

The Approaching Advent of Christ

by
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CHAPTER XI

THE PAROUSIA OF THE KING

The next word claiming attention is *Parousia*, which is usually translated in the Authorized and Revised versions by *coming*, and in the recent independent translations by *coming* and *arrival*. We first meet it in the N.T. at Matthew 24:3, which reads: "What will be the sign of your *Coming* and of the close of the age?"¹ Here and everywhere else in the Gospels it refers to the triumphant Advent of our Lord at the close of the present world-period. Pre-tribs admit this, but contend that the Lord was addressing the Apostles as representatives of a Jewish Remnant of the End-time, and that it is to the Epistles of Paul that we must go to get light on the Church's hope. The Coming of the *Son of Man* is not for the Church, but for Israel and the world. Literally, as I have said, a volume is required to examine adequately the theories of the standing, sufferings, and missionary preaching of that Remnant. But in the Epistles of Paul we are on common ground. It is allowed that *Parousia* in the Epistles always refers to that Coming of Christ, which is the hope of Christians. Let us go, therefore, to Paul. And it is in his earliest Epistles (excepting Galatians), those to the Thessalonians, that we meet with several references to the word that we are to examine. Pre-tribs think that Paul is with them and rely on these very Epistles to prove their whole case on the Second Coming. Here are the references according to the Revised Version. For the sake of completeness I also give the occurrence of the word in the great chapter on resurrection:

1 Cor. 15:23: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his *coming*.

1 Thess. 2:19: For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his *coming*? For ye are our glory and our joy.

1 Thess. 3:13: To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the *coming* of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

1 Thess. 4:15: We that are alive, that are left unto the *coming* of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.

1 Thess. 5:23: May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thess. 2:1: Now we beseech you brethren touching the *coming* of the Lord. . . .

2 Thess. 2:8: 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 (*epiphaneia*) of his

1 So Weymouth and Goodspeed; Moffatt has "arrival"; A.V., R.V. have "coming."

coming

Only two of the above texts require detailed study. We may as well consider first the stronghold of the new program of the End.

(1) 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Most pre-tribs are frank enough to admit that if this passage goes against them, then their main position is lost. Their whole safety rests, in the last resort, upon the holding of this fort against attack. To borrow a figure from Provost Salmon, we face an adversary who has been driven from one fortress after another, but now secures himself with special confidence in his last. If he fails here he must fall back in a rout. What does the Apostle say?

But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning the rapture of the Saints, that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope.

The careless reader will have read the above passage without observing any appreciable change in its wording. Others will have noticed a significant variation at verse 13. Whereas Paul writes, "I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning *them that are asleep*," the citation above reads, "concerning *the rapture of the saints*"--for so it is often unconsciously read by every theorist who approaches the text. According to Paul, he is going to give fresh instruction concerning "them that are asleep." According to the theorists, he is about to give a revelation concerning the Rapture of the saints. In a former chapter I quoted the dictum of a pre-trib in America--"the Rapture is an incident of the coming, spoken of directly *once*, and only once; and then given as a new revelation to meet the sorrows of the Lord's bereaved. It is never repeated."

Such statements are characteristic of thousands made in pamphlets, books, and magazines. They are typical of the exegetical looseness that characterizes so many of the school. For, first, it may be asserted with all boldness that the Rapture was not given in 1 Thessalonians 4 "as a new revelation." I have already shown in chapter 6, with the complete concurrence of Darby, Kelly, Newberry, and, indeed, of all the earlier theorists and present-day ones like Scofield, that the Rapture of believers was not "given as a new revelation" by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 but by the Lord Jesus Christ twenty years earlier. Secondly, it is to be asserted that the new revelation, given "to meet the sorrows of the Lord's bereaved," was not the Rapture at all but the fact that at the Coming of the Lord the saints who survive till then will have no precedence or advantage whatever over the saints who sleep. Thirdly, in view of the Rapture craze fathered by theorists, it needs to be asserted that the real message of comfort about the Apostle's words is not that there will be a Rapture but that at the Lord's Coming the saints, whether watching or sleeping, will live together with the Lord and be forever with Him; so that, as Faussett beautifully puts it in his commentary, there will be "no more parting, no more going out," and [as] Moffatt [writes], "no more sleeping in him or waiting for him." Fourthly, it will be shown, before we have finished with strange theories, that the Rapture so far from being "spoken of directly once and only once and never repeated" was so spoken of more than once and was often repeated.²

To anyone not infatuated with special theories, the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 is as plain as a pikestaff. In the words of Faussett, "Jesus is represented as a victorious King, giving the word of

2 John 14:3; Matt. 13:30; 24:31, 40-41; Mark 13:27; Luke 17:34-35; Rev. 20:4; 14:16.

command to the hosts of heaven in His train for the last onslaught, at His final triumph over sin, death and Satan"³ (Rev. 19:11-21).

The N.T. grammarian, A. T. Robertson, writing on the phrase "with a shout" in v. 16 says: "an old word, here only in N.T., from *keleuō*, to order, command (military command). *Christ will come as conqueror.*" Conybeare translates [it] by a "shout of war" and adds, "the word denotes the shout used in battle." Alexander, in *The Speaker's Commentary*, has the paraphrase "with a cry of command ringing forth, like that of the general of a great army."

"Christ will come as conqueror." Here is the keynote of the passage. And this is proved beyond all doubt by the kingly word *Parousia* used here. It is one of the great contributions of modern scholarship that we now understand what the early Christians felt when they read in Paul's Epistles of the Parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ. Scholars and archæologists have been digging in the rubbish-heaps of Egypt and found this word used in scores of documents in everyday life for the *arrival* of kings and rulers, or the visit following. Let us have this in the words of a scholar, who has rendered priceless services in explaining the words of Paul. In his great work, *Light from the Ancient East*,⁴ Deissmann deals with the word *Parousia*. I quote some paragraphs from it:

Yet another of the central ideas of the oldest Christian worship receives light from the new texts, namely: parousia, "advent, coming," a word expressive of the most ardent hopes of a St. Paul. We now may say that the best interpretation of the Primitive Christian hope of the Parousia is the old Advent text, "Behold, thy *King* cometh unto thee" (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5). From the Ptolemaic period down into the 2nd cent. A.D. we are able to trace the word in the East as *a technical expression for the arrival or the visit of the king or the emperor* (or other persons in authority, or troops). The parousia of the sovereign must have been something well known even to the people, as shown by the facts that special payments in kind and taxes to defray the cost of the parousia were exacted, that in Greece *a new era was reckoned from the parousia of the Emperor Hadrian*, that all over the world advent-coins were struck after a parousia of the emperor, and that we are even able to quote examples of advent sacrifices.

The subject of parousia dues and taxes in Egypt has been treated in detail by Wilcken. The oldest passage he mentions is in the Flinders Petrie Papyrus II. 39e, of the 3rd cent. B.C., where, according to his ingenious interpretation, contributions are noted for a crown of gold to be presented to the king at his parousia: "for another crown on the occasion of the parousia, 12 artabae." This papyrus supplies an exceptionally fine background of contrast to the figurative language of St. Paul, in which *Parousia* (or *Epiphany*, "appearing") and *crown* occur in collocation. While the sovereigns of this world expect at their parousia a costly crown for themselves, "at the parousia of our Lord Jesus" the apostle will wear a crown--"the crown of glory" (I Thess. 2:19), won by his work among the Churches, or "the crown of righteousness" which the Lord will give to him and to all them that have loved His appearing--2 Timothy 4:8.

I have found another characteristic example in a petition, *circa* 113 B.C., which was found among the wrappings of the mummy of a sacred crocodile. A parousia of King Ptolemy, the

3 Lest the word "final" should be misunderstood, I remark that Canon Faussett held ardently to the kingly rule of Christ, following the Advent in Rev. 19:11, and 1 Thess. 4:14-18.

