

The Approaching Advent of Christ

by
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CHAPTER I

THE QUESTION STATED

Until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, general agreement existed among premillennial advocates of our Lord's Coming concerning the main outlines of the prophetic future. Amid differences of opinion on the interpretation of the Apocalypse and other portions of Scripture, the following scheme stood out as fairly representative of the school:

- (1) The approaching Advent of Christ to this world will be visible, personal, and glorious.
- (2) This Advent, though in itself a single crisis, will be accompanied and followed by a variety of phenomena bearing upon the history of the Church, of Israel, and the world. Believers who survive until the Advent will be transfigured and translated to meet the approaching Lord, together with the saints raised and changed at the first resurrection. Immediately following this, Antichrist and his allies will be slain, and Israel--the covenant people--will repent and be saved by looking upon Him whom they pierced.
- (3) Thereupon, the Messianic Kingdom of prophecy, which as the Apocalypse informs us will last for a thousand years, will be established in power and great glory in a transfigured world. The nations will turn to God, war and oppression cease, and righteousness and peace cover the earth.
- (4) At the conclusion of the kingly rule of Christ and His saints, the rest of the dead will be raised, the Last Judgment ensue, and a new and eternal world be created.
- (5) No distinction was made between the *Coming* of our Lord, His *Appearing*, *Revelation*, and *Day*, because these were all held to be synonymous, or at least related, terms, signifying always the one Advent in glory at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom.
- (6) While the Coming of Christ--no matter how long the present dispensation may last--is the true and proper hope of the Church in every generation, it is nevertheless conditioned by the prior fulfillment of certain signs or events in the history of the Kingdom of God: the Gospel has first to be preached to all nations, the Apostasy and the Man of Sin be revealed, and the Great Tribulation come to pass. Then shall the Lord come.
- (7) The Church of Christ will not be removed from the earth until the Advent of Christ at the very end of the present Age. The Rapture and the Appearing take place at the same crisis; hence, Christians of that generation will be exposed to the final affliction under Antichrist.

Such is a fair statement of the fundamentals of Premillennialism as it has obtained since the close of the Apostolic Age. There have been differences of opinion on details and subsidiary points, but the main

outline is as I have given it.

These views were held in the main by Irenaeus (the "grandpupil" of the Apostle John), Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and the primitive Christians generally until the rise of the Catholic, political Church in the West, and of allegorical exegesis at Alexandria (Harnack). In later times they were also held and propagated by Mede and Bengel, who did so much to revive the primitive hope of Christ's Coming. And since the beginning of the last century, what a galaxy of preachers, theologians, and expositors have appeared to maintain the ancient faith! In Britain and America the names of Alford, Andrews, David Baron, Birks, Bonar, Ellicott, Erdman, Gordon, Guinness, Kellogg, Moorehead, Müller, Maitland, B. W. Newton, Ryle, Saphir, Stifler, Tregelles, Trench, and West pass before us; while in Germany and the Continent generally we meet with an imposing list of exegetes and theologians such as Auberlen, Bleek, Christlieb, Delitzsch, DeWette, Düsterdieck, Ebrard, Ewald, Godet, Hofmann, Lange, Luthardt, Orelli, Rothe, Stier, Van Oosterzee, Volck, and Zahn, who assented to and expounded the premillennial doctrine set forth above.

The fact that so many eminent men reached similar conclusions regarding the subject of Christ's Coming and Kingdom creates a strong presumption that such views are scriptural, and that nothing plainly taught in Scripture and essential to the Church's hope was overlooked. About 1830, however, a new school arose within the fold of Premillennialism that sought to overthrow what, since the Apostolic Age, have been considered by all premillennialists as established results, and to institute in their place a series of doctrines that had never been heard of before. The school I refer to is that of "The Brethren" or "Plymouth Brethren," founded by J. N. Darby.

It will be convenient to give a summary of the new doctrines with extracts from the writings of the four pioneer writers who filled Evangelical Christendom with their teaching. I refer to Darby's *Lectures on the Second Coming* and *Notes on the Apocalypse*; Kelly's *Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ's Coming Again*, and *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*; Trotter's *Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects*; and C. H. M.'s *Papers on the Lord's Coming*.

