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THE DAY OF HIS COMING

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THE DAY OF HIS COMING

The Day of His Coming

THOUGHTS FOR THE
SEASON OF ADVENT

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NEW YORK
THOMAS WHITTAKER (INC.)
2 AND 3 BIBLE HOUSE

405612

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I

“ THE DAY OF HIS COMING ”

“ Bring me my bow of burning gold,
Bring me my arrows of desire,
Bring me my spear : O clouds, unfold,
Bring me my chariot of fire.

“ I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
(Within this) green and pleasant land.”

—*Blake.*

I

“THE DAY OF HIS COMING”—(*Malachi 3 : 2*)

THE Calendar of the Church year, it has been decided, begins with the season of Advent. This is obviously because it has been felt that the whole structure of Christian doctrine and of Christian life is built upon the revelation of God's relation to the world, His coming to Humanity in the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Christmas thought,—“Emanuel, God with us”—needs for its apprehension a period of preparation and the Church has wisely chosen these four weeks at the very beginning of its Calendar that Christian people may learn to understand what the Coming means and what consequence it draws with it in its train.

Nevertheless, misunderstandings persist, misunderstandings which would not be serious were they simply intellectual errors, but are seen to be moral hindrances when we perceive how they lessen the sense of awe which the thought of each approaching Christmas should bring and, thereby, lessen inevitably the joy and the power and the richness of our present Christian life.

Hence the attempt to set forth as simply and explicitly as possible something of the meaning of this solemn season.

“What is the ultimate design of the world?” This is the question which starts the mind in pursuit of a

Philosophy of History. As soon as we believe in the oneness of the Universe we set to work seeking for unity of rational process. We have learned to recognize the fact that *physical* Nature is interpenetrated by the sense of law, that in every molecule, it goes on its way obedient to the Will "that moves the sun in heaven and all the stars."

If, therefore, Law, or in still truer language, the living will of God, works in Nature, why not also in History? Are the interferences with the Highest Will, for which our lower wills are responsible, too considerable to allow the carrying out of a Divine plan, or are they, in their total result no more considerable than the resistance of inertia in the lower parts of Nature, or than the irregularities of mountain and valley in their relation to the general curvature of the earth's surface?

Hegel puts the matter thus: "It was for a while the fashion to profess admiration for the wisdom of God as displayed in animals, plants, and isolated occurrences. But, if it be allowed that Providence manifests itself in such objects and forms of existence, why not also in universal history? This is deemed too great a matter to be thus regarded. But Divine Wisdom, *i. e.*, Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise His Wisdom on the grand scale. But intelligent striving aims at realizing the conviction that what was *intended* by eternal Wisdom is actually *accomplished* in the domain of active, existent spirit as well as in that of mere nature." "It is only an inference," he adds, "from the history of the world that its development has been a rational process." Now the Jew,

as the first consistent monotheist, was the first to have a consistent philosophy of history. However deficient in other respects intellectually, he had a grasp of the essential meaning of history such as supported him through all the bitter fortunes of his much enduring race and made him the minister of the higher hope to all mankind. "The Jewish thinkers," says Renan, "were the first who sought to discover a general theory of the progress of our species."

And this theory had the good fortune to look forward, not backward. It had been the perdition of many nations to be attempting to live on their past, to be ever looking backward to some Golden Age, in whose pale reflection they found their present glory, to be forever imagining themselves the degenerate descendants of the gods, the children of the moon, or the sun, or the giants and demi-gods of an heroic age, long passed away. The Jew had little sympathy, except in the days of his decadence, with this spirit. When he ceased to be the lord of the future, even amid his bondage and woe, the mission of his race passes away from him forever. The Jew was essentially, by the Divine vocation, a seer and a prophet. Back indeed, with the rest of the world, he looked to discern the fact that man's first attempt to conform his life to the Highest will had been failure and tragedy, yet that very failure started man on the first steps of that long heroic march "on to the bounds of the waste, on to the City of God."

The thought was with him in the iron furnace of Egypt, in the weary wilderness wanderings, in the anarchy of the times of the Judges, amid the ceaseless wars of the Monarchy, in the protracted misery of the

Babylonian captivity, amid all the experiences of Greek and Syrian and Roman tyranny. It even waxed stronger and brighter in times of adversity, so that it was during the exile that there was founded the religion of faith and hope, and it was when Ezekiel received the news of the destruction of Jerusalem that he broke forth into his glowing description of the ideal Jerusalem, the City of God.

Thus, although both Jews and Gentiles appeared in history as those who,

“ Rowing hard against the stream
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not deem it was a dream,”

yet the Gentile set his idealization of humanity's hope far back out of history, while the Jew saw it as a tangible, literal promise, a “divine event” not perhaps “far off” but so near that every woman in her birth-pangs throbbed with the hope of being the Mother of Him who should make the vision true.

