

The Approaching Advent of Christ

by
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CHAPTER XIV

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST

No treatment of pre-trib views of the Second Coming of Christ would be adequate if it omitted dealing with the subject of the Church and the Antichristian tribulation of the Last Days. To the leaders among pre-tribs, the principal gain of the new program of the End-time was that it got the Church off the scene before the arrival of the last Antichrist. They labored under the impression that, in propagating a pre-tribulation Rapture, they were reviving truth that had laid buried for centuries under the rubbish of tradition; and it seemed to them unfitting and intolerable that the Church, united as she is with her Head in heaven, should be on earth when the hour of trial arrived. In all honesty they thought that the finished work of Christ and the very character of God were at stake in the matter.¹

Now if the Church is to be removed from the scene before the time of Antichrist, if she is to enter on her rest several years or decades *before* the Day of the Lord, then we must nowhere find passages of Scripture that locate her obtaining relief at the Day itself. We should expect to find texts putting the blessing in terms that leave no doubt. We shall examine first, however, a text that is relied on confidently to meet the latter condition.

(1) Revelation 3:10.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee *from* the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

It is contended by pre-trib writers that the Greek preposition *ek* in the above text must be translated *out of*, and that what Christ promised to the Angel or Overseer of the Philadelphian Church was *complete exemption from* the trial by the prior rapture of the saints to heaven. In reply to this I remark:

(a) Even if we admit the translation that the theorists contend for, it does not in the least follow that the whole of the Christian Church in the generation of the Second Coming will be raptured to heaven some years before the Day of the Lord. The argument presupposes the very point to be proved; for it is a mere assumption that the only way God can preserve His Church from the Great Tribulation is by rapturing her to heaven above. As a matter of fact, the Rapture is not so much as mentioned or hinted at. So long, therefore, as another possible means of preservation *out of* the hour of tribulation exists, it is a mere assumption that the Church *must* be raptured away in order to fulfil this promise of Christ. This very book of Revelation reveals the possibility and certainty of a people in relationship with God

¹ This point is dealt with in the last chapter. One may mention tracts on the Church and the Great Tribulation by J. H. Burrige, A. H. Burton, A. C. Gaebelein, F. E. Marsh, C. I. Scofield, and W. E. Vine. The most thorough-going treatment is in Kelly's *Second Coming and Christ's Coming Again*. I deal with him in this chapter and the last.

being thus preserved from the Great Tribulation. We are told that the Sun-clad Woman flees to the wilderness and is there protected by God from precisely the hour of the last Great Tribulation--"a thousand and two hundred and three score days" (12:6, 14). Not all the power of the Dragon can avail to reach or touch her. Not a word is said about her being raptured out of the world, yet the Woman is untouched by the final persecution under Antichrist. I am not arguing that the Sun-clad Woman is the Church or that the latter will escape the Great Tribulation. These are matters for consideration. But what I do contend for is that, in view of Revelation 12:14, a holy people in relationship with God can be exempted from the last tribulation without being taken up to heaven by a rapture.²

So far as the language of Revelation 3:10 is concerned, there is nothing in it that compels us to believe that the Church must be raptured to heaven for the promise to be fulfilled; for we have seen a people of God kept "out of" the Great Tribulation without so much as leaving the ground under its feet. Reasoning such as this will, I repeat, be irksome to those who are careless of logical proof for their theories, but its reasonableness will be admitted by those who acknowledge the elementary rule of exegesis--that we must not introduce our ideas into the text but draw the natural and obvious meaning from it.

I am aware of the arguments that are used to nullify the contention that the Church need not be taken from earth to escape the last fiery trial: "The Church is a heavenly people," "the saints of the Body are in union with Christ," "our citizenship is in heaven," and so on, all of which are blessed truths. But the use of them to deny that the Church may be exempt from the tribulation without a rapture is the merest sophistry [deception].

When the terrific judgment fell upon Jerusalem and the Jews nearly nineteen hundred years ago,³ God did not see fit to rapture "the heavenly people" out of the world. Nor has He seen fit to remove them out of the midst of appalling calamities such as plagues, famines, and wars during nineteen hundred years--calamities that every biblical writer would speak of as judgments of heaven upon heathenism or apostate civilization.

(b) So far we have assumed the correctness of the theorists' contention that the language of Revelation 3:10 demands an exemption from the tribulation. This, however, is not nearly so certain as they would have us believe, for many of the most competent Greek scholars unhesitatingly maintain that the use in Revelation 3:10 of the preposition *ek* from *out of the midst of* (not merely *out of*) is precisely the consideration that demands the very opposite conclusion to that which pre-tribs wish. According to these scholars, the Greek means that Christ promised to the Angel at Philadelphia preservation throughout the hour of tribulation. In Moffatt's translation of the N.T., the promise of Christ to the Angel at Philadelphia reads as follows:

Because you have kept the word of my patient endurance, *I will keep you safe through the hour of trial* which is coming upon the whole world to test the dwellers on earth.

And Goodspeed renders [it] as follows:

2 Kelly says that "any geographical refuge" is vain, for the tribulation "will befall the whole habitable world" (*Christ's Coming Again*, p. 86). But of course he forgets or avoids Revelation 12:14, which shows that his inference from 3:10 is false.

3 Luke 19:27, 20:16; 1 Thess. 2:16; cf. Luke 21:22.

Because you have kept in mind the message of what I endured, I also will keep you *safe in* the time of testing that is going to come upon the whole world, to test the inhabitants of the earth.

Faussett says that the Greek means,

(so as to deliver thee) *out of*, not to exempt *from* temptation.

I give now the views of Beckwith and Zahn, whose commentaries are among the best since Alford's. Beckwith says: "The Philadelphians and those who show the same Christian steadfastness are promised that they shall be carried in safety through the great trial, they shall not fall" (p. 484). Zahn translates the promise thus: "I also will keep (and rescue) thee out of the hour of temptation." And he comments thus:

Testimony is borne once more to the Bishop of Philadelphia's proved faithfulness up till now, and he is assured that Jesus will requite him for this, when He will *preserve* him at the time of the great temptation that is to come and test the inhabitants of the earth, and will *rescue* him out of the danger that will exist even for Christians found in it. More or less like that should one render the sense of the pregnant construction, "I will keep out of the hour" (*Zahn-Kommentar*, i., pp. 305-6).

Archbishop Trench in his work on the *Seven Churches* remarks as follows upon the passage:

The promise does not imply that the Philadelphian Church should be exempted from the persecutions which should come on all other portions of the Church; that by any special privilege they should be excused from fiery trials through which others should be called to pass. It is a better promise than this; and one which, of course, they share with all who are faithful as they are--to be kept *in* temptation, not to be exempted from temptation (*tērein ek* not being here=*tērein apo*, James 1:27; Prov. 7:5; cf. 2 Thess. 3:3); a burning bush, and yet not consumed (cf. Isaiah 43:2). They may take courage; the blasts of persecution will indeed blow; but He who permits, uses, and restrains them, will not suffer His barn-floor to be winnowed with so rough a wind that chaff and grain shall be borne away together.⁴

Swete in his commentary adopts the same view: "The promise, as Bede says, is 'not indeed of your being immune from adversity, but of not being overcome by it.'" And after referring the trial to "troublous times which precede the Parousia," Swete adds: "to the Philadelphia Church the promise was an assurance of safe keeping in any trial that might supervene."