In America the new teachings were spread abroad through W. E. Blackstone's *Jesus Is Coming*, and numerous writings of F. W. Grant, J. M. Gray, A. C. Gaebelein, F. C. Ottman, and C. I. Scofield; but all these followed the lead of the British (or Irish) pioneers. Scofield's *Reference Bible* represents a lifelong study of the Scriptures, and is hailed in all the world by Brethren as setting forth their views on the interpretation of Scripture, especially of prophecy and "dispensational truth." And naturally; [for] Scofield was for a generation an assiduous and admiring student of Darby's writings. In A. C. Gaebelein's many writings the influence and spirit of William Kelly are everywhere evident. These things are not said churlishly, but only to explain our confining the quotations, at this juncture, to primary authorities.

(a) The Second Coming of Christ is to take place in two distinct stages; the first, which concerns the Church alone, occurs at the beginning of, or prior to, the last or apocalyptic Week of Daniel;¹ the second, which concerns Israel and the world, takes place at the close of that Week. Between Christ's Coming in relation to the Church and His Coming in relation to the world, there thus intervenes a period of at least seven years, the period of the apocalyptic Week, during which Antichrist is manifested. At the first stage of the Advent all the dead in Christ, together with the righteous dead of

1 See note at the end of this chapter.

the O.T., will be raised in the image and glory of Christ. These, together with those Christians who live to see the Lord's Coming, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the *Coming* of the Lord, and is the true hope of the Church.

At the second stage, seven or more years later, Antichrist will be destroyed, Israel converted and renewed, and the millennial Kingdom set up. This is the *Day, Appearing, or Revelation* of Christ, and is entirely distinct from the *Coming*, for it concerns the world and Israel while the *Coming* concerns the Church alone. The second stage of the Advent has this, and this only, that concerns the Church--that it will be the time for the judgment and rewarding of the heavenly saints for their service on earth. Some, however, refer the rewarding to the time of the *Coming, or Rapture*, as the first stage is generally called.

C.H.M. says:

Having, as we trust, fully established the fact of the Lord's coming, we have now to place before the reader the double bearing of that fact--its bearing upon the Lord's people, and its bearing upon the world. The former is presented, in the New Testament, as the coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself; the latter is spoken of as "The Day of the Lord"--a term of frequent use also in Old Testament Scriptures.

These things are never confounded in Scripture, as we shall see when we come to look at the various passages. Christians do confound them, and hence it is that we often find "that blessed hope" overcast with heavy clouds, and associated in the mind with circumstances of terror, wrath, and judgment, which have nothing whatever to do with the *coming* of Christ for His people, but are intimately bound up with "The *Day* of the Lord" (p. 23).

Again, the same writer says:

The great object of the enemy is to drag down the Church of God to an earthly level--to set Christians entirely astray as to their divinely appointed hope--to lead them to confound things which God has made to differ, to occupy them with earthly things--to cause them to so mix up the *coming* of Christ for His people with His *appearing* in judgment upon the world, that they may not be able to cultivate those bridal affections and heavenly aspirations which become them as members of the body of Christ (pp. 31-2).

Again:

Wherever we turn, in whatever way we look at the subject, we are more and more confirmed in the truth of the clear distinction between our Lord's "coming," or "state of presence," and His "appearing" or "day." The former is ever held up before the heart as the bright and blessed hope of the believer, which may be realized at any moment. The latter is pressed upon the conscience, in deep solemnity, as bearing upon the entire practical career of those who are set in this world to work and witness for an absent Lord. Scripture never confounds these things, however much we may do it (p. 45).

Referring to the Church's hope and the Day of the Lord, Trotter says:

She looks for Him, however, in a previous stage of His return. She looks for Him, not as the Son of Man who comes to execute judgment on the ungodly, but as the Son of God, the Head and Bridegroom of His Church, who comes to receive to nuptial joys and heavenly glory, the Church which has known and confessed Him, in whatever weakness, during His rejection by a proud and unbelieving world. She knows that when He comes in judgment, she shall be the companion of His triumphs, and the sharer in His glories (p. 22).