What was the essence of this expectation which marked off the Jew from the rest of the world? We have seen that he believed that once, in the thought of God, there had been unity between God and His work. Envisaged in eternity, Creation reflected the Creator. We have seen also that in the Creation process time entered as an element and therefore stages of imperfection. Therefore in all the stages of creation there was necessarily a gulf between the thought of God and the actual work visible in the studio. This was sufficient to try faith, to perplex the mind, to vex the heart. It forced the confession —

“The world hath something harsh and strange,
Something is wrong, there needeth a change.”

But the Jew believed that all this was but the *incident* of the Creation process, not its fundamental character. The final result was not to be the spectacle of one great tide of purpose foiled by multitudes of diverse wills dribbling out their rebellious force and making anarchy of the universe. The result of all would be Unity between God and Man, the full manifestation of a completed World before the eyes of God, the full revelation of a wise, purposeful, almighty and loving God to the mind and heart of man, satisfied at last.

This expectation is known as that of a Theophany or manifestation of God.

There are two forms under which such an expectation may present itself.

First, the method which is natural to our western habits of thought, as the *Ascent of Man*, the progress of civilization, the development of Creation towards its goal, the manifestation of the perfect realization of the Creator's thought in the creature.

Secondly, the method which was natural to the Jew, and indeed to most Oriental minds, the gradual *Revelation of God*, God breaking through all obstacles interposed between Himself and the universe, conquering the blindness and rebellion of human hearts and minds, traveling in the greatness of His strength.

Now both these forms are different aspects of one and the same fact, viz.:—the establishment of the ideal Unity which is between God and the World. The Coming of Man to God and the Coming of God to man are but different ways of regarding the same

great process. But the Jewish way, although open to the possible error of making God in His working altogether external to the human spirit was the pro-founder and the *more religious*, as recognizing the force of the Divine initiative and the eternity of the Divine purpose.

Hence the great epoch to which the Jew looked forward, as fulfilling his expectation was spoken of as "*Jehovah's Day*," "*The Day of the Lord*," the Day when His purpose should be manifested and His authority regarded as the law of life.

Such expectations as this had, of course, many half-way fulfilments. There were many events in Jewish history which were regarded as "*The Day of the Lord*." Every crisis, whether a physical chastisement or a great moral movement, was a Day of Jehovah, inasmuch as it brought with it some deepened sense of God's presence, some finer conception of His character. In almost every prophet we find deliverances and judgments which were rightly called by this name.

But the inevitable disappointments which the Jewish people suffered at every one of these particular epochs did but strengthen the belief that the real Day of Jehovah, to which all history seemed to be leading up was as yet far in the future. Then mercy and truth should meet together, Righteousness and peace should kiss one another, God should perfectly manifest Himself in Man and Man should reach his predestined end in the likeness of God.

This expectation it was which crystallized itself into what is called *the Messianic hope*, an expression exactly equivalent to the longing for the Day of Jehovah.

Of the development of the Messianic idea there is no need to speak at length, especially as it is the tie which binds together all the books of the Old Testament. This one thought gives a unity to all the scattered documents of Jewish literature, making their witness at once clear, orderly and progressive to the work of the Holy Spirit in history.

We are able to see, as in the studio of a sculptor, the great design gradually taking shape. Out of the formless and speechless stone lineaments are gradually discerned. The "seed of the woman" becomes the line of Seth, the family of Abraham, the royal house of David, the royal line of David, at last the royal and suffering Servant (of the second Isaiah) Prophet, Priest, King, Deliverer through the Service of Suffering. And as we discern more and more clearly the *attributes* and the *personality* of that chosen instrument through whom God's face is to shine upon the world, so we discern more clearly what His Work is to be.

To this there are two sides.

First, naturally, He is the Deliverer, the Saviour. First of all, the deliverance was thought of only as *national* and as *temporal*. But, as time went on, it was seen that the *individual* needed deliverance as well as the nation and that there were perils from which men needed salvation greater than the perils which beset the body and the physical life. So the idea of deliverance enlarged itself, becoming more and more spiritual and at the same time more and more universal. Secondly, as God, through His Messiah, was regarded as Deliverer, it became more and more obvious that in order to deliver He must *Judge*. At

first His Judgment was regarded only as directed against the *heathen* nations who had trampled on God's heritage of Israel. He was their national champion and vindicator. So the Day of the Lord shone luridly as a day of wrath, and of flaming anger against the Gentile world. But as the idea of the Deliverance spiritualized itself, so the idea of Judgment extended and deepened itself. Their own lives lay also under the scrutiny of God; their own wills opposed themselves to God's law; their own hearts resisted the manifestation of His face. Consequently, the Judgment must *begin at the House of God* and must extend, through the very fact of God's appearing and through the very necessities of deliverance, to the thoughts and intents of the individual heart.