4 The Greek quotations are omitted.

second, who called himself *Soter* ("saviour"), is expected, and for this occasion a great requisition has been issued for corn, which is being collected at Cerceosiris by the village headman and the elders of the peasants. Speaking of this and another delivery of corn, these officials say: "and applying ourselves diligently, both night and day, unto fulfilling that which was set before us and the provision of 80 artabae which was imposed for the parusia of the king"

Are not these Egyptian peasants, toiling day and night in expectation of the parusia of their saviour king, an admirable illustration of our Lord's words (Luke 18:7) about the elect who cry day and night to God, in expectation of the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 18:8)?

As in Egypt, so also in Asia: the uniformity of Hellenistic civilisation is proved once more in this instance. An inscription of the 3rd cent. B.C. at Olbia mentions a parusia of King Saitapharnes, the expenses of which were a source of grave anxiety to the city fathers, until a rich citizen, named Protogenes, paid the sum--900 pieces of gold, which were presented to the king. Next comes an example of great importance as proving an undoubted sacral use of the word, viz., an inscription of the 3rd cent. B.C., recording a cure at the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus, which mentions a parusia of the healer (saviour) god Asclepius--"and Asclepius manifested his parusia." For the combination of parusia with manifestation see Thess. 2:8. Other examples of Hellenistic age known to me are a passage in Polybius--"to expect earnestly the parusia of Antiochus" (the verb is very characteristic, cf. Rom. 8:19)--referring to a parusia of King Antiochus the Great, and two letters of King Mithradates VI., Eupator of Pontus at the beginning of his first war with the Romans, 88 B.C., recorded in an inscription at Nysa in Caria--"And now, having learnt of my parusia." The prince, writing to Leonippus the Praefect of Caria, makes twofold mention of his own parusia, *i.e.* his invasion of the province of Asia.

It is the legitimate continuation of the Hellenistic usage that in the Imperial period the parusia of the sovereign should shed a special brilliance. Even the visit of a scion of the Imperial house, G. Caesar (+ 4 A.D.), a grandson of Augustus, was, as we know from an inscription--"in the first year of the epiphany [synonymous with parusia] of Gaius Caesar"--made the beginning of a new era in Cos. In memory of the visit of the Emperor Nero, in whose reign St. Paul wrote his letters to Corinth, the cities of Corinth and Patras struck advent-coins. *Adventus Aug(usti) Cor(inthi)* is the legend on one, *Adventus Augusti* on the other. Here we have corresponding to the Greek *parusia* the Latin word *advent*, which the Latin Christians afterwards simply took over, and which is to-day familiar to every child among us.

How graphically it must have appealed to the Christians of Thessalonica, with their living conception of the parusiae of the rulers of this world, when they read in St. Paul's second letter--("the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus . . . shall destroy by the manifestation of His parusia, whose parusia is according to the workings of Satan" 2 Thess. 2:8-9)--of the Satanic "parusia" of Antichrist, who was to be destroyed by "the manifestation of the parusia" of the Lord Jesus!

How deeply a parusia stamped itself on the memory is shown by the eras that were reckoned from parusiae. We have heard already of an era at Cos dating from the epiphany of G. Caesar,

and we find that in Greece a new era was begun with the first visit of the Emperor Hadrian in the year 124;--the magnificent monuments in memory of that parusia still meet the eye at Athens and Eleusis. There is something peculiarly touching in the fact that towards the end of the 2nd century, at the very time when the Christians were beginning to distinguish the "first parusia" of Christ from the "second," an inscription at Tegea was dated "in the year 69 of the first parusia of the god Hadrian in Greece."

Even in early Christian times the parallelism between the parusia of the representative of the State and the parusia of Christ was clearly felt by the Christians themselves. This is shown by a newly discovered petition of the small proprietors of the village of Aphrodite in Egypt to the Dux of the Thebaid in the year 537-538 A.D., a papyrus which at the same time is an interesting memorial of Christian popular religion in the age of Justinian. "It is a subject of prayer with us night and day, to be held worthy of your welcome parusia." The peasants whom a wicked Pagarch has been oppressing, write thus to the high official, after assuring him with a pious sigh at the beginning that they awaited him "as they watch eagerly from Hades the future parusia of Christ the everlasting God."

Finally:

Quite closely related to parusia is another cult-word epiphaneia, "epiphany, appearing." How closely the two ideas were connected in the age of the N.T. is shown by the passage in 2 Thess. 2:8, already quoted, and by the associated usage of the Pastoral Epistles, in which "Epiphany" or "Appearing" nearly always means the future parusia of Christ, though once it is the parusia which patristic writers afterwards called "the first." Equally clear, however, is the witness of an advent coin struck by Actium-Nicopolis for Hadrian, with the legend: "Epiphany of Augustus"; the Greek word coincides with the Latin word "advent" generally used on coins . . . the new proofs available are very abundant.

It is not too much to say that these facts about the language in which the N.T. was written must revolutionize some old and favorite ideas. In particular, when we open the Epistles to the Thessalonians, we know for certain that Paul, in speaking of the Parousia of the Lord, is referring to the arrival, nay, the arrival in triumph of Christ the Lord. The humble believers in Thessalonica, when they witnessed the imposing parousiæ of the emperor or his representative, and when they read the words of the Apostle about the Parousia of the Lord, would remember with joy that their Emperor, Jesus the Messiah, will have His Parousia, which will be an overpowering manifestation of divine power and glory, full of joy for the righteous, full of terror for the impenitent and the ungodly, and *opening up a new era for the world.*

At 1 Thessalonians 2:19 this Parousia is associated with crowns and rewards for the servants of Christ, at 3:13 with an immense retinue of the holy dead, at 4:15-17 with the resurrection of those saints and the Lord's summons to His hosts for the decisive conflict, at 5:23 with the saints' holiness and preparation for that day, at 2 Thessalonians 2:1 it is mentioned with the assembling of the Elect as one of two events characterizing the Day of the Lord and requiring to be fulfilled before anyone could say "the Day of the Lord has come"; at 2:8 with the Glorious Appearing of Christ and the overthrow of Antichrist, and at 1 Corinthians 15:23, 50-52, with the resurrection and transfiguration of the redeemed when the Kingdom is established.

Not different is the teaching of the other Apostles. James (who according to Bartlet, Mayor, Zahn, and many other authorities wrote about A.D. 45, a few years before the "revelation" in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 of a special coming "for the Church") deals with the Parousia of the Lord in a primitive, almost O.T., way⁵--He who judges the ungodly and vindicates the elect is at hand. In 2 Peter 1:16 the Parousia is associated with the Coming and Kingdom of *the Son of Man* in the Gospels.⁶ At 3:12, the Apostle desires that his readers should be found "looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God" (R.V. mg.), which is the same as the Day of the Lord in v. 10, the day that closes the present Dispensation of mercy and ushers in the regeneration of nature, according to Isaiah and our Lord.⁷ John, in his First Epistle at 2:28, associated the Parousia with the public manifestation of the Son, and this in 4:17 is called "the day of judgment." This majestic event requires that we abide continually in Him so as to have boldness in the great Day and "not be ashamed before him at his parousia."