Again:

The coming of Jesus, and our gathering together to Him in the air, is the Church's portion: the day comes upon the world. He (the Apostle) beseeches them by the one not to be distracted about the other. The day cannot burst with its terrors on the world till the saints have been gathered to the Lord Jesus in the air. Then he further shows that "the day" cannot come till there come a falling away first (literally, the apostacy), and that man of sin be revealed--that wicked whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. It is on the man of sin that the judgments of the day of Christ first fall. It is by the epiphany of His coming, or presence, that the man of sin is destroyed. Clearly, then, 'the day' cannot come till the man of sin has come. But the apostle does not say that CHRIST cannot come till then. He distinguishes between "the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord Jesus Christ" and "the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of his coming (*parousia*)." It is His *parousia* that gathers the saints in the air. It is the *epiphaneia* of His *parousia* that destroys the man of sin. The day commences with the *epiphaneia* of Christ's coming--that is, with His appearing to the world. The day comes not till the man of sin has come. But we have no warrant to say this of the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him. That may be any day, any hour. Nothing that has been considered presents any obstacle to that (p. 288).

Here we have the quintessence of the new eschatology, the new exegesis, and the new reasoning: a single phrase--"the manifestation of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:8) is interpreted as meaning that a secret coming (*parousia*) takes place at the beginning of the Seventieth Week of Daniel (or perhaps even long before it), and another public *parousia* or *epiphany* at the Day of Christ, when the millennium is established. Not all is said, but what is not said is in the background, with the whole school approving. Soon all will be said.

Let us have another extract from the same primary source of the new teaching:

Certain events are indeed predicted as inevitably to occur before "the day of Christ" arrives; but Scripture was seen most clearly to distinguish between *the coming* of Christ for His saints, and *the day* of Christ which brings judgment on the world. All that must occur prior to the day *may* transpire between the descent into the air and the return of Christ *with all His saints* to execute judgment on the earth: and this latter event it is that brings "the day of Christ" (p. 327, italics his).

The reader is asked to note the significance of this explanation of the phrase "Day of Christ," for it represented the view of the whole school till about the end of the century.² It was Messiah's glorious

2 The application of the phrase to the Rapture (by Anderson, Gaebelein, and Scofield) is examined in

Day, when He comes to set up His kingly rule, after routing His foes. Perfect clarity here will help us to avoid misunderstanding all through our inquiry; so I give an extract on this point from C.H.M., and then a brief one from Darby. The former writes:

We are plainly and expressly told the "day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12). What "day"? The day of the Lord, most surely, which is always the term used in connection with our individual responsibility in walk and service. This, we may remark in passing, is a point of much interest and practical value. If the reader will take the trouble to examine the various passages in which "the day" is spoken of, he will find that they have reference, more or less, to the question of work, service or responsibility. For instance, "That ye may be blameless [not at the *coming*, but] in *the day* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8). Again, "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for *the day* shall declare it" (1 Cor. 3:13). "Without offence till *the day* of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at *that day*" (2 Tim. 4:8). From all these passages and many more which might be adduced, we learn that "the day of the Lord" will be the grand time for reckoning with the workers; for the appraisal of service; for the settling of all questions of personal responsibility; for the distribution of rewards--the "ten cities" and the "five cities" (pp. 44-5; italics and brackets his).

On "Christ's day" in Philippians 2:16, Darby says in the same vein: "The apostle thus unites his work and the reward in the day of Christ with the blessing of the assembly" (*Synopsis*). So Kelly, *Revelation*, p. 236.

The pith of which is that Christ's *Coming* or *Parousia* brings the Rapture, and Christ's *Day* the judgment, the reward, and the Kingdom several years later.

(b) The Coming of Christ "for the Church," the resurrection of the sleeping saints and the translation of the living together with them to meet the descending Lord, will take place secretly. None of the unconverted will witness them. Not so, however, the *Day* of Christ, seven or more years later; for the Lord will then come forth in visible glory, and every eye shall see Him. Referring to the Ascension in Acts 1:10-11, C.H. M. says:

And here we may ask--though it be rather anticipating what may come before us in a future paper--Who saw the blessed Lord as He went up? Did the world? Nay; not one unconverted person ever laid his eyes upon our precious Lord from the moment that He was laid in the tomb. The last sight the world got of Jesus was as He hung on the cross, a spectacle to angels, men and devils. The next sight they will get of Him will be when, like the lightning flash, He shall come forth to execute judgment, and tread, in terrible vengeance, the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God. . . .