Hence, the Messiah would be *both the Saviour and the Judge*, the Judge because the Saviour and the Saviour because the Judge. *Judgment* (not in the sense of a school examination, with fearful penalties for those who are "plucked," but) as the manifestation of the presence of an all holy God, because an essential part of the Messiah's work. "Judgment," says Prof. A. B. Davidson, "is that pervading of life by the principles of equity and humanity which is the immediate effect of the true religion of Jehovah." *To set Judgment in the Earth* is the *raison d'etre* of the Theophany. As the rising of the sun upon the darkened earth, so is the appearing of God, in its nature and effects, upon the world of sinful men. Thus every messianic prophecy contained implicitly the thought of Judgment. Even when seen in lowliest guise, as in the Servant passages of Isaiah, Christ puts not off the robe of the Judge. "This is the

burden of the Servant's work," says Prof. G. A. Smith, "to pervade and instruct every nation's life on earth with the righteousness and piety which are ordained of God." "He shall not flag nor break till He hath set Law in the earth." This is the end of civilization and of religion itself, to enable man to keep the law, not the law of the jungle or the law of his members, but the law which comes to him in whispers from God Himself even under the Old Testament, and clearly and outspokenly in the life and character of Jesus Christ;—to keep it not by instinct merely, nor by compulsion, but by the free will which recognizes, with Dante,

"to mightier force,
To better nature subject, ye abide free."

I think, then that we shall now be able to understand something of that *mingling of awe and joy* with which the Jew looked forward to the Coming of Messiah. The joy of it is brought out notably in the Psalms. Although, as Dr. Cheyne says, the function of the temple poets was to brighten the present rather than to paint the future, yet the Messianic Judgment is more and more brought into view as Israel's contact with the surrounding nations increases. The Theodicy, or Divine Judgment, grew to be a necessary element in the Jewish conception of Providence. "Must," says Dr. Cheyne, "the loving kindness of the Good Shepherd always take the same form? Will the Divine education of Israel never be complete? Must there be a perpetual alternation of sinning and repenting, of wandering and returning? And this deep sighing of the poor and this straining look for the

morning, must the one always be met by a call to patience, and the other by the watchman's neutral report, 'The morning cometh and also the night'? Oh, no; the Hebrew not less than the Iranian hymns, are the bearers of good tidings. The day is at hand which shall close the school time of God's people, a day of burning anger and burning love, anger against all, whether within or without Israel, who oppose God's gracious purpose and of a love which reacheth unto the heavens to the upright and pure of heart."

With what joy the Jew could look forward to such a day as this! Even the Gentiles, they thought, might join in the song of praise which proclaimed that God should "judge the folk righteously and govern the nations upon earth."

"Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof;
Let the field exult and all that is therein;
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy;
Before the Lord for He cometh;
For He cometh to judge the earth:
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the people with His truth."

Nevertheless, we can discern the presence of the awe and deep religious fear beneath the exultant strains of the Psalm. "God is not the feeble, good-natured God of languid or frivolous profligacy," nor is His world a place of irresponsible dalliance! When God appears "Who shall abide the day of His coming?" He comes to discriminate and separate the bad from the good in every individual, to pass every man through the purifying fire. As the refiner of silver sits patiently over his molten metal, purifying it again and

again till he can discern his own face in the caldron's contents, so does the Judge judge us until He can discern in us the image of Himself.

To bring us to that point, is the first object of the Advent season.

To experience the joy of Christmas we must have been able to put ourselves under the dividing sword of the Divine Judge.

If Christ become to us the manifestation of the Face of God, He must show both the Divine love for the sinner and the Divine wrath against sin.

Thus redemption becomes possible for the human soul and, in the hope of redemption, through the manifestation of the face of God, life explains itself.

It is our part to coöperate with God in this plan of salvation. Therefore we are to let Him redeem us with judgment. We are to let the glorious yet searching light of His presence enfold us round till our dark consciences are enlightened and our stubborn wills melted by the glow.

May the divine manifestation speak to all the good in us to cast away all the bad from us. Then, if like the guilty queen in the great tragedy, we have wrung from us the cry of a stricken conscience —

“Thou hast cleft my heart in twain,”

the answer will come back from a greater and purer judge than Hamlet,

“O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.”

II

“WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL”

“They all were looking for a King,
To slay their foes and lift them high :
Thou cam’st a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry.

“O Son of Man, to right my lot
Nought but Thy presence can avail :
Yet on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail.

“My how or why Thou wilt not heed,
But come down Thine own secret stair,
That Thou may’st answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer.”

—*George MacDonald.*

II

“WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL.”—(*St. Luke 2 : 25*)

WE have seen the results of the evolution of the Messianic hope compressed into the final verses of the Old Testament prophecies. The hope had not been fulfilled as many had expected, in the return from Babylon. Like the star which led the Magi, it still moved and went before the people. It was the mission of prophets like Haggai and Zechariah to lift up the eyes of the nations towards this guiding star, but it is in the closing book of the Canon, the prophecy of Malachi that we see the double significance of the Day most clearly defined. On the one hand it is a day “which shall burn as a furnace and all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” And on the other hand there is the brightness and the hope—“Unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and ye shall go forth and gambol as calves of the stall.” The prophet, Elijah, moreover, is promised as the immediate forerunner of the Day, to turn, if possible, the nation to repentance and to avert the curse which the Presence of God must bring to the ungodly.