The suggestion of Darby, backed by the vigorous efforts of Kelly⁸ and others, to prove from this most magnificent passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 that a secret coming, a secret resurrection, and a secret rapture are portrayed, followed by the *rise and reign* of Antichrist, is among the sorriest in the whole history of freak exegesis. It is on a par with what the postmillennialists say at Revelation 20:4-6 [refuting a thousand-year earthly reign of Messiah]--just as bad and just as dangerous to the truth of the Millennium. For if I Thessalonians 4:14-18 can be fulfilled as secretly as Darbyists insist, then so can the classic passage in Revelation. It is an inconsistency to deny it. Admitting the principle of secrecy is selling the pass of the premillennial position. Anything becomes possible, [even] the vagary of Dr. J. Stuart Russell and others that 1 Thessalonians 4 was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the lunar suggestion of Pastor Russell (or his successor) that it was accomplished in 1914. We are in a land of guesses, dreams and delusions, which Christ and His Apostles sought strenuously to save us from. If anyone doubts this reasoning, let him consider the following exposition of Revelation 19:11 by a leading postmillennialist, Dr. Agar Beet:

The vision of Rev. 19:11 does not necessarily describe an event visible to men on earth. We are

- 5 James 5:7,8; on verse 7 Alford says: "**Be patient therefore** ('therefore' is a general reference to the prophetic strain of the previous passage: judgment on your oppressors being so near, and your own part, as the Lord's 'righteous,' being that of unresistingness) **brethren . . . until . . . the coming of the Lord.**"
- 6 Matt. 16:28, and 17:1-8. This is the interpretation of the Transfiguration by both Kelly and Gaebelein in their commentaries on Matthew. It is not so sure as they think.
- 7 Isaiah 65 and 66:22; Matt. 19:28.
- 8 "Brayings of ignorance," "antagonists of the truth," "it is mere and ignorant unbelief," and scores of others were the grossly offensive expressions used by Kelly of his opponents, to browbeat his readers into acceptance of his distorting exegesis. Not only that, the influence of Satan was attributed to those who rejected the Secret Rapture or the distinctions between the *Coming* and the *Day, Appearing, and Revelation* of Christ. Now half the school is doing it! Kelly would be excellent--when expounding the truth; Spurgeon said of him that "he was born for the universe, but narrowed by Darbyism." But in espousing ecclesiastical and prophetic error he used most of the tricks of controversy. In the writings of Dr. Gaebelein, an American interpreter of Kelly, the same deplorable spirit is often found. It is no pleasure to say this, for the author's *Harmony of the Prophetic Word* has much in it that is excellent. The present writer is glad to testify that in what he had read of Darby on prophecy, the courteous and urbane spirit has been admirable. He was often ingenuous in making ruinous admissions. Of course Darby could use another blade.

not told in Ch. 20:4-6 that the risen ones will reign with Christ on earth; nor have we in verse 4 any hint of a visible return of Christ to earth. Possibly the events of Rev. 19:11 to 20:4 may take place without any interruption of the ordinary course of human life.⁹

These words, *mutatis mutandis*, are an exact reproduction of pre-trib ideas of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. It is Darby and Kelly who insist, and loudly insist, that this latter passage "does not describe an event visible to men on earth." It is they who assert that that sublime Advent will take place "without any interruption of the ordinary course of human life," and that the passage does not contain "any hint of a visible return of Christ to earth." And, as if to complete the resemblance between the two schools, Beet indicates that in his opinion the reign of the risen ones in Revelation 20:4-6 will not be exercised on earth but in heaven--exactly the position of Kelly and his colleagues, who vigorously insist that the risen saints during the millennium will not reign on earth but from heaven.

Thus we see how thoroughly the strange doctrine of a secret, invisible advent of Christ is a complete undermining of the fundamental position of premillennialism. In vain may the theorist protest against the violence of Beet's exegesis. In vain may he insist that the language of the Apocalypse requires a visible, glorious Advent breaking in upon the life of humanity. He himself by his own violent principles of interpretation has provided Beet and his school with the requisite justification. Every argument he uses against Beet is a refutation of his own system.

Similarly it must be admitted that if the innumerable company of the sleeping saints who rise at the Advent of 1 Thessalonians 4 may rise and be transferred to heaven without any interruption of the life of humanity beyond a passing scare and inconvenience, then the same must be granted as possible of the resurrection of the martyrs in Revelation 20:4-6. Finally, if millions of living Christians, whom the world sees and with whom it has intercourse every day, can be translated in clouds to heaven without the world's witnessing it, then it is but straining at a gnat to deny that God can bind Satan, whom we have never seen, and overthrow Antichrist and his allies secretly and without a glorious Advent of which all the world will know. Thus we see, I repeat, that the Secret-Rapture theories are a menace to the hope of Christ's Coming.

But there is no need to labor that point; the Secret Rapture theory is being increasingly abandoned by theorists. R. A. Torrey gave it up. So did Anderson. Now Messrs. Hogg and Vine indicate their doubts about it,¹⁰ [although this is] combined with a reluctance to give the fond thing up. They say: "What is to happen 'in the twinkling of an eye' cannot be witnessed and therefore must, in so far, be secret" (p. 168).

Yes, people can never see lightning; it cannot be witnessed; it is no secret! May one point out that what is said to take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" is not the Rapture of the saints but their transfiguration, as 1 Corinthians 15:51-2 proves? Yet every theorist works the phrase to death to prove a million miles of miracle at the Rapture; for, they tell us, the whole round world will see nothing of the stupendous events of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. It is as pure a myth as ever entered the brain of man.

Men who taught this dangerous delusion were capable of teaching other [equally] beautiful and

9 *The Second Advent* ("British Weekly" extras), 1887, p. 30; see also the author's *Last Things in Few Words* (1913).

10 *Touching the Coming*, p. 168.

comforting errors on the Second Coming. And they did; and did it with such success that multitudes in all the Churches hail them as heaven-sent truths worth dying for. "It is amazing," says an American theologian, "how gullible some of the saints are when a new deceiver pulls off some stunts in religion."¹¹ And very devout and Christian men, "with half-baked theories about the Second Coming of Christ," can be as successful as any deceiver. The very excellence of their character and Christian standing adds to the danger. This accounts for the amazing popularity of the Secret-Rapture pre-Tribulation theory¹²--some spiritual giants espoused it. But sound exegesis and the new discoveries about the use of the word *Parousia* in popular speech are the annihilation of all ideas of secrecy at the Advent, and of an Advent to be followed by the triumph of the Man of Sin.

In their work *Touching the Coming*, Messrs. Hogg and Vine complain that the translation *coming* is wrong. Relying, or seeming to rely, on Cremer's Lexicon, they claim that *presence* is the fundamental meaning of *Parousia* and that the word should be so translated (pp. 58-61). With rashness the authors set aside the comments of Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot, and all the scientific commentaries, and press on the reader their view that *presence* is the only acceptable translation (pp. 60, 153). The reader is even led to believe that Cremer treated the translation *arrival* as erroneous and as "somewhat artlessly," admitting that translators thus made the Greek word *Parousia* "mean what, in fact, it does not mean."

This is a complete mis-statement of Cremer's position. He gives the first meaning of *Parousia* as *presence*, with 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Phil. 2:12 as his examples of this sense. He then gives *arrival* as the second sense of the word, quoting 1 Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6, 7; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; and 2 Peter 3:12 as examples. He then goes on: "With this meaning is most probably connected the application of the word to *the second coming of Christ*."¹³ He gives numerous examples and continues:

The two expressions (*Day* and *Coming*) are used interchangeably in 2 Thess. 2:1, 2. According to the passages in question, the *parousia* of Christ denotes His coming from heaven, which will be an advent and revelation of His glory, for the salvation of His Church, for vengeance on its enemies, for the overthrow of the opposition raised against Himself--of antichristianism--and finally, to realize the plan of salvation. Cf. (in addition to the passages already named) 2 Thess. 2:1, 8; Jas. 5:7; 2 Pet. 1:16, 3:12.

And Cremer is appealed to by our authors to prove that *Parousia* does not really mean arrival and should always be translated "presence." What next?