Is it possible for testimony to be more distinct or satisfactory? Could proof be more clear or conclusive? How can any counter-argument stand for a moment, or any objection be raised? Either those two men in white apparel were false witnesses, or our Jesus shall come again in the exact manner in which He went away. There is no middle ground

the chapter "Messiah's Day" [chap. 12].

between these two conclusions. We read in Scripture that, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established"; and therefore in the mouth of two heavenly messengers--two heralds from the region of light and truth, we have the word established that our Lord Jesus Christ shall come again in actual bodily form, to be seen by His own first of all, apart from all others, in the holy intimacy and profound retirement which characterized His departure from this world. All this, blessed be God, is wrapped up in the two little words "*as*" and "*so*" (pp. 17-18).

In expounding 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Kelly, the acknowledged theologian of the movement, writes thus in his *Second Coming*:

It is mere and ignorant unbelief to press the fact that the Lord so shouts, and then to conclude that all the world must hear Him at that epoch. It is contrary to every analogy, that the world will be witnesses of the Lord's coming to take away the believers. It is easy to conceive that the Lord could conceal it if He pleased. Of course the world may be alarmed and astonished for a while by the fact of the disappearance of so many. That there will be a great effect produced in the world by it I am not in the least disposed to deny; but I believe that the simple and natural interpretation of the terms employed in this Scripture (1 Thess. 4) supposes a special connection between the Lord and those for whom He comes, and that the choice of the expressions limits His action in sight and sound too, as well as in effects of deeper moment, to those whom it all concerns. No more at present would I deduce or assert (pp. 171-2).

On the same passage Darby writes in his *Second Coming*:

The only persons who hear it are "the dead in Christ," Christ being represented as in this way gathering together His own troops. . . . At the proper time the Lord comes--it is not said *appears*-- and calls us up to be for ever with the Lord, to take our place associated with Christ (pp. 44-5).

(c) Christ, having come secretly to the air and received His waiting or sleeping people to Himself, returns with them to heaven, and there awaits the *Day* or *Revelation*. They remain in heaven for an undetermined period, but it is almost universally recognized to be at least seven years, the period of the last of Daniel's Seventy Weeks. When the *Day* of the Lord arrives, Christ will appear in glory from heaven, accompanied by the previously-raptured saints. Every eye shall see them. This is called Christ's Coming *with* His saints, as distinguished from the earlier secret Coming *for* his saints. The distinction is insisted upon as most vital.

(d) The realization of the Coming of Christ *for* His saints is quite independent of the fulfillment of all or any signs and predicted events. It awaits no progress in the evangelization of the world on the one hand, no spread of apostasy in the professing Church on the other. It is independent of the return of the Jews to their own land, of the emergence of the Concert of the Ten Kings, and of the rise and reign of the last Antichrist--for all these events take place *after* the Secret Rapture, which is conditioned by nothing except the conversion of the last member of Christ's mystical Body.

When, therefore, we read in the Gospels or Epistles that certain events have to be fulfilled before the Return of Christ, we are to understand at once that it is the second stage--the *Day*, or *Revelation*, or

Appearing of Christ, and not the secret *Coming* that is so conditioned. With his usual lucidity Kelly says in his *Second Coming*:

The Lord keeps His coming to receive His saints as a distinct hope of the heart, apart from earthly events. When they are, at His coming, translated to heaven, then the earthly tide of events begins to flow. Hence, a further stage of Christ's coming is called "the appearing," the "revelation of Christ," and the other terms which imply manifestation--among the rest, "the day of the Lord" (p. 183).