When the voice of Old Testament prophecy ceased,

a thick darkness seemed to close around the heart of Israel. Many felt that Jehovah had forsaken the people of His choice and that inspiration was a thing of the past. The times were sordid and disillusioning. The Temple seemed small and mean to the imaginations of those who reflected upon the glories of the Temple of Solomon; the men who were raised up as leaders were second-rate men, they had neither the heroic proportions nor the sense of mission which had characterized the leaders of old; the sacrificial system seemed less and less in itself to correspond to more spiritual conceptions of worship. Altogether it was a time when the preparation for the coming of Messiah seemed at a standstill.

Yet, as with us when experience seems halting and there is no open vision, the presence of God was never more real. Little as they could see it themselves, we who look at this particular period from the perspective of history can feel that there was never a time when the leading hand of God was more conspicuously present in the Jewish nation. The old tendency to idolatry had been completely eradicated through the sojourn in Babylon. It was impossible for faith in idols to survive the scorn of the unknown prophet of the second part of Isaiah, especially as that scorn was itself the expression of the nation's own consciousness. But there were two other results to be attained ere the Messiah could come to His own. One was the evolution of that capacity for martyrdom which enabled the world to perceive for the first time the supreme serviceableness of suffering when that suffering is the consequence of love and devotion to duty. The other was the freeing of Jewish religion from the materialism

which had been a necessary and inevitable part of its religious system hitherto.

Both these lines of development we may see proceeding in what is called the Maccabean age.

The terrible persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes came as in itself a Day of Judgment. It tested the nation, drove men into the categories to which fundamentally they belonged. No doubt, when the temple was polluted, swine's flesh offered on the altar and the daily sacrifice suppressed, there were some who were secretly relieved. Even as to-day there are some who are not sorry when circumstances interfere with the fulfilment of religious obligations, so it was then. A story tells of the woman who smote the altar with her shoe and railed on it, as she gazed upon its cold and blackened stones, as the insatiate wolf which had devoured the wealth of Israel.

But there were others whom the crisis tested and revealed as heroes and martyrs. So one part of the nation went to the left, to sink to the level of the surrounding paganism, to lose forever the opportunity of being "The Servant of Jehovah." And the other part gifted with the spirit of martyrdom, stood waiting the higher call, dowered with a power to serve such as no warrior or sage had ever known. It began to be seen that when the glory of God should be revealed it would be through the love which could be obedient unto death.

The second line of development was equally important. The old spirit of idolatry had been exorcised, but the religion of Judaism required to be purged from the spiritual pride which is the danger and temptation of the strong, and from the materialism which threat-

ened to blind them to the glory which was to be revealed.

So the nation needed to be sifted to discover that spiritual kernel which was to be the seed of a future world-wide kingdom.

The piety of the Chasidim hardened into bigotry, and under the name of Pharisaism gave trouble to Jonathan Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus, long before we see it as an opposing influence in the Gospels.

The patriotism of the warriors who drove out the Syrians became secular and fanatical in the Zealots who tried to expel the Romans.

The conservatism of the Sadducees and their unwillingness to add to the teaching of the Pentateuch became unbelief when they were brought face to face with new vistas of faith, as in the doctrine of the Resurrection.

All these displays of partisanship were secular and materialistic in thinking and worshiping, and in working, and must all pass under the Judgment of God. Neither Pharisee nor Zealot nor Sadducee could stand when the Messiah appeared.

Where then was the heart of the people? It was in that small school of thought, ascetic in tendency, withdrawn from the beaten paths of history, unnamed in the New Testament, known as the Essenes. There can be little doubt that it was through this channel that the results of the whole previous evolution of Jewish history entered the world, although one need not be blind to the differences between the Essene and the first followers of the Christ.

The most important way, however, in which the Essenes continued the preparation of the Jewish world

for Christ was in the propagation of the Apocalypses in which the Day of Jehovah, which is also the Day of Messiah is more and more distinctly described. From their "houses" among the cliffs of Engedi and the mountains of Galilee, where they pondered on the Old Testament scriptures and wove, surely not unhelped of the Divine spirit, their mystic visions of the great day into strange, yet significant, language, the Essenes sent out into the nation a body of literature the importance of which has scarcely been realized by the student of the life of Christ.

The number alone of these books known to us is formidable. The writer of the Fourth Book of Esdras reckons over seventy of them among the Scriptures. They were of varied character, historical or pseudo-historical, haggadistic, lyrical or frankly apocalyptic. It is impossible, again to arrange them chronologically. Some are Christian in feeling while Jewish in source; others Jewish in feeling while dating from after the birth of Christ. All are so patched, interpolated, added to, taken from, overwritten,—that they must be considered in the mass rather than as individual documents. Yet who can estimate the effect which these religious and political pamphlets, aflame with the highest hopes of the race, had in preparing the "fulness of the time" when Christ came to His own? Moreover, who can fail to see the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the way in which the Apocalypses stressed those features of the Messianic hope which it was most necessary for the world to learn.