The burden of Cremer's article is, in fact, the annihilation of pre-tribs' and our authors' views on the word *Parousia* and their whole program of the End; this, although Cremer is sixty years behind the times of Deissmann, Milligan, Moulton, and Abbot-Smith. Cremer admits that *Parousia* in Matthew 24:27, 37, [and] 39 means "arrival," and he goes on to identify it with the terms *Appearing*, *Day*, *Revelation*, and *Coming* in the Epistles. Our authors say that "'Coming' is properly represented by a perpendicular line thus |; *parousia* is properly represented by a horizontal line thus —." Yes, but if we read the page sideways we get an opposite effect. And our authors read Cremer on the skew.

11 Robertson, iv., p. 49.

12 Very appropriately works of fiction have taken up the theory; see Sydney Watson's *In the Twinkling of an Eye and the Mark of the Beast*.

13 *Biblico-theological Lexicon of N.T. Greek*, p. 238.

Cremer goes on to raise a doubt about the rightness of using *Parousia* in the sense of *arrival*. But he is not quarreling with modern translators for translating the word *coming* or *arrival*. *His doubt is over the Apostles themselves. They used it undoubtedly in the sense of arrival; [but] how did they do this when the original sense was presence?* That is Cremer's argument.

When teachers misread the Lexicon, how can we trust their reading of the N.T., which it explains?

What Cremer did not know fifty years ago has been made abundantly clear by the Papyri discoveries in the Near East, cited copiously in this chapter. *Parousia* was everywhere used in the sense of the *arrival* or *coming* of kings and rulers on a visit to a town. How appropriate to the Arrival of our Saviour-God, Jesus Christ when He comes in triumph to rescue His afflicted people and establish the kingly rule of God. All the new translations of the N.T. that have been published in the last sixty years, in the light of intense research, give *coming*, *advent*, *arrival*, *appearing*, to translate *Parousia* when used of the End. Darby, Kelly, the American and English revisers, Weymouth, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Way, Wade, and the Twentieth Century, all make use of those terms. The new N.T. lexicons of Souter, Abbot-Smith, and the monumental one of Milligan and Moulton, which incorporate the new material from the Papyri discoveries, all give *arrival* or *coming* as one of the fundamental meanings of the Greek word *Parousia*. And now the famous Greek lexicon compiled by Liddell and Scott, in the new edition revised and augmented throughout by Dr. H. S. Jones, gives the senses *presence*, *arrival*, *occasion*, *visit*, and then says, "*In the N.T. the Advent, Ev. Matt. 24, 27 al.*" (Part 7, 1933, p. 1343.) So also the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1936) on the anglicised form: "The second coming or advent of Christ (the sense in 1 Cor. 15:23, etc.)."

But no translation (not even Darby's) and no up-to-date lexicon of N.T. or classical Greek will satisfy the authors. Why? Because they want a "blanket" meaning for the word to cover a new-fangled, fantastic scheme of the End-time, which turns topsy-turvy all previous programs, including Darby's. They themselves require a chart to explain their scheme. I will give a silhouette in a few words, and not unfairly: The *Coming* or *Presence* of Christ, according to them, begins at the Secret Rapture, extends over an undetermined period of several years, and ends with the Appearing in great glory of our Lord.

Let the reader think of the implication in this. After Messiah's *Presence* begins, *ex hypothesi*, *Antichrist arises*, deceives the nations, oppresses the Covenant People, and comes to a full triumph in the Great Tribulation, when the millions of saints in Revelation 7:9-17 are martyred! A truly bewildering and misleading program as to His Coming.

If the writers had applied their idea, in which there is an element of truth, to the Advent of our Lord in glory and to the period of His "visit" when He opens up *a new era for the world* by his kingly rule, there would be much in the new researches to support them. But their scheme, as they put it, is totally without foundation. It is an innovation on the faith, and on pre-trib traditions as well. Moffatt, whose translation embodies the results of the new lexical research, translates *parousia* by "arrival" again and again. It is his usual word:

1 Corinthians 15:23: "All who belong to Christ, at his *arrival*."

1 Thessalonians 2:19: "In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ on his *arrival*."

1 Thessalonians 5:23: "Till the *arrival* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 2:1: "With regard to the *arrival* of the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 2:8: "Whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of His lips and quell by His appearing and *arrival*."

Of particular interest is 2 Corinthians 7:6,7: "But the God who comforts the dejected comforted me by the *arrival* of Titus. Yes, and by more than his *arrival*." According to the conjecture of Wieseler, cited by Weymouth, Titus walked in as Paul was writing. This cheered the Apostle, as did the report he had to give. This one passage completely demonstrates that *arrival* is a fundamental meaning of *Parousia*; Paul was comforted by the arrival and the subsequent intercourse.

But the most damaging exposure of this new program and this new chart is the word of our Lord: "For like lightning that shoots from east to west, so will be the arrival (*parousia*) of the Son of Man."¹⁴ Here, as in Thessalonians, "Christ comes as a Conqueror" and Rescuer, and his Parousia, far from being a prolonged period, is a single crisis breaking with the utmost suddenness; and, far from being followed by the rise of Antichrist, is preceded by it, and followed by the reign of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:15; 19:28). Shall we prefer the fond theories of men to this majestic declaration?

Having examined the word *Parousia*, let us come to grips with the great passage in First Thessalonians.

First, concerning the occasion of Paul's oracle, I cannot do better than quote some remarks from Professor Frame's masterly volume in *ICC* on Thessalonians:

Since Paul's departure, one or more of the Thessalonian Christians had died. The brethren were in grief not because they did not believe in the resurrection of saints, but because they feared that their dead would not have the same advantages as the survivors when the Lord came. Their perplexity was due not simply to the Gentile difficulty of apprehending the meaning of resurrection, but also to the fact that Paul had not when he was with them discussed explicitly the problem of the relation of survivors to dead at the *Parousia*. Since they had received no instruction on this point (contrast vv. 1-2, 6, 9, 11, v. 2), they write to Paul for advice "concerning the dead" (pp. 163-4).

Professor Frame then goes on to show "that the question is not: Will the Christians who die before the *Parousia* be raised from the dead? but: Will the Christians who die before the *Parousia* be at the *Parousia* on a level of advantage with the survivors?"

14 Matt. 24:27 (Moffatt). On the first use of the word *Parousia*, Plummer says (on 24:3): "It intimates that the return of the Messiah in glory will not result, like the First Coming, in a transitory stay, but will inaugurate *an abiding presence*" (p. 329). This admirable note about sums up the truth of modern research on the Parousia: a triumphant arrival of our Lord followed by His presence in His kingly rule. J. Weiss, following Deissmann, says that Parousia "does not signify Return, but Arrival." (*Derste Korintherbrief*, p. 357). With this qualification Plummer's note may be accepted.

Secondly, concerning the nature of the revelation made by Paul, it is as clear as light that it was not the Rapture, still less an entirely new coming of Christ "for the Church," but merely a new detail of the Lord's Coming to show the sure blessedness of the sleeping saints. That the burden of 4:13-18 is the place and blessedness of the Christian *dead* at the Advent is clear from the fact that four times they are referred to, as the following from the R.V. will show:

- (1) But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them *that fall asleep* (13).
- (2) Them also *that are fallen asleep* in Jesus will God bring with him (14).
- (3) We that are alive, that are left . . . shall in no wise precede them *that are fallen asleep* (15).
- (4) *The dead* in Christ shall rise first (16).

And Paul meets the difficulty by indicating a new circumstance concerning the relation of the survivors to the holy dead at the Advent. This [is] to show that at the Coming of the Lord the living will have no precedence over the dead, and that these, consequently, will be at no disadvantage.

Professor Frame observes on the central point:

Whatever the procedure in detail may be, the point is clear that at the descent of the Lord from heaven, the dead are raised first of all, and then the survivors and the risen dead are together and simultaneously (*hama sun*) snatched up and carried by means of clouds to meet the Lord in the air (p. 174).

If Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 professed to be giving some additional details concerning the relation of the sleeping and surviving saints at the well-known Coming of Christ, then he could not have made himself better understood; because, since the time the Apostle penned the words, no doubt has ever existed among his principal interpreters concerning the precise significance of his "revelation." But if his intention was to introduce (as theorists now insist) an entirely new coming of Christ and a new resurrection of the saints (a coming and resurrection different from those found in the earlier Scriptures), then, though he was writing in a language that is said to be the most perfect instrument of accurate thought and expression that the world has seen, and though the Apostle himself was possessed of singular lucidity and great powers of reasoning, he failed miserably to make himself understood; since for nearly two thousand years all his best expositors failed to see his meaning until recent theorists discovered, or thought that they had discovered, that Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was setting forth a new resurrection earlier than the "first" and a new coming of Christ earlier than that in the Gospels.

The question of importance now is, have we any indication when this coming of Christ will take place? Pre-tribs insist that the passage teaches that Christ will come *for* His saints prior to the last of Daniel's Seventy Weeks, and especially before the Great Tribulation. This, however, is impossible, since the text contains no reference to the Great Tribulation and Daniel's prophecies--and this it must have had [in order] to reach any such doctrine as that proposed. And Daniel's prophecies contain no reference to the Rapture, as such. It is clear, therefore, that the theorists, in interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4, read their ideas into the passage. Paul did not put them there.

But though the prophecy in 1 Thessalonians 4 contains no reference to the Seventy Weeks, it nevertheless gives us a clue that enables us to overthrow the new theories. In that Scripture the Coming of the Lord synchronizes with the resurrection of the saints. The latter follows immediately upon the former. Nobody disputes this. Well, when do the dead rise, before or after the apocalyptic Week? We have already seen that, alike in the teaching of the Prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ, [and] of Paul and the Apocalypse, the resurrection of the saints is located with the utmost definiteness at the Day of the Lord. Paul, far from revealing a new resurrection, insists that he is expounding an old one.

Here is the fundamental blunder, the crowning disaster of the new ideas on the Second Coming. The theorists quietly assume that all the passages on the resurrection of the saints can be brought forward in front of the Seventieth Week to suit their novel interpretation of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4. But it is to be insisted on that such wresting of the Scriptures cannot be allowed. The time of the Rapture must stand or fall with the time of the saints' resurrection, and this is located at the Day of the Lord.

It remains to answer some objections to the obvious view that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will be fulfilled at the Day of the Lord. The theorists contend that as there is no mention of signs and seals heralding the Advent in 1 Thessalonians 4, and as seals and signs are always associated with the Advent at the Day of the Lord, the former cannot be identical with the latter. But what these writers have overlooked is that there is no mention of seals and signs *after* the Coming in 1 Thessalonians 4; [and] not even in the following chapter, where the Day of the Lord is spoken of, is there any mention of preceding signs and seals. If from the absence of seals in 1 Thessalonians 4 it is legitimate to assert that the Coming in that chapter must precede the Day of the Lord, then the same must be conceded concerning the Advent in chapter 5, because there also no mention is made of signs and seals.¹⁵ It must be different from the Day in Revelation 19:11 ff., and 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

Moreover, the absence of preceding signs and seals does not necessarily prove that the Advent in chapter 4 will precede the Day of the Lord by seven years. Adopting the theorists' method of interpreting the text *by itself*, it would be just as reasonable to maintain that that Advent will occur seven years *after* the Day of the Lord, when all the signs and seals are done with!

The reason why there is no mention of preceding signs and seals in 1 Thessalonians 4 is because the Apostle does not profess to be *describing* the Second Coming. His theme, properly speaking, is not the Second Advent but the relation of survivors to the dead at that event. In other words, the Apostle is dealing with a single aspect of the Coming, and *that* as it concerns the dead in Christ. And this avails also to explain why no mention is made of the bearing of the Advent upon the unbelieving world. Theorists, of course, find here a proof of their theory of two "second" Advents; but it is sufficient to say, in the words of Westcott on Hebrews 9:28, "Nothing indeed is said of the effect of Christ's Return upon the unbelieving. This aspect of its working does not fall within the scope of the writer."

Paul, I repeat, is not even describing in detail the hope as it concerns the Church, for there is no mention of the transfiguration of the believers--an essential feature of their blessedness. The Apostle says nothing again of the judgment-seat of Christ and the recompense of the saints, nothing of the marriage-supper of the Lamb. These aspects are all omitted, as also the relation of the Advent to Israel

15 This fact is even used by some to prove that Paul's teaching here contradicts that of our Lord, because the Lord spoke of preceding signs: contradicts also the teaching of 2 Thess. 2, where signs are also mentioned.

and the world, simply because the Apostle had no occasion to raise them. He was dealing with a company of Christians who already knew the main facts of Christ's Coming from the Apostle's own oral teaching, but had doubts about the place that the dead, whom they mourned, would have at the Advent. But to argue from the Apostle's silence upon other points such as the destruction of Antichrist, the judgment of the ungodly, and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom--that therefore these events do not occur at this time--is an unreasonable attitude. Just as logical would it be to contend that since there is no mention of the transfiguration of the saints and the marriage-supper of Christ, those events must be conceived of as occurring some time later.

It is well known that postmillennialists made much of Paul's silence at this point upon the question of the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ at the Advent. "Paul does not teach in 1 Thess. 4 that the millennium will follow the advent." So they argue--just as our theorists do. The reply that Alford and Faussett gave to such unreasonable exegesis is as applicable to the reasoning of our theorists as it was to that of the antagonists of a literal millennium. Alford writes in his commentary:

Christ is on His way to this earth . . . ; that St. Paul advances no further in the prophetic description, but breaks off at our union in Christ's presence, is accounted for, by his purpose being accomplished, in having shown that they who have died in Christ shall not be thereby deprived of any advantage at His coming. The rest of the great events of that time--His advent on the earth, His judgment of it, assisted by His saints (1 Cor. 6:2-3), His reign upon earth, His final glorification with His redeemed in Heaven--are not treated here, but not therefore to be conceived of as alien to the Apostle's teaching.

Nor, he might have added, to the purpose of this Advent.

Excellent also is the interpretation of Moffatt in his Commentary in *EGT*:

What further functions are assigned to the saints thus incorporated in the retinue of the Lord (3:13; cf. 2 Thess. 1:10)--whether, e.g., they are to sit as assessors at the judgment (Sap. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6:2,3; Luke 22:30)--Paul does not stop to state here. His aim is to reassure the Thessalonians about the prospects of their dead in relation to the Lord, not to give any complete program of the future (so Matt. 24:31, Didache 10, 16). Plainly, however, the saints do not rise at once to heaven, but return with the Lord to the scene of his final manifestation on earth (so Chrysostom, Augustine, etc.). They simply *meet* the Lord in the air, on his way to judgment--a trait for which no Jewish parallel can be found--and so shall we be always with the Lord (no more sleeping in him or waiting for him).

Pre-tribs also make use of the Rapture of the saints to meet the Lord "in the air" to prove their extraordinary theory that Christ does not come on to earth at this time but returns to heaven. This also was an essential part of the postmillennialists' argument; the idea of Christ's reign *upon* earth was as obnoxious to them as it is to most theorists.

The truth is, pre-tribs are precluded from an adequate appreciation of 1 Thessalonians 4. The Secret Rapture delusion has blurred their vision and the importance attached to the Rapture has led them to overlook the elementary principle that "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20, R.V.) but must be compared diligently with other Scriptures. For when we compare 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 with other Scriptures and carefully weigh its own terminology, we have no

difficulty in seeing that the Second Coming will not be secret but in visible glory, that the hope of the Church is not an event to be followed by the rise and reign of the Man of Sin but by his destruction and the reign of Christ and His saints on the renewed earth.