Again:

I have no hesitation in affirming from these inspired statements that we have come to the second act, so to speak, in which the Lord manifests His presence. He appears from heaven, and the saints, already risen and changed, already taken up to be with Him above, come along with Him from heaven. It is between His coming *for* the saints and His coming *with* them from heaven, that the earthly events transpire, with various signs and tokens--never of His coming to receive the saints, but of His coming to judge the world. In short there are no defined periods or visible harbingers to intimate that He is coming to receive us, but there are manifold and manifest signs before He comes with the saints in the execution of His judgment upon the world (p. 184).

(e) During the interval of seven years or more that will elapse between the *Coming* and the *Day* of Christ, God will resume His purposes with the Jews. While many will return in unbelief to Palestine, and yield to the seduction of Antichrist, a small Remnant will remain faithful to the true God. Their relation to Christianity will be unique. They may have some knowledge of Christ's person,³ but little or none of His saving work. They may recognize Jesus as Messiah, yet because of the removal of the Holy Spirit from the earth at the Rapture of the Church, they will be unable to appropriate the benefits of His redemption. Hence they will have no real knowledge of salvation until Christ comes in His glory, when they will repent and be saved. In a word, their state until then might be described as semi-Christian.

The spiritual experience of this Remnant is believed by pre-tribs to be mirrored to us in scores of the Psalms. Even the Imprecatory Psalms, with their cries for vengeance on the ungodly, are applied to the future Jewish Remnant. So are several of the Beatitudes of our Lord.

During the second half of Daniel's apocalyptic Week, this Remnant of Jews will take up the Great Missionary Commission of Matthew 28 and go far and wide preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Extraordinary power and success will accompany their labors, for an immense number--possibly the vast majority--of the inhabitants of the world will be brought to God through their labors prior to the Day of the Lord. According to many teachers (including Darby, Anderson, and Gaebelein) this will be the true intent and fulfillment of our Lord's Missionary Commission in Matthew 28; but this is not urged by all. Many other portions of our Lord's discourses are also referred to this Jewish Remnant of the Last days instead of to members of the Christian Church. The Lord's Prayer, most of the Sermon on the Mount, and the prophecy of the End in Matthew 24-25 are so applied.

3 This is not admitted, however, by others; See E. Dennett, an interpreter of Darby: *The Blessed Hope*, pp. 55 and 81.

For a convenient exposition of pre-trib teaching on the Jewish Remnant, the reader is referred to the two chapters, "The Spared Remnant" and "The Martyred Remnant" in Trotter's work, and to Gaebelein's volume *Hath God*, etc.

Darby's *Synopsis* contains scattered references to this subject, which is handled systematically in his *Collected Writings*, and in the two works just mentioned. Anderson's view of Matthew 28:18-20 is found in an appendix to his *Buddha of Christendom* and *The Bible or the Church?* Scofield treated of the subject in his *Bible Correspondence Course*. There the position is taken up that the sealed of Israel are "144,000 Pauls" sent into all the world to evangelize the nations after the removal of the Holy Spirit to heaven,⁴ and during the 1260 days of Antichrist's triumph. A big order, yet they succeed in converting "the overwhelming majority" of earth's inhabitants to God. (Sect. ii., pp. 112-3.)

(f) From the fact that the Church will be removed to heaven prior to the rise of Antichrist, it follows that no member of the Christian Church will suffer in the Great Tribulation, instigated by him.⁵ No single point in the new scheme is more earnestly contended for than this one, and every year sees new tracts issuing from the Press in support of it. Anyone who denies the Church's immunity from the Antichristian persecution of the Last Days is looked upon as having departed seriously from the faith once delivered to the saints, and is received coldly or not at all by pre-tribs. Thrice welcome is he who has written a tract affirming it.

(g) The resurrection of the saints at the Coming of Christ prior to the Seventieth Week of Daniel will be succeeded by another resurrection of saints at its close. This is the resurrection of the immense number of martyrs who die, *ex hypothesi*, between the previous resurrection and rapture and the Day of the Lord. But these martyrs--converted by the preaching of the Remnant--have no connection with the Church of God. It should be said also that the martyred portion of the semi-converted and semi-Christian Jewish Remnant, which enters heaven, [*sic*] at death,⁶ is also raised at this time to share the image of the heavenly. "A martyr's death is for them the passage to heavenly glory, and to association with Christ when He shall reign over the earth" (Trotter, p. 402). It is contended by pre-tribs that this second resurrection is really part of the first resurrection, which, *ex hypothesi*, takes place some years or decades previously, at the Rapture.