Let us take our illustrations.

There is, first and foremost, *the Book of Daniel* added to the Hagiographa of the Old Testament, as

though to vindicate the claim of Apocalypse to the shelter of the inspired Word of God. The book is partly historical and partly apocalyptic; yet it is evident that the history is given, not to enlighten us as to the condition of Babylon in the time of Daniel, but to give us a philosophy of history which shall show the "giant forms of empire on their way to ruin," as ushering in the Kingdom of Messiah. And it is made clear in this book which was written to hearten the nation in its struggle against the Syrian, as St. John's was, two centuries later, to hearten the infant Church in its struggle against Rome, that the Kingdom of God is to be the Kingdom of Humanity. The great, brute world, the empire of lion and of bear, is to go, and the lord of the future is "the Son of Man." The appearance of this term is an event to be noted.

Again, we have the *Book of Enoch*, especially interesting to us as quoted by St. Jude in his Epistle, as being included in the Ethiopic Canon, where it follows the Book of Job, and as being favorably regarded by several of the Alexandrian fathers. Here we have the authority of the great prophet of pre-Noachian days assumed to give a picture of the Age which is coming and the Judgment which must usher it in.

Around the throne of God are the *four faces of glory*, from which proceed the *four voices*, one praising God as the Lord of Spirits; the second praising the companion of God, the Anointed One; the third pleading for the afflicted saints on earth; and the fourth uttering a warning against the Satans who tempt the people of God.

Then we have the vision "*of the Ancient of Days*,"

with His "hair white as wool." With Him is One who is called "*the Son of Man*," "who hath righteousness, and all righteousness dwelleth with Him, and all treasures of hidden knowledge He revealeth because the Lord of spirits hath chosen Him." This "Son of Man" is the warrior Messiah, who shall execute judgment on the earth and shall "arouse Kings from their couches." Again in another vision, we see the *throne* set and the *books* opened, and "the saints shall rejoice because the number of righteousness is fulfilled, and the prayers of the just have been heard, and the blood of the Just One has been demanded before the Lord of Spirits."

Near the throne is a *fountain of righteousness* opened for the cleansing of all the elect of God. In the latter, and later, part of the book we have Messiah spoken of as "*the Son of Woman*," "sitting on the throne of His Glory." "*The great white throne*" is seen gleaming in the house of fire, like hoar frost, and on it sits One, whose raiment is brighter than the sun, surrounded by ten thousand of His saints. In the course of the book, again, we have the saints of God described under the sacrificial figure of "*white bullocks*" and "*white sheep*" and the Messiah Himself is pictured as a white bullock with large and powerful horns.

The writer does not lose sight of the fact that the appearing of Messiah must inevitably bring about great tribulation in all the earth. Nature herself will feel the travail pangs of His birth; great changes will ensue; the term of human life will be shortened; moon and stars will become inconstant in their course; there will be a general loosing of iniquity.

Then will come the overthrow of the powers of evil before Jerusalem as preliminary to the inauguration of the Theocracy in the "*New Jerusalem*" where the elect shall offer their unceasing song of praise in harmony with the whole angelic host.

But the blessedness described is in no future life, upon no other earth than this we tread. "In those days I will open the store chambers of blessing which are in heaven, that they may descend upon the earth, and on the work and labor of man. Peace and righteousness shall join together, in all the days of the world, and through all the families of the earth."

Another Apocalypse, better known and more accessible than the Book of Enoch, is the fourth book of Esdras (included in our Apocrypha as Second Esdras). Here Ezra occupies the position taken in other apocalypses by Daniel or Enoch. The book deserves careful study since it is linked on the one hand with the language of the Old Testament prophets and on the other with the language of our Lord. As the old age gets older it gets more wicked and upon it come those startling signs which in apocalyptic language denote the disruption of the settled order of history. There are earthquakes, prodigies in the heaven above and in the earth below, the sun shining at night and the moon by day. Then comes the Messiah, as the judge, to inaugurate "*the immortal age that is to come*, wherein corruption hath passed away."

Before the Judgment, however, Messiah has to die, there is *silence in heaven* for seven days, and the Church (Mt. Zion) as a stately *woman* is seen mourning for her son dead on the eve of his wedding.

Out from the sea, like the Beast of St. John's vision,

rises an *eagle* with twelve *wings*, and three *heads*, symbol of the world-empire of Rome, riding on all the wings of heaven. But her power is not to endure, for a *lion*, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, rises up to oppose her might, and her wings and heads disappear, while her body is given over to the flame of judgment.