If we bear in mind that these are the comments of scholars who are not biased by preconceived notions on our dispute with pre-tribs, the force of their words will be readily appreciated; for they, desirous only of interpreting the Greek correctly, and without any desire or inclination to read favorite theories into the text, adopted the interpretation that is the very one despised by theorists, namely: that the

4 Pp. 183-4. The text from Isaiah quoted by Trench is as follows: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

faithful will be in the tribulation but preserved from being overcome by it.⁵

(c) Other occurrences of the same Greek preposition veto the suggestion that a rapture out of the earth is the only way of fulfilling the promise of Revelation 3:10. Here are some passages that are relevant to our discussion of the significance of the preposition *ek*.

John 17:15:

I pray not that Thou shouldst take them from (*ek*) the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from (*ek*) the evil one (R.V.).

Here we meet with the same construction, "to keep from or out of." And a little consideration will show how fatal the text is to those who dogmatically maintain that the preposition in Revelation 3:10 necessarily demands a rapture out of the world to escape the trial; for we find the Church kept from the Evil one,⁶ *while it is expressly asserted that she must remain in the world*. Christ prays in the same moment that His Church be not removed from the world and yet that she may be preserved from the Evil one.

They are *not*, says Meyer, *to be taken out of* the unbelieving world which hates them (which would take place by death, as now in the case of Jesus Himself, ver. 11), but *they are to be kept* by God, so that they ever come forth morally uninjured, *from the power of Satan surrounding them*, the power of the prince of the world. (Italics his.)

There can be no question that the above is the correct explanation. Not by death, not by rapture, not by removal in any shape or form from this world (which in one sense is Satan's domain⁷) but by remaining in it, and *there* by the grace and keeping power of God living worthily of Him. Thus are the saints kept from the Evil one, as the Saviour prayed. Turning now to Revelation 3:10, we see how agreeable to the sense of John 17:15 is the view of those scholars who maintain that the Greek preposition *ek*, from out of the midst of (for this is its most literal meaning), implies that the Angel at Philadelphia was to be preserved through and out of the hour of tribulation; so that while others yielded to the Apostasy and denied Christ, he would be kept safe unto the End. And, I repeat, even if we allow pre-tribs to insist that *ek* means *immunity from* tribulation, John 17:15 furnishes conclusive evidence that this may be accomplished without the saints leaving the world. It was vital to the pre-trib scheme of the prophetic future to prove that the verse teaches that the Church will be raptured to heaven at least seven years before the Day of the Lord in order to escape the tribulation under Antichrist. But the text teaches no

5 It ought not to be suppressed, however, that a few scholars waver upon the point. Alford, for example, states that *ek* means "from out of the midst of; but whether by *immunity from*, or by *being brought safe through*, the preposition does not clearly define." This was Moffatt's view when he wrote his commentary for the *EGT*. But in his translation of the N.T., published three years later, he adopted the view quoted above.

6 Satan, not evil. So English R.V., American R.V., Weymouth, Wade, Moffatt, and the commentators generally. It is the *Devil* [whom] Christ has in mind and not merely evil. Darby's rendering ("out of evil") is not according to his usual literalness and accuracy, for he ignores the force of the article.

7 Our Lord speaks of "The *Prince* of this world" (John 16:11); Paul of "the *god* of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), and of "the *prince* of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2).

such thing. It is read into the passage by advocates of pleasing theories that have the misfortune to lack any better proof.

Another text that throws light on Revelation 3:10 is Galatians 1:4, which reads as follows:

Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from (out of) this present evil world (age), according to the will of God and our Father.⁸

Here we are told that Christians are delivered *out of* this present Age, and yet it is obvious from the very fact of their existence that they are *in* it--in it, yet delivered from its sins, its spirit, and its doom. Meyer comments:

Christ, says Paul, desired by means of His atoning death to *deliver* us *out of* this wicked period, that is, *to place us out of fellowship with it*, inasmuch as through His death the guilt of believers was blotted out, and through faith, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, the new moral life--the life in the spirit--was brought about in them (Rom. 6:8), Christians have become objects of God's love and holiness, and as such are now taken out of that "evil age" so that, although living in this age, they yet have nothing in common with its "wickedness." (Italics his.)

Here then is another example of the use of *ek* that has the very opposite significance to that which theorists assert that it has; for Christians, while delivered *out of* this evil age, still remain *in* it. When, therefore, pre-tribs have solved this paradox in Galatians 1:4, then, and not till then, will they be at liberty to reject that interpretation of Revelation 3:10 which maintains that the preposition *ek* signifies that the Angel of the Church at Philadelphia was promised preservation through the midst of the hour of trial and not immunity from it.

The same lesson is taught in a remarkable passage in Hebrews 5, where we read that our Lord in Gethsemane

"had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from (*ek*, out of) death, and was heard in that he feared" (v. 7).

Here is a case where we know that the Lord suffered and passed through death, and yet was saved out of it.⁹ Anything more decisive than this passage could not be wished for.

The results of our study of Revelation 3:10 may be briefly summarized as follows:

8 See R.V. margin; it is *age*, not *world*. The distinction is important. Kelly (*Galatians, in loco*) argues on the assumption that the word means "world," whereas his own translation correctly reads "age."

9 It is scarcely necessary to refute a strange theory that our Lord was afraid of dying suddenly in Gethsemane before accomplishing redemption on the cross. This is totally opposed to sound views of our Lord's person and to His express claim (John 10:18). I owe the reference in Hebrews 5 to James Wright's lecture in J. H. Burrige's booklet. Robertson (*Grammar of Greek N.T.*, p. 598) quotes John 12:27 and says that the Lord "had already entered into the hour." On Revelation 3:10 he says: "we seem to have the picture of a general temptation with the preservation of the saints."

1. Nothing is said about the Rapture of the Church out of the world some years prior to the Great Tribulation.
2. Even if the promise meant exemption from the tribulation, this would not necessitate the Rapture of the Church. She could be preserved in other ways while still on earth, as was the Church of Judæa at the destruction of Jerusalem and as the Sun-clad Woman will be in the last half of Daniel's Seventieth Week.
3. The preposition *ek* may possibly mean immunity from, but more probably it means *out of* in the sense of being "brought safe out of." In any case, it may not be forced to prove a rapture out of the world, for in John 17:15 Christians are "kept *out of* the Evil one" while still remaining in his domain. In Galatians 1:4 the saints are delivered *out of* this evil world while still remaining in it; and according to Hebrews 5:7 the Lord, by resurrection, was saved "*out of* death" though called on to go through it.
4. The promise of immunity from the trial would have been more clearly expressed by the use of the preposition *apo*, which means *from* in the sense of separation or removal from the exterior or limit of a thing or place, whereas *ek* rather means from the interior of a place or object.¹⁰
5. The use of *ek* in Revelation 3:10 distinctly implies that the Overseer would be in the hour of tribulation. The Promise refers either to removal from out of the midst of it or preservation through it. (Cf. Jer. 30:7, where Israel is preserved *through* Jacob's Trouble.)