It will be understood, of course, that the kingly rule of Christ and His saints, the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous dead, and the creation of a new world at the close of His reign, are firmly held in the new school.

I have thus sought fairly and accurately to set forth the pre-trib scheme of the prophetic future. It must not be supposed, however, that all among Brethren accepted the new views. On the contrary, some of their weightiest members repudiated them as innovations. Not only accomplished scholars like S. P. Tregelles and B. W. Newton, but also devout men like George Müller and James Wright of Bristol, Robert Chapman and Dan Crawford resisted the new theories of Darby. The following extract from

4 Darbyists interpret the difficult verses, 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, of the removal of the Holy "Spirit at the Rapture; evil then comes in like a flood. I deal with the point in the last chapter but one of this volume. Kelly deals with the theory in *Christ's Coming Again*, ii., p. 99, etc.

5 Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14; etc.

6 Brackets here are Reese's.

Müller's writings will show how the group I have mentioned adhered to the early premillennial views set forth above. Asked shortly before his death whether Christians are to expect our Lord's Return at *any moment*, or whether certain events must be fulfilled before He comes again, Müller replied as follows:

I know that on this subject there is great diversity of judgment, and I do not wish to force on other persons the light I have myself. The subject, however, is not new to me; for, having been a careful, diligent student of the Bible for nearly fifty years, my mind has long been settled on this point, and I have not the shadow of a doubt about it. The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will *not* come until the Apostasy shall have taken place, the Man of Sin, the "son of perdition" (or personal Antichrist), shall have been revealed, as seen in 2 Thess. 2:1-5. Many other portions also of the Word of God distinctly teach that certain events are to be fulfilled before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not, however, alter the fact that the *Coming of Christ*, and not death, is the great Hope of the Church, and, if in a right state of heart, *we* (as the Thessalonian believers did) shall "serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from Heaven."⁷

Müller's teaching, however, despite the enormous prestige of his name, is rejected, even among "Open Brethren"--the movement that originated in his breach with Darby over ecclesiastical contamination at Bristol and Plymouth. On Missions and Baptism, Müller's influence prevailed; on prophecy and prophetic speculation, Darby's.

It must be kept clearly in view, moreover, that I have described only the original, parent scheme as formulated by Darby and his associates. This scheme is still in the ascendant today. Adaptations and developments of Darby's original scheme by J. A. Seiss, G. H. Pember, E. W. Bullinger, and Sir Robert Anderson will be duly noticed in the sequel. Suffice it to say here that Seiss and Pember, followed by Hudson Taylor, D. M. Panton, and others, taught that only really faithful Christians will be raptured prior to the Great Tribulation; all others will be left behind to be purified in that trial. Bullinger, among other peculiarities, excluded the Pentecostal Church from the mystical Body of Christ and limited the Lord's action at the first stage of the Advent to the Body alone; only members of the Body will be raised and raptured. The holy dead of ancient times, and all Christians prior to Paul, will not be raised until the Day of the Lord. Bullinger, moreover, found more than one rapture in the N.T. Anderson does not accept the distinction between the *Coming*, *Appearing*, *Revelation*, and *Day* of Christ, but teaches a doctrine of a *series* of comings or appearings at the End. This has found little acceptance. He also disclaims the idea of secrecy at the Rapture; so also R. A. Torrey and a growing number of writers.

For these aberrations from Darby's scheme, the reader is referred to Hudson Taylor's *Union and Communion*, Seiss's *Apocalypse*, Panton's *Rapture*, Anderson's *Coming Prince*, *Forgotten Truths*, and *Unfulfilled Prophecy* (2nd ed.), and Bullinger's *Ten Sermons on the Second Advent*, *The Apocalypse*, and *The Mystery*. Moreover, changes are still going on. In *Touching the Coming*, Messrs. Hogg and Vine, two Brethren expositors of note today, repudiate the pioneers' distinctions between the *Coming* and the *Appearing*, *Revelation*, and *Day* of Christ, which gave early Brethren songs in the night, and which C. H. M. told us above with such certitude it was a design of Satan to confound and mix up; and they [Hogg and Vine] find exegetical salvation in adopting everywhere the translation *presence* for the Greek word *parousia*, so that the period or age, *ex hypothesis*, between the Rapture and the Appearing

⁷ Cited by Frank H. White in *The Saint's Rest and Rapture*.