In another vision, we see a man rising out of the midst of a mighty tempest to take his stand upon a high sculptured mountain. Against him come forth multitudes from the four winds of heaven, but out of his mouth proceed flames of fire which consume them so that "nothing was to be perceived but only dust and smell of smoke." After this terrible judgment He appears descending and calling unto Him a peaceable multitude and the seer is told that His name is Christ, the Messiah.

Let us glance at two or three other apocalypses, less known than the above.

There is the *Assumption of Moses* in which the following passage appears as *the song of Moses* uttered just before the farewell address to Joshua: "Then shall appear God's Kingdom in all His creation; then shall the devil (Zabulus) have an end, and sadness be taken away with him. Then shall be filled the hands of the messenger appointed by the Highest, who quickly shall vindicate them from their enemies. The Heavenly One shall rise from the throne of His Kingdom and shall go out from His holy habitation with indignation and wrath on account of His sons, and will cause the earth to tremble and shake it to its boundaries. And the lofty mountains shall be brought low and shaken together and the valleys shall be filled.

The sun shall give no light, and shall turn into darkness; the horns of the moon shall be broken and she shall be turned into blood, and the circle of the stars shall be confounded. The sea shall retreat to the abyss, and the springs of waters shall fail and the river shall be dried up; because the Most High, the Eternal, the only God, shall arise and come manifestly to chastise the nations and to destroy their idols. Then shalt thou be happy, O Israel, and shalt mount on the necks and wings of the eagle, and thy days shall be fulfilled; for God shall exalt thee, and seat thee in the heaven of stars, in the place of their habitation; and thou shalt look down from the height and shalt see thine enemies in the earth, and shalt recognize them and rejoice and give thanks and confess to thy Creator."

There are interesting passages, again, in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* in which we see Rome emerging as the typical world-power which the Kingdom of Messiah is to overthrow. "And it shall come to pass when the time of its fall shall approach, then the dominion of Messiah shall be revealed and He shall root up the multitude of that Kingdom." Then shall appear the signs of the advent, "whenas punishment shall lay hold of the inhabitants of the earth and they shall fall into many tribulations and again into great torments." Evil shall go on increasing to a climax, and wars and earthquakes shall be on every side.

"And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall escape from the war shall die in the earthquake, and whosoever shall escape from the earthquake shall be consumed in the fire, and whosoever shall escape from the fire shall perish in the famine. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall escape all these evils of

the conquerors and of the conquered, shall be delivered into the hands of my servant Messiah. For the earth shall devour the inhabitants thereof."

Then shall appear the Messiah on Mt. Zion.

"Here He shall judge the last leader of His enemies and shall put him to death and shall protect God's people who are found in the place which He hath chosen. And His dominion shall continue until the world of Corruption is brought to an end, and the predicted times fulfilled."

The triumph of the saints is described under the figure of the *great banquet* upon the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan (a Midrash upon Psalm 24 : 15), and the enjoyment of the new life is depicted in the symbolic description of the vine with a thousand branches, a description which Papias believed to have come from the lips of our Lord Himself.

The blessedness of the saints is further described in the two following passages :

"They shall see the world which is now invisible to them: they shall see the time which is now hidden from them. And time shall never grow old to them, for they shall dwell in the high places of that world, and shall be like unto the angels and equal to the stars, and shall be transformed into all the beauty that they can desire, and changed from light into the radiance of glory. In their sight shall be unfolded the breadths of *Paradise*, and there shall be displayed before them the comeliness of the majesty of the *living creatures* which are beneath the throne, and all the hosts of angels which are now holden by My word from being seen, and hidden by My command that they should stay in their own places till the time of their appearance is

come. Thus the excellency of the righteous shall surpass that of the angels. For the first shall succeed the last, those for whom they waited, and the last those whom they heard to have passed by; and they have been delivered from this world of sorrow, and have laid down the weight of care." "Then health shall descend in dew, and weakness leave and *care and sorrow and groaning shall depart* from men, and joy shall walk about the whole earth; nor shall any die till he is of full age, nor shall any adversity fall suddenly on any man. And judgments and accusations and contentions and revenges and blood and coveting and envy and hatred and whatsoever things are like to these, shall depart into condemnation. And wild beasts shall come out of the forest and shall minister to men, and serpents and dragons shall come from their holds and submit themselves to a little child. And it shall be in those days, that the reapers shall not weary, nor the builders toil; for work shall go on freely with them who do those things in much tranquillity."

Such is the vision of Messianic days seen by the pseudo Baruch and the importance of its agreement with the teaching of the prophets and its suggestion of what the Christ fulfilled is not to be gainsaid.

Space forbids more than a passing reference to other apocalypses.

We may just mention the *Book of Jubilees*, a distinctively Jewish work, which agrees with its contemporaries in describing times of terrible iniquity, unnatural crime, destruction of life and general lawlessness as signs of Messiah's coming. But, "in the *new creation* Zion shall be sanctified, and through it shall all the world be purified from guilt and uncleanness forever and ever."