We have examined the principal text adduced to prove a rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation. It proved inadequate. There is still another side to the question. If such exemption of the Church from the Great Tribulation is a scriptural truth, then we must nowhere find terms used of the sufferers in the Great Tribulation that are commonly used of the Church. How does it stand? A proper answer to the question would require a detailed examination of dozens of expressions, for which there is no space available. Moreover, on some of those texts we should be arguing in a circle. For instance, one of the common words in the Epistles for the saved of this dispensation is *elect*: "as *the elect* of God, put on . . ."; "according to the faith of God's *elect*"; "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's *elect*?" And [who are] *the elect*?

The late Dr. Griffith Thomas, in reply to a correspondent, defined them thus:

Those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour, are living in the power of the Holy Spirit through faith, and glorifying God by lives of consistent obedience. The elect are always described in the New Testament by expressions which include the two sides of truth, the Divine and the human.¹¹

Well, we meet this word *Elect* frequently in the sermon of our Lord's on the Last Things;¹² and there cannot be any doubt that they are in the thick of the last great struggle. But pre-tribs intervene sharply

10 See S. G. Green, *Grammar of Greek Test.*, p. 236; also T. Newberry's "Graphic Scheme of the Greek Prepositions as Viewed According to the Idea of Geometrical Relationship" (*Newberry Bible*, p. 11, N.T.).

11 "The Christian," Feb. 25th, 1909.

12 Matthew 24:22, 24, 31.

to tell us that we err. [They say] the Elect in the Epistles are the Church, in Matthew 24 the "lost tribes" and the Remnant of Jews of the End-time.¹³ And the proof of this? Only their own strange interpretation of Matthew 24. Their system requires it, therefore it must be so; [and thus] in the Epistles it means people who know and love the Saviour and aim at being filled with His Spirit. In the Gospels [it means] a people ignorant of the first principles of Christ, ignorant of redemption, devoid of the Spirit, guided by select beatitudes and other snippets from the Sermon on the Mount and by the Imprecatory Psalms, fulfilling Matthew 28:18-20 in 1,260 days, converting countless millions of the heathen to Christ during the absence of the Holy Spirit, [and] yet though preaching the Gospel of that Kingdom¹⁴ whose very essence is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,"¹⁵ they invoke terrible curses upon their enemies and their enemies' children. *Elect* indeed!

To refute such supreme rubbish requires either a volume or a page. We can only give it a page, which will be sufficient for those ingenuous [sincere] readers who have followed us so far and have seen that the saints are raised at the Day of the Lord; that the Blessed Hope is none other than the Glorious Appearing; that the Appearing, the Revelation and the Day of Christ are for the Church; that the *Parousia* is not in secret but in triumph.

It is utterly wrong to say, as A. C. Gaebelein says, that the Elect "throughout the Gospels always means His earthly people." [Consider the following:] In mid-morning of the very day when He spoke of the Elect in Matthew 24, our Saviour, in the most "dispensational" of His parables (that of the Wedding for the King's Son,¹⁶ where one sees the gospel passing from Jerusalem, to Judæa, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth) used the term "the Elect" of the saved of the present Church dispensation. The parable ends: "many are called, but few are chosen," and the word is "*eklektoi*"--elect, the very word used by our Lord at sunset when telling of the suffering of His Elect and their gathering at the Last Day.¹⁷

Could anything be more conclusive?

In His discourses the Lord shows us the Elect being won for Him through the world-wide preaching of the gospel (Matt. 22:14); shows the Elect in the very midst of the trial (24, *passim*); describes the trial itself;¹⁸ portrays the Elect as a poor widow crying in her distress to the Righteous Judge to hasten His Coming and remember her in her affliction;¹⁹ shows us that when the very Elect seem undone, when all

13 A. C. Gaebelein, *Olivet Discourse*, pp. 60-1, 72.

14 Matthew 24:14.

15 Rom. 14:17. As one's good faith is at stake here, I remark that justification for every statement and inference in the text is forthcoming from the two chapters on the Remnant in Trotter's *Plain Papers*; in Gaebelein's *Hath God Cast Away His People?*; *Gospel of Matthew* (2 vols.); and *The Olivet Discourse*; and Kelly's numerous writings, especially *Christ's Coming Again* and *Lectures on The Second Coming and Kingdom*. But I have had to leave exhaustive treatment of the subject to a future volume.

16 Matt. 22:1-14. See the *Harmony* by J. A. Broadus and A. T. Robertson, and *The Lives of our Lord* by S. J. Andrews and Edersheim.

17 Matt. 24: 22, 24, 31.

18 Matt. 24:21-22; cf. Rev. 13.

19 Luke 18:1-7. Zahn says that the Parable is really a continuation of the Parousia discourse of the

seem weak and liable to be deceived by the terrible delusions of the End-time, He can stand it no longer. He shortens the days of her affliction. He arises in His pity, His majesty, His power and rescues His Elect by gathering them to Himself (Matt. 24:21-31, 40-41). Redemption, release, has not merely drawn night but has come (Luke 21:28).

The assertion of Kelly in his *Second Coming* (p. 211) that there is no rapture at Matthew 24:31 is as bold as it is unfounded. Our Lord in that passage gave a perfect picture of the assembling of the saved of this Dispensation by means of a rapture. St. Mark even used for "gather" the verbal form of the same word used for "gathering" in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, where Paul refers to the Rapture.²⁰ To unbiased minds the gathering of the saved, or the Elect, in Matthew 24:31 is the prototype of Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1. The student may be referred to Kennedy's important work, *St. Paul's Conception of The Last Things* (pp. 55 ff.), and Salmon's *INT*; Zahn's survey is developed in a later chapter.

The language of the Lord has not the slightest reference to the Jews, or the Jewish National Remnant, or merely Jewish believers. He had dealt with them in 24:16: "let those who are in Judæa (not the Elect) flee unto the mountains," and in verse 30, "then shall all the tribes *of the land* lament, and they shall see the Son of Man coming" (Darby's version). And in the next verse He passes on to speak of the muster of a Community independent of all nationality--the Elect whose salvation the Lord had told of in Matthew 22:14, the saved of this Dispensation. The Elect, "those whom He chose," as Mark adds (13:20), are assembled by a rapture that is even described with some detail both in Matthew and Luke (Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 17:34-36).

Yet Kelly, Gaebelien, and others bring in their half-converted, half-Christian Jewish Remnant (unconverted, un-Christian would fit the facts better), and the grossly mythical "Lost Ten Tribes"²¹ to explain away one of the grandest prophecies in Scripture.