But if any doubt exists that the Coming of 1 Thessalonians 4 will take place at the Day of the Lord, it is removed by the opening verses of chapter 5 of the same Epistle, where the Apostle is still speaking of the Second Coming.

This passage causes great embarrassment to pre-tribs, and they are reduced to unnatural explanations to square its teaching with their theories. [Accordingly], the Apostle is no longer speaking of the *Second* Coming of Christ but of the *third*; no longer dealing with the Advent as it affects Christians but unbelievers; the Day of the Lord and "the times and seasons" have no reference to the Church's hope but only to the Day of Judgment some years later. So they assert.

If the Day of the Lord has no reference to the Christian hope, why did the Apostle give the Thessalonians so much instruction concerning its arrival and the necessity of sobriety and alertness on the part of Christians in view of its coming? If he held the views of pre-tribs, why did he not drop the subject of the Day of the Lord altogether when speaking to Christians and confine himself to the Rapture? This is what pre-tribs do. They insist that Christians have not the least practical concern with the coming of the Day of the Lord as a hope, since they will have been with the Lord for years when it comes. But the awkward thing is that the Apostle, far from eschewing [avoiding] the giving of instruction to Christians about the Day of the Lord, has given very detailed instruction, in the Second as well as the First Epistle, about the coming of that Day; and this not merely to arouse their interest in a subject of prophetic inquiry but to prepare them mentally and morally for its coming.

Light is thrown upon 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 by considering what led the Apostle to write it. The Thessalonians had two difficulties about the Lord's Coming. The first was concerning the hope and place of the *dead*. The Apostle answered it in the closing verses of chapter 4, where the living are referred to but incidentally, to show the precise relation of the two classes. The second difficulty of the Thessalonians followed from the first. If the *dead* saints missed the blessedness of the Coming and Kingdom of Christ, then their own position became precarious since they were mortal men and might not survive to see the Advent and share its glory. Unless, therefore, they could be sure that Christ would certainly come in their own lifetime, their hope was vain. Hence they requested from the inspired Apostle information "concerning the times and seasons," that is, they wished to know the precise period that must intervene before the Advent, and they desired to know exactly when the Lord would come. In other words, their second difficulty was about the *living* and their prospect of seeing the Day.¹⁶

Paul answers it in chapter 5 by dealing with the Day of the Lord as it will affect the *living*. The dead are no longer in view, since he has already settled the difficulty concerning them. They are not mentioned at all now until the end of the whole section. The Apostle informs the Thessalonians that their request to know the intervening period prior to the Advent is beside the mark [not necessary], since the time of the Lord's Coming is not a subject of calculation at all. For the day of the Lord's Coming will be like the arrival of a thief--sudden and unexpected. Like a thief, however, that day will come upon the ungodly alone. Not so upon the believers, since they are expecting that Day and will be

16 I must acknowledge my obligations here to the commentaries of Milligan and Findlay.

ready for it whenever it comes.

The true significance of this section is obscured for pre-tribs by the unfortunate break into chapters at this point. Convinced that the meaning will become clearer, I propose to set down here in parallel columns¹⁷ three of the admirable modern versions of Paul's oracle in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11 without any division into verses and chapters. Then I shall add two paraphrases from famous expositors of the passage in Paul.

Of the many idiomatic translations of First Thessalonians, I purposely choose three that were not made by professional theologians but by classical scholars, two of them--W. G. Rutherford and A. S. Way--Greek scholars of renown. This is done simply to avoid the suggestion that I have sought translations with a theological bias.

THE COMING OF THE LORD
1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Weymouth

(Concerning the Dead) Now, concerning those who fall asleep we would not have you ignorant, brethren, lest you should mourn, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way also through Jesus God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. And this we declare to you on the Lord's own word--that we who are alive and survive until the Coming of the Lord will have no advantage over those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud summons, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Afterwards we who are alive and survive will be caught up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. *(Concerning the Living)* But as for the times and dates it is unnecessary that anything be written to you. For you yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. While they are saying "peace and safety," then, in a moment, destruction falls upon them, like birth-pains on a woman who is with child; and escape there is none. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should surprise you like a thief; for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We belong neither to night nor to darkness. So then let us not sleep like the rest, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But let us, since we belong to the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. God has not destined us to incur His anger, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; who died for us, so that whether we are awake or sleeping we may share His Life. Therefore encourage one another, building each other up, as in fact you do.

Rutherford

(Concerning the Dead) There is a matter upon which we would have you informed--I mean the fate of friends when they die. To know it will save you from repining as the rest of the

17 The reader will forgive me for putting each entry one below the other.

world repine, who have no hope. If we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, then shall God at the intercession of Jesus bring with Jesus those of us who have gone to their rest. This indeed is the Lord's teaching, that we who shall be alive, who shall continue here till the Lord's coming, shall have no advantage in time over those who have gone to their rest; that with a crash, at the archangel's cry, at the trumpet-call of God, the Lord in his majesty shall descend from heaven; and all who have died faithful to Christ shall arise first; thereafter we who remain alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the sky; and then we shall be for ever with the Lord. Make this your theme in assuaging each other's sorrow. (*Concerning the Living*) Of the time and the circumstances of our Lord's coming you have no need to be told. We cannot tell you more exactly than you have been told already--"The day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night." When men say "All is well! there is nothing to fear!" then in an instant destruction overtakes them as labor overtakes a mother with child, and there is no escape. But you are not creatures of darkness that the Day of the Lord should surprise you as thieves are surprised. You have been made free of the light and the brightness of day. We have nothing to do with the night or the darkness. If the rest of the world are asleep, we ought to be awake and alert. Night begets sleep, it begets also the stupor of the drunkard. But we belong to the day; we ought to have the alertness of men armed with faith and love for corslet, and the hope of salvation for helmet. For whereas God might have visited us with judgment, it has been his will that we should obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sakes, that whether awake in life or asleep in death, we should attain to eternity together with him. Realizing this, encourage one another and reinforce every one his brother's faith, as indeed you do.

Way

(*Concerning the Dead*) And, in this connection, I wish you to have no false conceptions, my brothers, of the lot of those who are now sleeping in death: you must not grieve for them as the heathen do, who have no hope. If we really believe that Jesus not only died, but has risen, we must, by inference, believe that those too who have, through Jesus' power, been hushed to sleep, will God draw heavenward in Jesus' train. Yes, this I tell you, as a revelation from God, that we who may be surviving up to the Day of the Coming of the Lord shall most certainly not enter into His presence before those who have fallen asleep. For--The Lord Himself, with a reveille call, with the shout of an archangel, and with the clarion of God, shall descend from heaven. Then the dead who are in Messiah's keeping shall be first to rise; then we, the living yet left on earth, shall be with them caught away amidst the clouds into the sky, to that meeting with our Lord, and so for evermore with the Lord shall we be. With this assurance, therefore, comfort one another. (*Concerning the Living*) But, on the question of the time, the precise date, of the Coming, my brothers, it is not necessary for you to be informed in my letter. You yourselves know perfectly well that the Day of the Lord, as comes a robber in the night so cometh. When men are saying, "All is peace and safety!" then on a sudden destruction looms over them, as the birth-pang of a travailing woman; there shall be no escape for them--none! But you, my brothers, are not groppers in darkness, that the Day should, like a robber, take you unawares. No, all of you are sons of light, sons of day--not of the night are we, nor of the gloom! Oh, then, let us not sleep, as do other men; but let us keep vigil and be sober. For they that slumber, by night they slumber; and they that are drunken, by night they are drunken: but we who are of the day, let us be sober, having arrayed us in corslet of faith and love, and, for our helmet, in the hope of salvation; because God appointed us not to be

victims of His wrath, but to the winning of salvation, through our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, who died for us, to this end, that, whether in life we yet keep vigil, or sleep in death, sharing His life we may live. Then still comfort one another, still build each other up into His temple, as I know you are doing already.