As a last example, let us take the *Book of the Sibyllinel Oracles*, which, although the work of different times and different writers, furnishes the explicit evidence of the ideas entertained by the Jewish people respecting the Parousia of the Christ. The Roman power was to be broken. "The Roman name which now is supreme in all the world, shall be utterly abolished, the empire shall return to Asia, and once again the East shall bear rule." "When Rome shall rule over Egypt also, uniting it into one, then indeed the mighty Kingdom of the immortal King shall appear to hold the sceptres of all the earth for all ages as Time hastens onward."

Such is the Kingdom over which "the Son of Man" shall reign as Jehovah's vice-gerent, a Kingdom which shall embrace all nations and flourish with righteousness and peace.

Such was the literature on which the hope of Israel was nourished for a hundred years and more, before the birth of Jesus Christ. It is well to emphasize the fact that the minds of the generation to whom Christ came were not a blank, but were literally "looking for and hasting unto" the day of Messiah's Kingdom. When the aged Simeon and Anna waited in the Temple for the consolation of Israel, their expectation was a well grounded and definite one.

When the crowds flocked to the preaching of the Baptist in the wilderness, they were drawn by this magnetism of hope. When they heard him proclaim, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" they had definite, if too material, conception of what that Kingdom was to be.

Before seeing how Christ seized and fulfilled this

expectation, let us gather up for ourselves the meaning of it all as it was expressed by the voice of prophecy and the dreams of apocalypse.

First, it meant to the hearts of men that the hope of Israel and of all humanity was in the manifestation of God.

Second, That this manifestation of God was to come through Humanity, in the presence of one "anointed" for this very purpose, one who should be "the Son of Man" as well as the revelation of God.

Third, That the presence of this "Son of Man" should be in itself a "Day of Judgment," a Theodicy as well as a Theophany, to all, heathen or Jews, who should oppose the principles He came to reveal.

Fourth, That through this "Day of Judgment" should be ushered in the great deliverance, which should be, to all peoples and individuals, salvation and peace.

Fifth, That this deliverance should be the inauguration of the great world-wide Kingdom of Messiah, on earth, yet in its character spiritual, before which all the brute forces of the world should disappear, and God be all in all.

Sixth, Lastly, the belief was general in the days immediately contemporaneous with the birth and ministry of Jesus, that men were living in the "last days" of the old order and might reasonably expect to see the new age "about to come" and "to stand before the Son of Man at His appearing."

III

“THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM”

“The Day of the Lord is at hand, at hand :
Its storms roll up the sky :
The nations sleep starving on heaps of gold ;
All dreamers toss and sigh ;
The night is darkest before the morn ;
When the pain is sorest the child is born,
And the Day of the Lord is at hand.

* * * * *

“Who would sit down and sigh for a lost age of gold,
While the Lord of all ages is here ?
True hearts will leap up at the trumpet of God,
And those who can suffer, can dare.
Each old age of gold was an iron age too,
And the meekest of saints may find stern work to do,
In the day of the Lord at hand.”

—*Kingsley.*

III

“THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM”

“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—*St. Matthew 4: 17.*

THERE can be but little question as to the part played by John the Baptist in bringing to a flame the expectation of the Messiah towards which all the history of Israel had been leading. Unwilling as he was to assume the name of Elijah, the Baptist was not uncertain as to his work as the forerunner. The day he was sent to herald was the “Day of Jehovah” predicted by Malachi. In person he could not fail to remind those who saw him of the undaunted Tishbite. In teaching, too, he came “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” He is the herald of the Kingdom, with the rough work of the pioneer to do. Mountains must be leveled, valleys filled, crooked places straightened, rough ways made smooth, that the King may come to His own.

So the silence of the wilderness is startled by the cry, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” “Flee from wrath which is coming,” he cries to the complacent hierarchy of Jerusalem, who half in terror, half in curiosity, come to his baptism. “The axe is being laid to the root of the trees, the fire is ready for the barren branch. Repent, for He—the long expected Christ—is at hand, to baptize with the Spirit of God, and with fire. He is coming, winnowing fan in hand, to purge His threshing floor, to gather the

wheat into the garner, to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Let us ask whether Christ accepted the place and the office assigned to Him by His forerunner. In doing this we are but asking the questions as to whether He fulfilled the hope which was the soul of the whole nation. Did Christ bring the salvation described by the aged Simon to the virgin Mother in the temple: "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed"?

We must be careful to guard ourselves against two common misconceptions of the humanity of Christ.

First, We must be careful not to suppose Him merely the creature of His time. He came indeed in "the fulness of time," but nothing is more striking in the record of the Gospels than our Lord's divine independence of the time-spirit. He was very far from being, as some would have us believe, a dreaming enthusiast led away by the messianic frenzy, by apocalyptic ponderings, readings of Daniel, or listening to preachers like the Baptist, to give Himself to the flowing tide and impose, first on Himself, then on others, a belief in His own Messiahship. Never was one who so little drifted with popular currents, who so little conformed Himself to the age. The times, on the contrary, were in His hands, not He in the hands of the time. The *Zeitgeist* was Himself. He stands apart, even where He gathers up for fulfilment the thoughts of many hearts. We see this exemplified many times and in the most emphatic way.