And Paul? He has no other doctrine for the release and relief of the saints in tribulation. In 2 Thessalonians 2 he describes, with a few graphic touches, the rise and triumph of the last Antichrist on the very eve of the Day of the Lord. With terrible powers from the Abyss the Adversary prospers and presses hard on Christendom when our Lord Jesus, appearing on the scene, slays him with the very breath of His mouth and "annihilates him by His appearance and arrival" (Goodspeed).

Milligan, in his outstanding commentary, speaks of the "'manifestation of His coming' involving the

previous chapter. He points out that the Lord represents His Community between His earthly ministry and His Return, as a widow lamenting the delay and praying constantly for His Arrival. In Rev. 8:1-6 he thinks the Community is again seen at prayer for the Advent. Zahn rightly says that there is no contradiction to the Church's being considered, under another aspect, as a *Bride* awaiting union with the Bridegroom (*Zahn-Kommentar*, Lucas, *in loco*). Adolph Saphir is quoted (*Memoir of Adolph Saphir*; by G. Carlyle) as being on a hymnal committee of the English Presbyterian Church that was considering a line about the Church's being a Widow. Some objected to the sentiment (they who want a reigning Church now), and Saphir remarked, "I thought it was only the *Apostate* Church that said, 'I sit a queen, and *am no widow*.'" (Rev. 18:7).

20 "Assembling" (Goodspeed), "muster" (Moffatt), "summons to muster" (Rutherford), on 2 Thess. 2:1.

21 A. C. Gaebelien, *Olivet Discourse*, p. 72.

idea of something striking--a conspicuous *intervention* from above" (p. 149). Again: *Epiphaneia* draws attention to the 'presence' as the result of a sublime manifestation of the power and love of God, *coming to His people's help*" (p. 151).

Jesus the Lord appearing on the scene in triumph and intervening for the rescue of His saints--this is the doctrine of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8, as it was of our Lord.

Even more relevant and decisive is the great Apostle's treatment of the Advent in the previous chapter of 2 Thessalonians, for he is writing to a Church when it was going through the fires of persecution. In a passage of great power on the Day of the Lord's Appearing, he reveals incidentally and naturally *when it is* that the saints obtain rest from persecution. Here are his words:

For these are a plain token of God's righteous judgment, which designs that you should be found worthy of the Kingdom of God, for the sake of which, indeed, you are sufferers; since it is a righteous thing for Him to requite with affliction those who afflict you; and to *recompense with rest you who suffer affliction--rest with us at the revelation of the Lord from heaven with the Angels of His power*. He will come in flames of fire to take vengeance on those who do not acknowledge God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.²²

Zahn's paraphrase of the setting goes, as usual, right to the heart of things:

This patience, which the readers have shown in enduring such constant sufferings, ought to be a source of comfort to themselves, inasmuch as it is at once the token and the warrant that as believers they shall have part in the glory of the Kingdom of God at the righteous judgment to be established at the return of Christ, when their persecutors shall be given over to eternal destruction (1:5-10). That the readers may be made more and more ready for the decision of that great day, is the constant prayer of the founders of the Church (1:11-12) (*INT*, vol. 1, p. 225).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:6, the Apostle had dealt with the Day of the Lord's Coming in relation to deceased and living Christians, and only incidentally in relation to the world. Here in 2 Thessalonians he *describes* the great Day--[a] day of wrath and judgment for impenitent and ungodly men who persecute the Elect; yet a day of surpassing joy to the Elect, for it brings to them the Kingdom, and the glory, and their everlasting rest.

A. T. Robertson (iv., p. 43) comments pithily:

7. *Rest with us (anesin meth'hēmēn)*. Let up, release. Old word from *aniēmi*, from troubles here (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5; 8:13), and hereafter in this verse. Vivid word. They shared suffering with Paul (verse 5) and so they will share (*meth'*) the *rest*. *At the revelation of the Lord Jesus (en tēi apokalupsei tou Kurious Jēsou)*. Here the *Parousia* (1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 5:23) is pictured as a *Revelation* (Un-veiling, *apokalupsis*) of the Messiah as in 1 Cor. 1:7, 1 Peter 1:7, 13 (cf. Luke 17:30). At this Unveiling of the Messiah there will come the *recompense* (verse 6) to the

22 2 Thess. 1:5-8 (Weymouth). There is no ulterior motive in quoting from a version in idiomatic prose; Darby's version gives the same sense. It is only that familiar words often obscure the truth by their very familiarity.

persecutors and the *rest* from the persecutions. This Revelation will be *from heaven* (*ap' ouranou*) as to place and *with the angels of his power* (*met' aggelōn dunameos autou*) as the retinue and *in flaming fire* (*en puri phlogos*, in a fire of flame, fire characterized by flame). (Italics his.)

What do pre-tribs say to these things? As usual they have three ways of escape, each more worthless than the other.

1. Following Darby and Kelly, Hogg and Vine say:

The time indicated is not that at which the saints will be relieved of persecution, but that at which their persecutors will be punished. The time of relief for the saints had been stated in the earlier letter, 4:15-17; here passing reference to a fact within the knowledge of the readers was all that was necessary (*Thessalonians*, p. 228).

These are simple mis-statements of fact.

(a) 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 does not mention "rest" from beginning to end; not persecution, but *death* was the problem. Here in 2 Thessalonians 1 the problem is fierce persecution, and the Apostle deals with it by consoling them concerning the significance and reward of suffering, and by telling them that they will get relief from it *at the approaching Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment and glory* (vv. 7-8). Once it is seen that "rest" is a noun, not a verb, then Darby's and every theorist's scheme collapses.

(b) But the Apostle also gives the Day of the Lord as the *time* for the glorification of the saints, and for their looking upon Him in adoring wonder and seeing Him as He is "in that day" (v. 10).

(c) Simultaneously with this occurs the doom of the impenitent.

(d) Not only that, the Apostle gives in the clearest terms another indication *when* the saints are to be released and rested from tribulation: it is when the Saviour-judge appears in His glory (v. 10). The teaching is ruinous to the whole new scheme of exemption from trial for the saints by a rapture years before the End.

2. Pre-tribs assert that as the Rapture is not mentioned, the "first stage of the Advent" is not in view. Of course not, [for] Paul and the other Apostles did not fall into the nineteenth-century delusion of making "a mere incident of the Coming" the hope itself. Not the Rapture but the Glorious Appearing was "the blessed hope" of the Apostolic Church. After the writing of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Paul and the other Apostles made scores of references to the Christian hope without mentioning the Rapture.

But even if the Apostle had mentioned a Rapture at 2 Thessalonians 1:7, pre-tribs would arrange three shifts to get rid of it. This is not cruel or churlish but the plain fact. The Rapture of the elect saints in Matthew 24:31 was explained away because it clashed with the fond theory of a rapture before the Great Tribulation.