(which some think may be only three and a half years, others seven, others about seventy, but which Anderson thinks may possibly be a thousand years) gives the true meaning of the Apostolic references to the Coming of our Lord. He is then present. (Chart & app., 152-5.)

And now in the year of grace, 1932, which marks the centenary of the first Brethren assembly in England, C. F. Hogg, one of the authors of the volume just referred to, proposes a further retreat from dispensational orthodoxy, with no diminution of confidence and certainty. Writing officially, I take it, in the Brethren publication, "The Witness," for June 1932, he thinks that confusion is only avoided and adherence to truth promoted by accepting his suggestion that the Rapture is not really the Lord's Coming but "our going to be with Him"--the levitation of the scattered saints through space to the Lord's presence: "The second Advent, or Coming, of the Lord is His coming to the earth in power and great glory for the overthrow of His enemies and the establishing of His Kingdom" (p. 135). And this, he tells us elsewhere,⁸ is "the Blessed Hope" of the Church. The levitation of the saints to Christ secures for them the blessed immunity from the Great Tribulation, but the Blessed Hope of Christ's Second Coming belongs to the Day of the Lord *after* the time of tribulation.

It was as necessary as it was desirable to exhibit the new theories at a single view, because misrepresentations and misconceptions of them abound, and some there are who may read this volume who are little acquainted with Darby and his school of prophetic interpretation. Experience shows, moreover, that some very intelligent people, although initiated into the new methods of exegesis, have never grasped the new plan in all its bearings--such are its astonishing intricacies. As an example, I mention that even well-taught ministers who maintained the new views have applied Matthew 24:40-41, and Luke 17:34-35 ("the one shall be taken and the other left") to the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Not so leaders like Darby, Kelly and Gaebelien, who, seeing the inconvenient proximity of the Glorious Appearing at Matthew 24:31 and Luke 17:30, did not admit a rapture in the context; and naturally.

The question that now concerns us is whether the pre-trib theories are true and scriptural and thus entitled to supplant the former scheme outlined.

It matters not that they are new and novel and have never been heard of in the whole history of the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age. What men call heresy sometimes proves to be the truth of God. It matters not that the great premillennial scholars and theologians--Alford, Bengel, Delitzsch, Zahn, and others--found no trace in the N.T. of the teachings raised by Darby, for they may be all wrong and he alone right. Reluctant as some may be to admit it, it is quite possible that the very men who fought and won the battle of Premillennialism in the modern Church may all have been--to borrow a phrase of William Kelly's--"antagonists of the truth," inasmuch as they missed the distinction between the *Coming* of Christ and the *Revelation* seven or more years later; and because they made the *Day* of Christ the day for the realization of the Church's hope.

8 "The Morning Star," August 1, 1912; *Touching the Coming* (pp. 141-2). In their commentary on Thessalonians the authors say: "Where it is used prophetically, *parousia* refers to a period beginning with the descent of the Lord from Heaven to the air, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, and ending with His revelation and manifestation to the world" (p. 88). The extract from Mr. Hogg's article is given at length in the last chapter of this volume. Anderson's view of the interval between the Rapture and the millennium is to be found in his *Coming Prince*, p. 289, and is quoted later.

Let us therefore be candid and open-minded for fear lest, in resisting the new theories, we resist the Spirit of God Himself.

But there is another side to this. Darby and his followers may be wrong and the hundred-and-one famous advocates of the older premillennial school right; in which case the "brayings of ignorance" (Kelly), the "hotch-potch system of exegesis" (Anderson), and other terms applied by some advocates of the new to those of the old school will prove rather inept [foolish]; for if the new theories are not true and scriptural, then we must class them with the "noble errors" (to use a phrase of Gladstone's) that devout men have sometimes sincerely propagated.