Having given three translations by classical scholars of the crucial passage in Thessalonians, I propose now to give two paraphrases of it by eminent exegetes. The first is by Dr. Plummer as given in his commentary, and the second by G. Milligan in his volume in the Macmillan series. Then I shall give the setting and argument as seen by G. G. Findlay in his volume in *CGT*, and by Zahn in *INT* (i., pp. 221-2,253). There will be some repetition, of course, but there will also be increasing light from some of the most lucid expositions ever given of these Epistles.

Plummer

(Concerning the Dead) Now there is a matter, Brethren, about which we do not wish you to remain uninformed; I mean about those among you who are falling asleep before the Coming of the Lord; for we desire to save you from sorrowing in the way that the rest of the world cannot fail to sorrow, because they have no share in our Christian hope. Our hope saves us from such sorrow, for, if we really do believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we are quite sure that God will cause those who by the hands of Jesus have been laid to sleep to be brought again with Him. We are quite sure of it, for this we say to you on the authority of the Lord, that we who are alive, who survive the Coming of the Lord, will assuredly have no advantage in time over those who have fallen asleep before the Coming. We cannot do so, because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding summons, namely, with an archangel's cry, with a trumpet of God; and all who have died and are now in Christ will at once rise again. Then, and not till then, we who are alive and survive shall, one and all, with them be caught up in clouds, for a meeting with the Lord, into the air; and thus for evermore with the Lord shall we be. Wherefore, in times of doubt and depression, comfort one another by repeating these words. *(Concerning the Living)* Now, as to the times and the circumstances of the Lord's Coming. Brethren, you have no need for anything further to be written to you. For you yourselves know accurately from what we have already taught you, that the time of the Coming of the day of the Lord is just as uncertain as the coming of a *thief* in the night. It is just when men are saying, "we may feel secure; we are perfectly safe," then in an instant destruction comes upon them, just as travail-pangs upon a woman with child, and there is no possibility of escape. But you, Brethren, are not living in darkness, so as to let the Day overtake you, as daylight overtakes thieves. For *all* of you are sons of light and are sons of day. We Christians have nothing to do with night, nor yet with darkness; surely, therefore, we ought not to slumber, as the rest of the world do, but to be awake and be sober. For those who slumber, slumber at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But, seeing that we are of the day, let *us* be sober, as is only right for men who have just put on faith and love, as a breastplate for our hearts; and as a helmet for our heads, hope of salvation. And ours is a sure hope, because God did not appoint us to be visited with His wrath, but to secure for ourselves salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, in order that, whether awake in life or slumbering in death at the time of His Coming, one and all with Him we should live. According, as we said before, comfort one another, and build up each the other, as indeed you really are doing.

Milligan

(Concerning the Dead) With regard moreover to that other matter which we understand is causing you anxiety, the fate namely of those of your number who are falling on sleep before the coming of the Lord, we are anxious, Brothers, that you should be fully informed. There is no reason why you should sorrow, as those who do not share in your Christian hope cannot fail to do. For as surely as our belief is rooted in the death and resurrection of Jesus, even so we are confident that God will bring along with the returning Jesus those who have fallen on sleep through Him. Regarding this, we say, we are confident, for we have it on the direct authority of the Lord Himself that we who are surviving when the Lord comes will not in any way anticipate those who have fallen asleep. What will happen will rather be this. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet-call of God. Then those who died in Christ, and in consequence are still living in Him, shall rise first. And only after that shall we who are surviving be suddenly caught up in the clouds with them to meet the Lord in the air. Thus shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. *(Concerning the Living)* We have been speaking of Christ's Return. As to the time when that will take place, Brothers, we do not need to say anything further. For you yourselves have already been fully informed that the coming of the Day of the Lord is as unexpected as the coming of a thief in the night. It is just when men are feeling most secure that ruin confronts them suddenly as the birth-pang of a travailing woman, and escape is no longer possible. But as for you, Brothers, the case is very different. You are living in the daylight now: and therefore the coming of *the* Day will not catch you unawares. Surely then, as those who have nothing to do with the darkness, we (for this applies to you and to us alike) ought not to sleep, but to exercise continual watchfulness and self-control. Night is the general time for sleep and drunkenness. But those who belong to the day must control themselves, and put on the full panoply of heaven. That will not only protect them against sudden attack, but give them the assurance of final and complete salvation. Salvation (we say) for this is God's purpose for us and He has opened up for us the way to secure it through our Lord Jesus Christ. His death on our behalf is the constant pledge that, living or dying, we shall live together with Him. Wherefore comfort and edify one another, as indeed we know that you are already going.

Findlay gives thus the setting and argument of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11:

CONCERNING THEM THAT FALL ASLEEP (4:13-18)

In regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus, which filled a large place in the missionary preaching of the Apostles and in the thoughts and hopes of their converts (1:3, 10, 2:12, 3:13; Acts 17:30 ff.), there was misgiving and questioning upon two points; and about these the Thessalonians appear to have sent inquiries to St. Paul: (a) as to *the lot of those dying before the Lord's return*--would they miss the occasion and be shut out of His kingdom? (4:13 ff.); (b) as to *the time* when the advent might be expected (5:1-11). The two subjects are abruptly introduced in turn by *peri* (concerning), as matters in the minds of the readers; they are treated in an identical method. With the former of these questions, made acute by the strokes of bereavement falling on the Church since St. Paul's departure, the Letter proceeds to deal. The readers (1) are assured that their departed fellow-believers are safe with Jesus, and will return along with Him (vv. 13 ff.); (2) they are informed, by express revelation, that these, instead of

being excluded, will have the first place in the assembling of the saints at Christ's return (vv. 15-17); (3) they are bidden to cheer one another with this hope (v. 18). Lightfoot quotes from the *Clementine Recognitions*, i. 52, the question, "If those whom His advent shall find righteous shall enjoy the kingdom of Christ, will therefore those who died before the advent be wholly deprived of it?" showing that the difficulty raised by the Thessalonians was felt elsewhere in the Early Church. This passage stands by itself in Scripture, containing a distinct "word of the Lord" (v. 15), in the disclosure it makes respecting the circumstances of the Second Advent; it is on this account the most interesting passage in the Epistle.

THE COMING OF THE DAY (5:1-11)

The second misgiving of the Thessalonians respecting the parousia was closely connected with the first (4:13 ff.). If only "the living"--*hoi perileipomenoi*--might count on witnessing the *parousia*, then any uncertainty about its date throws a cloud upon the prospects of all believers; if the season was delayed, any of those living might be cut off before the time and no one could count on seeing the wished-for day! This apprehension made the desire of the Church to know "concerning the times and the seasons" painfully keen; no mere curiosity prompted the question, but a practical motive, a natural fear arising from the very loyalty of the Thessalonians to Christ and the "love" of "His appearing" which the Gospel awakened in them. The Epistle has allayed the main cause of disquiet by showing that there will be no essential difference in the lot of those found "sleeping" and those "waking" at the Lord's return (cf. verse 10 below); it goes on to remind the readers of what they had been taught already, viz., that "the day of the Lord" is to come by way of *surprise* to the wicked, for which reason its date must be hidden (verse 2 ff.). The "sons of light and of day" will be ready for "the day" whenever it dawns (v. 4ff.). Their duty and safety is to be wakeful and sober, arming themselves with faith and hope (vv. 6-8)--a hope grounded in God's purpose of salvation revealed in the Gospel, which assures to them through Christ's death a life of union with Him remaining unchanged in life and death (vv. 9 ff.), and secure whether His coming be earlier or later.