Again, the Parable of the Tares sets forth the Rapture under the figure of the gathering of a harvest of

wheat (Matt. 13:30). So perfectly clear is this, and such was the unanimity among the pre-trib leaders, that Kelly in one of his last writings could say: "This, we all surely agree, means and must be to meet the Lord, who deigns to descend into the air."²³ Yet that does not hinder Gaebelein from disturbing and judaizing the parable to make it teach the very reverse of what our Lord taught.

The harvest of the saved is seen again in Revelation 14:15-16, a chapter that gives a *proleptic* view of the End; but Darbyists make it apply to something totally different.

The N.T., including our passage in 2 Thessalonians 1, teaches that the saints will be gathered and glorified immediately before the wrath falls on the unbelieving. No doubt it would be more pleasing to pre-tribs if they could convict us of leaving the Church on earth to share the wrath of the great Day; and, indeed, it is a favorite artifice with some of them to say: "Well, if you do not admit our theory of an interval of some years between the Rapture and the Day of the Lord, then you must believe that the Church will be upon earth when the wrath of that Day falls upon the ungodly."

But the dilemma is a false one. It is possible to reject the pleasing delusion of a rapture some years before the Day of wrath without accepting the error that the Church will partake of the wrath. It never seems to occur to these writers that, immediately before the wrath of the Day of the Lord falls, God can call His saints to Himself without the necessity of an additional advent a generation earlier. Yet this is precisely the doctrine of the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. Everlasting destruction shall fall on the impenitent "whenever the Lord shall have come to be glorified in His saints."²⁴

And this conception of the Great Day is exactly in keeping with the analogy of the past as recorded in Scripture, exactly in keeping with the teaching of the Lord Jesus upon the prophetic future. On the authority of our Lord we learn that it happened thus in the days of the Flood: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, *until the day* that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:27).

Our Lord evidently saw no incompatibility in the saints of those days remaining in the world until *immediately* before the judgment fell; for the saints entered into their rest and refuge, and the judgment began to fall on the ungodly, *on the same day*. And the Lord saw nothing unseemly in the same thing happening at His Second Coming; for He said, "*as* it was in the days of Noah, *so* it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man" (v. 26).

The same lesson the Lord drew from the days of Lot: "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but *the same day* that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (v. 29).

The Lord Jesus evidently saw no inconsistency in His saints' remaining in Sodom until immediately before the wrath of God fell, for the salvation of the godly and the doom of the sinners took place *on the same day*. And the Lord apparently saw no incongruity in the same things happening at His Return, for He said: "even *thus* shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (v. 30). That is, the righteous shall first be removed and then the judgment shall fall. And as if to leave no doubt about this, He proceeds to describe the conditions of human life in the day of His revelation and the circumstances

23 *Christ's Coming Again*, ii., p. 104.

24 Verse 10; the translation is discussed below.

of the Saints' removal:

I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be *taken* (*paralēmphēsetai*; taken *home*, or received), and the other *left* (*aphethēsetai*, left *alone*, left unprotected). Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be *taken* (taken *home*, received), and the other *left* (left *alone*, left unprotected). Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be *taken* (taken *home*, received), and the other left (left *alone*, left unprotected). (Luke 17:34-7).

The very same figures are used in Matthew 24:39-44, a section that begins with the *Parousia* of the Son of Man and ends with a solemn exhortation to the Apostles to be ready for His Coming; and all is in explanation of the Rapture of the Elect in verse 31 and 22:14. Few in the whole history of the Church doubted the meaning of these terms until new Rabbis arose with hair-splitting and fantastic theories of the End to commend to the faithful: the Elect are not the saved won by the missionary Crusade of 24:14, 22:9-10, 14, and 28:18-20, but a Jewish Remnant and Jewish outcasts, nearly or totally devoid of Christian knowledge, feeling, experience, and standing!

There is perfect harmony between Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 1 and that of the Lord Jesus Christ in His discourses on the End. Both locate the muster of the saints and the doom of the impenitent on the same day, the day of His Revelation in glory. Both place the blessing of the saints immediately prior to the descent of the Divine wrath.

Nothing different is taught in Luke 21:36, which reads as follows:

Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

The use of this text by pre-tribs to teach that the Church will be raptured away from earth several years or more before the End is a mockery of consistency (I had almost said, of honesty). A moment ago they were all affirming that "the Son of Man" was a title never used when Christ's relation to the Church was in view. It was a finger-post to tell us that Israel or the world was under consideration. Yet here they are with their short memories demanding that this time we should see the Church here. We will oblige them: the Church is in view here, but not in the sense nor at the time the theorists wish. They who "stand before the Son of Man" are the raptured saints, the Elect, gathered *on the Day of the Son of Man*, as Matthew 24:31, 41 and Luke 17:30-36 conclusively prove.

The Day of the Lord's Coming is pictured as a trap falling on the inhabitants of the world (v. 34). On the ungodly it comes as a surprise; and if the disciples give way to intemperance and the cares of this life, it will surprise them too. They should pray constantly for grace to be ready for that Day when it comes--in blessing for the faithful, in judgment for the unbelieving.

Take care that your hearts are not loaded down with self-indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares, and that day takes you by surprise, like a trap. For it will come on all who are living anywhere on the face of the earth. But you must be vigilant and always pray that you may succeed in escaping all this that is going to happen, and in standing in the presence of the

This blessed promise and prospect, however, is not good enough for theorists. They want about thirty or forty years' notice. An interval is inserted between the deliverance of the saints and the overthrow of the ungodly. The real reason is apparent. Christians must be saved not merely from God's wrath, but also from the trials and tribulations of the Last Days. Here is the source of all our novelties--two "second" comings, two "first" resurrections, two "Ends" of the Age, two "fulnesses" of the Gentiles, two "raptures" of saints. By one means or another the saints must be saved not only from the wrath *of God* but also from the wrath *of man*. But while the Scripture assures us of the truth of the one, it repudiates the other on almost every page of the New Testament.

Of course pre-tribs have a shift to get rid of these damaging facts. They interpret the Rapture in Matthew 24:41 and Luke 17:34-35 as a seizure to *judgment*;²⁶ the leaving as a leaving for blessing in the kingly rule of the Son of Man. Darby, in one of the few instance where he allowed private views to influence (and mar) his admirable, literal translation, translated *paralambanō* in Luke 17:34-35 by *seize*. The use of this word in the N.T. is absolutely opposed to this. It is a good word, a word used exclusively in the sense of "take away with" or "receive," or "take *home*." Its use on the first page of the N.T. gives the keynote. We are told that Joseph, after the terrible ordeal of fear concerning the faithfulness of his betrothed, was instructed to receive the holy Virgin: "Joseph, fear not to *take* Mary your wife *home* for what is begotten in her comes from the Holy Spirit,"²⁷ and, "Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him: he *took* his wife *home*." Absolutely decisive is the fact that when our Lord spoke the words, "I will come again and *receive* you to myself," which all pre-tribs apply to the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, *He made use of the same word (paralambanō) as is used for the Rapture of Matthew 24:41 and Luke 17:34-35.*

Consideration of all the facts is left to our volume on Matthew 24-25. We leave the matter for the present by quoting some excellent remarks of a scholarly writer on Matthew 24:40-41 and parallels:

With the view that the taken are taken to judgment, and the left are left to glory, it is needless to say more at present than that it is built on a single (not unnatural) misconception. For the word "took," in the case of the Antediluvians--"took them all away"--means "to arrest," "to take to *destruction*"; whereas when "one is *taken* and is left," the word means "to take *as a companion*." *It is a rapture of honor*; it is the word used when our Lord selects three only out of the Twelve for watchfulness against the great tribulation of Gethsemane, the select resurrection

25 Goodspeed's version. "And to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Weymouth). "There will be no dread of the Son if one is always ready" (A. T. Robertson, ii., p. 262). There is truth in the view of some expositors that "stand" has reference to being able to meet the Judge; e.g., "The great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to *stand*" (Rev. 6:17, R.V.). So Psalm 76:7; cf. 1 John 2:28; Psalm 1:5a.

