reverent study of Holy Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16).

"Oh, for the bliss of rising
My coming Lord to meet!
Oh, for the rest of lying
Before his pierced feet!

"Oh, for the hour of seeing
My Saviour face to face--
The hope of ever being
In that sweet meeting-place!"

Edmund Shackleton, *Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?* 3rd ed. (Aylesbury: Hunt, Barnard & Co., n.d.)

3 *i.e.*, the Roman Empire (Orbis terrarum).