It remains to give Zahn's statement of the setting and the argument of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11. Many will be glad to have this illuminating extract from one of the great theological works of the age. I cite from *INT* i., pp. 221-2, and p. 253:¹⁸

Another evidence of the expectancy with which the return of Jesus was awaited, is seen in the peculiar way in which the Church mourned for its departed members. This was due to the opinion that those who had died before the parousia would not immediately share the glory of the kingdom as would those who lived to witness the Lord's return. Although, the apostle argues, they should have been saved from this error by their faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, because it was not possible that death should separate the Christian from Christ (4:14), all anxiety concerning the participation in the parousia of those who have died in the faith he sets at rest by a word of the Lord, i.e., a specific teaching consciously based upon one of Jesus' prophetic utterances (4:15). In this definite form such teaching could not have been a

18 It should be explained that the last paragraph was written later by Zahn to defend the Thessalonian Epistles from a charge of contradiction. He shows their unity, and their agreement with our Lord's teaching. Its inclusion here seems apposite [pertinent].

part of the missionary preaching.

While on this point Paul is inclined to enlarge upon what he had said before, another question which was occupying attention in Thessalonica, namely, as to when the end should come, and the length of time that must elapse before that event, he holds to be superfluous (5:1, cf. Acts 1:6 ff.) and without practical value. For, he argues, it is one of the simplest elements of the Christian preaching, that for those absorbed in a worldly life the coming of the day of the Lord will be unexpected and sudden; while, on the other hand, the Christian, who lives in constant expectation of the parousia, the time of which it was impossible to determine by natural reckoning, will be always ready, living always the kind of a life that is in keeping with this future day of the Lord (vv. 2-10).

To those absorbed in the present earthly life the day of the Lord will come as a snare and the Lord as a thief; the disciples of Jesus are to watch, be sober and ready in order that he may not so come to them. They are to give heed to the signs of the times which portend the end; not to pay overmuch attention to those that are remote from the event, but not to overlook those that are near. If they are to avoid the latter mistake, they must know what those signs are to be; if the former, they must have a general idea of what is to happen before they appear. But since it is fundamentally impossible to know when the end will come and when the signs immediately preceding it will appear, it is the part of wisdom as well as the natural impulse of love to live in constant readiness for the approaching end.

[Now], if Paul believed that the Thessalonians would be raptured to heaven some years before the Day of the Lord, what a chance he had at 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 of asserting his belief! How easy to have said, "the Day of the Lord is coming; but, thank God, you will never see it since years before its arrival you will be raptured to heaven." Instead of that he has left no doubt whatever that Christians will exist on earth to see that Day.¹⁹ It is the day they wait for, a day of joy for the redeemed, of wrath for the

19 On the "times and seasons" Lightfoot observes: "Here *chronoi* denotes the period which must elapse before and in the consummation of this great event, *in other words it points to the date*; while *kairoi* refers to the occurrences which will mark the occasion, the signs by which its approach will be ushered in (comp. Matt. 16:3, *the signs of the times*). (*Notes on Epistles*, p. 71.) Anderson, *Forgotten Truths*, p. 71, says that the Apostle, after speaking of the Coming as a present hope, "went on to speak of the day of the Lord as pertaining to the 'times and seasons' of *Israel's national history*." But, the Apostle *did no such thing*; neither Israel nor "Israel's national history" is referred to once in the whole passage. The phrase "times and seasons" was clearly used by our Lord in Acts 1:7 to discourage knowing the date of the Return or measuring the period that precedes it. The question of the Apostles was most natural: the Lord's answer most appropriate. At 1 Thess. 5:1 a similar question is asked, and practically the same answer is given: no date fixing, no measuring of the period! The Day comes as a trap: the Lord as a thief to the careless. Be not careless, but watch. If only students would learn the lesson and quit their guesses and calculations! Sir R. Anderson, be it said, has given an excellent example on this point. The Editor of "The Morning Star" (June 15th, 1913) states that "these times and seasons, with their prophetic burden, the Thessalonians 'knew perfectly.'" But this is exactly *what they did not know at all*. They even request information about them from the Apostle; what they *did* know perfectly was that the day of the Lord's coming was to come a a thief at night; and, the Apostle implies, this very fact of its suddenness rendered any disclosure or calculation concerning the intervening period

impenitent. Of joy, because He who comes is the Saviour who will gather the saints to Himself and complete their joy; of wrath, because He who comes is also the Judge who will take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, whenever He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.²⁰

It will thus be seen that according to Paul the day of the Lord's Coming will have a two-fold aspect. For unbelievers, Christ will come as a thief; for Christians, He comes as the Master to reckon with His servants and induct them into the inheritance. It was ever thus that the Lord Himself preached the doctrine of His Second Coming--not two distinct advents separated by a number of years, but one single Advent with a two-fold bearing upon His faithful people who look with humble yet joyous expectancy to His Return, and upon the false and unbelieving who say "*where* is the promise of His coming?"²¹

It is curious how one can realize this and yet cling to the pre-trib theories of the Advent. Sir R. Anderson, for example, who is the ablest advocate of the new theories of the Parousia, used an illustration some time ago that not only threw light on our Lord's parable of His Coming as a thief, but was also an apposite [pertinent] commentary on Paul's use of the same figure; and, withal, it shows how unnecessary is the theory of two "second" Comings. He said:

When a man opens his door with a latch-key at midnight and walks into his house, his wife does not scream with surprise and fright. She expects him, and his coming is the most natural thing possible. But if a woman neither expects her husband nor wants him, she would probably greet him as if he was a burglar. This is precisely what the Lord Himself intended when He spoke of coming to some "as a thief in the night."²²

What the speaker failed to observe was how admirably his parable also fits the teaching of Paul; for the great Apostle, in speaking of the effect of Christ's Coming upon the living, remarks that to the worldly-minded the Day of the Lord will come as a thief, because, to use Anderson's parable, "they neither expect nor want Him." It will be otherwise, however, with Christians: "they will not scream with surprise and fright," for, to continue in Anderson's words, "His coming is the most natural thing possible." The Lord meets His Bride and judges the faithless at the same crisis.

(2) 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

Only one other use of the word Parousia in the Epistles to the Thessalonians need detain us longer. It is one that has already been cited but not considered.

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* (R.V.).

This text confirms the doctrine drawn from 1 Thessalonians 4:14-5:10, for Christ is again represented

until the advent unnecessary and impossible. The truth is, the writer of this article set out to correct the commentators, without having perceived the meaning of the Apostle (pp. 111-12).

20 2 Thess. 1:10; this chapter, not the Great Tribulation, explains the "wrath" of 1 Thess. 5:9.

21 Luke 12:41-8; Matt. 25:43-4.

22 "Things to Come," vi., p. 91.

as coming in the character of a Conqueror and Rescuer. Again the regal word *Parousia* is used. Antichrist is sent to his doom. "The mere outburst of His presence shall bring the adversary to nought, cf. the sublime expression of Milton,--'far off His coming shone.'"²³ The same glorious event as gathers the saints brings judgment upon the Man of Sin.²⁴

23 Dean Alford, *in loco*.

24 A. T. Robertson comments: "It will be a grand fiasco, this advent of the man of sin. Paul here uses both *epiphaneia* (epiphany, elsewhere in N.T. in the pastorals, familiar to the Greek mind for a visit of a god) and *parousia* (more familiar to the Jewish mind, but common in the papyri) of the second coming of Christ. " "The mere appearance of Christ destroys the adversary" (Vincent). And Zahn says: "*Epiphaneia*, manifestation, which is not at all superfluous, along with *parousia*, but, like the expression "breath of his mouth," indicates the outward manifestation of the coming of Christ (*INT*, i, p. 253.)