26 A. C. Gaebelien, *Olivet Discourse*, p. 78.

27 Matt. 1:20, Moffatt's version. Weymouth has "do not be afraid *to bring home* your wife Mary"; and he "*brought home* his wife" (v. 24). Goodspeed has: "Do not fear *to take* Mary, your wife, *to your home*" and Joseph "*took* his wife *to his home*." Wade has "*take* to yourself," "*took* to himself." Very significant are Wade's translations of the eschatological passages in Matt. 24 and Luke 17 by "one is *taken into safety* and one is *left to his fate*." That gives exactly the sense of the passages.

of Jairus's daughter, and the kingdom glory of the Transfiguration.²⁸

The truth of these facts is undeniable, as anyone can verify by consulting a good N.T. lexicon or the standard commentaries on Matthew and Luke.

3. A third artifice to evade the plain meaning of 2 Thessalonians 1:7 is an appeal to the tense of the verb "come" in verse 10. It is contended that the verb should be translated "when he *shall have come* to be glorified in his saints," and that this presupposes an interval of several years between the giving of rest at the Rapture and the Appearing in judgment in this chapter.²⁹

But even if we grant the translation, it does not help the theorists one little bit. All that can be inferred from the literal tense is what we have just seen to be the teaching of our Lord; namely, that as soon as the saints are removed from the world the judgment falls upon the impenitent. And this agrees perfectly with verse 7, whereas to import into verse 10 an interval of several years contradicts it.

In current English few say "when he shall have come" (Darby) or "whensoever he shall have come" (Hogg and Vine). They are correct English but a trifle stilted. Everyone says, "whenever he comes," "as soon as he comes," or simply "when he comes." And this is exactly how the great English versions of the past and the recent versions into idiomatic English translated *hotan elthēi* in 2 Thessalonians 1:10. The A.V., the R.V., the American R.V., Conybeare, and The 1911 Bible all have "when he shall come." Frame, Goodspeed, Moffatt, Rutherford, David Smith, Wade, and Weymouth all have "when he comes." Way has "when he descends," Plummer [has] "whenever he shall have appeared again," and Milligan [has] "Whenever he has (or shall have) come." And "whenever" in English simply means, in this connection, "at whatever time" or "as soon as."

Scores of instances could be given from all the versions, including Darby's, of the same Greek construction of *hotan* (when) followed by a verb in the aorist subjunctive having the simple meaning "whenever" or "as soon as" one comes or does something. The Grammarian Dr. Robertson gives a typical example from 1 Corinthians 15:24 and comments on it: "When he shall have abolished (*hotan katargesei*). First aorist subjunctive with *hoten*, indefinite future time. Simply 'whenever he shall abolish,' no use in making it future perfect, merely aorist subjunctive" (iv. p. 191).

Important also are Robertson's remarks on this very passage in 2 Thessalonians 1:10. He says: "When he shall come (*hotan elthēi*). Second aorist active subjunctive with *hotan*, future and indefinite temporal clause *coincident with 'at the revelation' (en tei apokalupsei)* in verse 7" (iv., p. 44).

I may add that Dr. Westcott discusses the same grammatical usage in his comments on Hebrews 1:6. In the light of these studies and of the unanimity of our translations of the N.T., we may say that the pre-trib attempt to interpose the Seventieth Week of Daniel between the granting of rest to the saints at

28 D. M. Panton, B.A., in "The Overcomer."

29 Bullinger, "Things to Come," i., pp. 17, 139: *The Church Epistles, in loco*. At the first writing I dealt fully with the arguments of Bullinger and P. Mauro on this passage. The former "progressed" to the extent of assigning 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and nearly all the N.T., to "Post-rapture" saints. The latter discovered many dispensational errors in his numerous early writings, as well in the school generally, and then abandoned the Scripture doctrine of the Lord's Return--threw out the baby with the bath-water.

verse 7 and the destruction of the ungodly in verse 9, or between the Coming for the glorification of the saints and the Revelation in fiery judgment on the unrighteous, is shattered on the rock of Greek grammar. Rest for the saints (7), participation in the kingdom (5), and their glorification are all coincident with the Glorious Revelation of our Lord at the Day of the Lord, when the unrighteous are banished from His presence. Thus are both persecuted and persecutors recompensed at the Last Day.

In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, at 2:19 and 4:14-5:10, the Apostle had dealt with the Day of the Lord's Coming as it affected the reward, gathering, and resurrection of the saints--and even then only incidentally to clear up difficulties. In chapter 5:1-10 he refuses to calculate dates or measure the present period, and warns the living believers that the Day comes suddenly for all, and like a thief for those who do not watch. Many aspects of the Lord's Coming, however, were passed over. Nothing was said of the Kingdom or of rest from tribulation; nothing of the transfiguration of the saints and their association with the King; and there was only a passing reference to the Day as a day of wrath.

The misunderstanding of the Apostle's reference to the Day's coming suddenly (1:2-4), and an outbreak of fierce persecution, made possible the spread of false rumors that the Day of the *Parousia* had actually arrived. The Apostle, therefore, in the Second Epistle, *describes in detail* the Day of the *Parousia* (chapter 1). He omits almost all reference to the resurrection and Rapture, which were dealt with in the First Epistle, and refers now to what the First Epistle had omitted--namely, the rest, transfiguration, and glory for the saints when the Lord comes with His Kingdom; and the reward, in banishment and destruction, for the persecutors. "You think the Day has come?" The Apostle is already answering: "Impossible," he says, "because you are [yet] in tribulation and the ungodly flourish, whereas the Day brings rest for the saints and utter ruin for the persecutors."

Then in chapter 2 he clinches the matter by saying that the Day of the *Parousia* or Appearing cannot have come yet, for the Antichrist is to precede Him, and he [Antichrist] has not yet come. He shall come, however, in his own time, and flourish by lying wonders. But the Lord shall slay him by His Glorious and triumphant Coming (v. 8). The Apostle makes it certain that the Glorious Appearing of the Lord, which in Titus 2:13 is called the Blessed Hope of the Church, is also the Day of wrath upon Antichrist and his hosts.³⁰

St. John has the very same doctrine of the Advent. The saints who are seen suffering throughout the Apocalypse, and risen and translated to thrones at the Last Trump (11:15-18 and 20:4-6), are openly displayed in bridal union with the Lamb (19:6-8) immediately before the victorious "Field Marshal" (to use Zahn's word) comes forth in full regalia riding prosperously in His majesty, His right hand teaching

30 In his *Forgotten Truths*, Sir R. Anderson has some references to this conception of the Last Day. They may be noticed here: "Common sense might veto the suggestion that His Coming as Avenger and Judge is the event described as 'that blessed hope'" (pp. 70-1). Well, the Lord and His Apostles had great common sense, and inspiration as well, and they all treated the Day of the Lord as the day for Jehovah's Appearing; and in Titus 2:13 this is stated to be "the blessed hope" of Christians. Even theorists are beginning to see this. (See *Touching the Coming*, by Hogg and Vine.) Referring to the Glorious Appearing in 2 Thess. 1:7-10, Sir R. Anderson says: "To call *that* a 'blessed hope' would savor of the spirit of the Spanish Inquisition, rather than of the Christian's grace-taught heart" (p. 66). This sounds about as intimidating as it was meant to be. But the writer must fix up his quarrel with the Apostle. It is he who calls the Glorious Appearing the Blessed Hope of Christians (Titus 2:13).

Him terrible things (verses 11-16).

Here, as everywhere in the N.T., the Day of the Lord is two-sided. At Matthew 24:27-51 and Luke 17:22-37, He comes as Conqueror, as Judge, as Rescuer. At [Matthew] 25 [He comes] as Bridegroom and Judge, and possibly as Rescuer of His Brethren (v. 40). At 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, the Lord is again seen coming as Conqueror, as Judge, and as Rescuer; so also at 2 Thessalonians 1, and again in the following chapter, where He overthrows the Man of Lawlessness and rescues His Elect.

John has a similar representation of the Day, for our Lord comes as Bridegroom and Rescuer for the Church, and as both Conqueror and King for the Nations.

Before leaving this chapter on the saints' rest from tribulation, it is necessary to examine John's use of the word *saints*--the usual name throughout the Epistles for the Church of God in Christ.³¹ Well, in the concluding book of the New Testament, written about A.D. 96, John the Apostle writes whole chapters to the Seven Churches of Asia (founded by Paul or his associates) about the great crisis of the End. He tells them much about Antichrist and the Great Tribulation. [And he tells them] much about the *saints*. [**First**] the *saints* prevail in prayer (5:8; 8:3-4); [**Second**] the *saints* suffer and are overcome (13:7); [**Third**] the *saints* have patience, wisdom, and faith, preferring death to dishonor (13:10; 14:12); [**Fourth**] the *saints* seal their testimony with their blood;³² [**Fifth**] heaven itself and the *saints* and Apostles rejoice over the downfall of Babylon, where their blood had been shed³³ (18:20 R.V.); [**Sixth**] the *saints* receive their reward at the Last Trumpet (11:18); [**Seventh**] the saints and martyrs of the End-time, and of all time, are raised at the First Resurrection (20:4-6), becoming "priests and kings" unto God.

We have further references throughout the Book to the saints' standing and position. Chapter 1:5-6 gives the keynote. There we read that they were redeemed by the blood of Christ and made "kings and priests" to God. At verses 9-10, as soon as the Twenty-four Angelic Elders speak of the prayers of the saints, they at once tell us who they are. They are those whom the Lamb had redeemed by His blood, an election out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation which had become "kings and priests" unto God. At 12:10 they are called Brethren--brethren of John and his fellow Christians.

Then in terms as clear and explicit as language can find (at 19:8-9, not at 4:1) the *saints* are identified on the very Day of the Lord with the Church, the Bride of Christ of his Dispensation, as the whole N.T. teaches from Matthew to the Revelation, pace Dr. Bullinger, Dr. Marsh, and Sir R. Anderson (Matt. 25:1-13; 22:1-4; Eph. 5:23 ff.; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 7:1-5). It is then, and only then, that the saints are raised and assembled, and inherit all things.

Who are the saints? "Jewish" saints--they of the Imprecatory Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Missionary Commission; "tribulation" saints, "post-rapture" saints, "Pentecostal" saints, "Gentile" saints, "martyred-remnant" saints and "millennial" saints--any saints *except Christians!* So say the theorists; and without such Rabbinical and unscriptural jargon and weird charts to explain that jargon, they cannot even expound, much less save, their innovations on Scripture.

31 Cf. the striking expression: "as in all the Churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33, R.V.).

32 16:6; 17:6; 18:24.

33 I.e., at least Peter and Paul, who, according to sound tradition, were slain in Rome.

And what says John? His very silence is decisive. He will not qualify or boggle or quibble. He says simply the *saints*, pure and simple; and until about 1830 everybody understood him immediately. In the Apocalypse he is writing an Epistle to the Seven Churches of the province of Asia, with moving messages to their Overseers. He begins with a salutation as definite as those in the other Church Epistles. He addresses the Churches directly in the epistolary form, all through, and closes with a benediction (see R.V.).

As if to ward off a nineteenth-century refinement (that the main body of the Book of Revelation, 4:1-22, is not suited to the "heavenly hope" and not of great practical concern to the Church but rather to the half-converted Remnant and its converts after the Rapture), the Seven messages to the Overseers either begin or end with the piercing word, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith *unto the Churches*." That is, as Sir W. M. Ramsay points out in his admirable work on *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, not merely what is said in the messages but also *in the main body of the Apocalypse*. There the Spirit, in this Fourth Epistle of John, is speaking to the whole of Christendom. He is giving to the Churches instruction that deeply concerns her. He is telling of the Church's approaching struggle with the powers of darkness and of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the Last time, and ye know that Antichrist cometh; yet a greater than Antichrist shall come, and shall not tarry.

Finally, the *saints*--saints in the Seven Churches, saints in the whole of Christendom at the end of the First Century, saints in tribulation and needing good cheer, receive from the aged Apostle the Apostolic benediction, with the grace of the Ascended Lord, our Saviour Jesus Christ: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the *saints*" (22:21, R.V.).

Who are the saints? Let us deal frankly and intelligently with the Apocalypse. Let us shed the methods and spirit of the Rabbis who made God's word of none effect by their traditions. We shall soon know of the doctrine.

"Will the *saints* go through the Great Tribulation?" No Darbyist would debate such a question for an instant, [for] he would feel that the dice had been loaded against him. [But they are] *loaded by the Apostles themselves*, for they everywhere use "saints" of Christians, members of the Mystical Body. So he [the Darbyist] must haggle and boggle over his terms. Even, "Will *the Church* or any part of it go through the Great Tribulation? will not suit his sense of the nicety of things; for Bullinger³⁴ and Anderson³⁵ saw *Churches* on earth *after* the Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ. [Therefore] the debate must proceed on the question, "Will the Mystical Body of Christ or any part of it pass through the Great Tribulation?"³⁶ They will not touch a debate until they have first split the Church of God in two. And the best reply to their nicely circumscribed proposition is that the Bible was not written to answer speculations at once so subtle and so wooden--speculations worthy of the "schoolmen" in the time of our Lord and in the Middle Ages. The Scripture is rugged and practical, and answers such questions artlessly, casually, and without debate, and leaves us to our intelligence, our honesty, and our courage.

34 *The Apocalypse*, on [chapters] 2-3.

35 *Coming Prince*, pp. 170,180.

36 See, for example, *Forgotten Truths*, pp. 78-9, with its mystifying reference to the Body of Christ; also the references given in my last chapter.

But on the question of identifying the *saints*, the greatest exegetical nuisance to pre-tribs is the innumerable multitude (in this very book of Revelation) of Jews and Gentiles who, dying in the last Great Tribulation, are seen in a disembodied state in heaven (7:9-17). In vain do Kelly and Grant and many more of the same school assert that only *Gentiles* are in view. John has settled the matter by saying that they come out of "every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues." Therefore they include saints from the twelve tribes of Israel. Thomas Newberry admits this with refreshing candor (p. 54). John then goes on to say that this immense multitude stands before the throne and before the Lamb arrayed in white robes and having victors' palms in their hands. They ascribe their salvation to God and the Lamb. Beyond all question this is the most glorious company in the whole of Scripture. Their witness, their sufferings, their glory, and their rest in the presence of the Lamb and Good Shepherd have inspired the saints and martyrs all down the ages. Men and women, youths and maidens, have performed prodigies of heroism under the inspiration of this magnificent vision of the End.

Who are the *saints*? The Rapture, say the theorists, took place years before this time in the drama of the Apocalypse. Yet here we see the spirits of just men made perfect, the souls of the martyrs in heaven awaiting their resurrection. They fell in the Great Tribulation instigated by the Antichrist, and heaven has received them. Pre-tribs, however, are shy, and hesitate to give to them the right hand of fellowship, because they come out of the Great Tribulation--and because the whole Rapture tradition is at stake. Though our Lord accepts them as His brethren³⁷ in union with Him, the advocates of the new prophetic teaching are unhappy about conceding to them the highest blessings and privileges.

Ottman,³⁸ Vine, Kelly, Grant, and others bid us see an *earthly* scene in Revelation 7:9-17, the glorious multitude being Gentiles on earth in the flesh when the millennium is established. The first two give as a reason for this that the mention of "day" and "night" in verse 15 is inconsistent with conditions in heaven. Then the same paltry reasoning will relegate the sublime vision of heaven in chapter 4 to our poor earth, for at 4:8 it is said that the cherubim "have no rest *day and night*, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty."

I must leave to another place William Kelly's contortions of exegesis on the nature of the Great Tribulation, put forth with studied offensiveness in his two books on the Second Coming. His statement (as miserable as it is inexact) that the "tribulation of those days is no honor," is answered by the glorious vision in Revelation 7:9-17, by the First Resurrection in 20:4-6, and by every exhortation to perseverance and faithfulness in the Apocalypse. It will be great honor, fraught with the highest reward. Where is this not spoken of in the Revelation?

F. C. Bland, author of a work on prophecy that has much that is excellent in it, has a still more astounding solution of the vision of Revelation 7:9-17, so as to save the Rapture theories from ruin. From the circumstance that John appropriates some phrases from Isaiah 49 to describe the blessing of the multitude in the vision, he insists that the multitude *must be Jews* (p. 139). I will only suggest in passing that on that unwise principle we should filch pretty well every blessing and relationship from the Church in favor of the Jews. Growing in credulity, Bland thinks that "probably the ten tribes" are

37 I think that there is something in the suggestion of T. Newberry's that these martyrs are seen again in Matt. 25:40 as the "Brethren," of course, raised from the dead. But this is merely a "pious opinion."

38 P. 185; Vine, *The Rapture and the Great Tribulation*, p. 40.

referred to (p. 140).³⁹ That is, the ten "lost" tribes, coming home to Palestine out of the nations of the earth, fulfill the sublime vision of Revelation 7. It seems totally incredible, but there it is in cold print. Any rubbish rather than the true and obvious explanation that there we see saints, martyrs, and Christians who are to fall in the last affliction of the Church, men and women whose shoes we are not worthy to unloose and awaiting in the abode of the holy dead the better resurrection at the Last Day.

I know few things more calculated to bring prophetic study into disrepute than this unhappy and persistent effort by Kelly and other hypercritical dispensationalists to belittle the sacrifice of the martyrs, explain away their glory, and reduce the whole vision to an earthly scene, not far from Palestine, I suppose. One has heard of the naturalist who botanized [studied plant life] on his mother's grave. Surely there might have been some restraint on speculation at this part of the Apocalypse.

Throughout Church history Revelation 7:9-17 has been interpreted as a heavenly vision, that of those saints who loved not their lives unto death. From the R.V. of verse 14 we must apply it to the martyrs of the End-time. From that fact, and from their being a community of Jews and Gentiles, saints redeemed by Christ, and from the additional circumstance admitted by T. Newberry of the pre-trib school that "their inheritance is heavenly" (p. 54), we must conclude that they are Christian martyrs in the time of the last Antichrist. Kelly's statement that they have "no distinctive properties of the Church" is as inaccurate as it is audacious (*Second Coming*, p. 228).

It is a real pleasure to give here a paragraph from Darby, who discussed this vision in a truly admirable spirit. As a rule he had a wretched prose style, but the beauty of the scene communicated something to his writing. He applied the vision to the Elect, but hesitated (for inadequate reasons⁴⁰) to apply it to the martyred Church of the Last Days. Admitting that the scene is in heaven, he wrote these beautiful words on verses 16-17:

God is a tabernacle over them, as if to solace them. The Lamb feeds and leads them. God would dispel, in the souls of those that are His, the dread of His majesty, by the thoughts of His gentleness, His meekness. A soul that is unconverted has no idea of a God tender, gentle, who "wipes away tears." God will have us near Him, as children near their father. He loves His children enough to take notice of all their afflictions, to comfort them, and to wipe away their tears (*Apocalypse*, p. 40).

I think that these words will remove any lingering doubt that the palm-bearing multitude in heaven is that portion of the Christian Church from all tribes and nations, which falls in the tribulation of the End-time.

39 On the myth see David Baron's *History of the "Lost" Ten Tribes*; also *The British Israel Theory* by Dr. H. I. Goudge, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford (1933, Mowbray). Both works deserve a large circulation to counteract a strong delusion of our days.

40 Especially the old view, now abandoned by pretty well every expositor in America, England, and Germany, that the Twenty-four Elders represented the redeemed. We have seen that this is a mistake. They are simply Angelic leaders in the worship of Heaven.