In the Temptation in the wilderness Christ encounters the whole spirit of the age in its views as to the method of Messiahship. He is offered the means of satisfying the people with bread, in accordance with the belief that the Messiah should stand on the sea-beach at Joppa and give food to the hungry multitudes; He is offered the prestige of winning the recognition of His mission by the working of some overmastering miracle such as the flinging of Himself down in their midst from the Temple roof; He is offered, moreover, the lordship of the world as a temporal gift that He may be the King of the world in the place of the cruel and detested Tiberius.

The same temptation is repeated from day to day. It comes to Him in the attitude of the people. They, too, would be content with earthly bread. "Our fathers ate manna in the desert," they said. "What doest *thou* for a sign?" They, too, were forever seeking to be convinced through signs and wonders, rather than by listening to the word. They, too, were prepared "to take Him by force and make Him a King," after a secular manner.

Nor were the Apostles free from the same spirit. They, too, needed the lesson about the insufficiency of physical food for the wants of man; they, too, were ever on the lookout for the great miracle which should inaugurate the Kingdom; they, too, feared the long conflict of the cross. "This be far from Thee, Lord," cried Peter, thus himself becoming a Satan in the way of Christ.

And under all this stress of temptation we see the entire independence of our Lord's attitude towards His office. He will, indeed, feed His flock like a

Shepherd, but it shall be with the Bread of Life; He, indeed, will be worshiped and adored, but not out of amazement at His miracles; He, indeed, will win the Kingdom of the world to become the Kingdom of God, but it will be through the power of His Cross and Passion.

Thus from the outset Christ settles clearly and conclusively the terms of the Messiahship and shows His freedom from the control of the Time-spirit.

Yet recognizing this we must be careful to avoid the other mistake, that of supposing that our Lord had not come to fulfil in a way more real than they themselves imagined, their expectations as to judgment and salvation and the establishment of a Kingdom. He had certainly not come to announce a postponement of all these things to some post-mortem condition, as has been imagined by so many readers of Scripture, strange as the inference may appear to be.

It is worth while to study carefully the words of Christ for the very purpose of seeing how concretely He promised a fulfilment to their Messianic longings. The fruits of the tree of Prophecy were fully ripe. He came to pluck them for the generation amongst whom He lived. So we see Him accepting and using, with full sense of its import, the apocalyptic title "Son of Man." The calm inevitableness with which He assumes the title is worth pages of argument.

So again, He accepts the Baptist's description of the epoch and its meaning. John the Baptist, He tells the Apostles, is the Elijah promised by Malachi. He Himself, then, is the one who is come to lay the axe at the root of the tree.

So once again, He uses the terms which defined the time as transitional. "This age" and "the age which is coming" are close together. He it is who shall close the one and open the gates of the other. This transition, moreover, is imminent. He takes up, in His own preaching, the note which the Baptist had sounded, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He tells the Apostles "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, until they see the Kingdom of God come with power." He assures them as they go out to preach the word, "Verily, I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel (that is, the cities into which Israel had been scattered) till the Son of Man be come."

He insists upon the judicial side of this coming. It is to affect that very "evil generation" which He addressed, those very cities, like Chorazin, and Capernaum, in which He had done His mighty works; it is to be a day of judgment in which even the guilty cities of the plain and the people of Nineveh should rise up to condemn them.

To describe the platform of this Kingdom which is "at hand," He delivers the Sermon on the Mount; to outline its characteristics He teaches the Parables of the Kingdom; and, as time goes on and indifference hardens into unbelief, He warns the nation in the Parables of Judgment. The whole subject is systematically dealt with in the great discourse on Mt. Olivet, in answer to the express questioning of the Apostles, in a way which only an obstinate prepossession can misunderstand. Let us put aside, first, the mistake of translators who give us "the end of the world" when the discourse is speaking about "the

winding up of the age " and secondly, the disingenuous efforts of commentators to explain the discourse as speaking of different things, thousands of years apart, and we need have no difficulty in learning the mind of Christ with regard to His Messianic office, the judgment He had come to execute, the Kingdom He had come to found upon the earth.

Dr. Milligan, in the *Baird Lectures* for 1885, suggested, or rather favored the suggestion of another from whom he quoted, that the omission of the discourse on Olivet from the Gospel of St. John was not wholly accounted for by the fact that the evangelist was satisfied with the record of the Synoptists. Was it not rather that St. John himself had given a transfigured account of this same discourse in this Apocalypse? "The correspondence," Dr. Milligan says, "is not merely general, it is minute and special; and it exists to such a degree as to admit only one conclusion, that the Apocalypse is the enlargement of the discourse."

But what does it describe? Is it not the dramatic unfolding of that "Day of the Lord," which all Israel had longed for, and yet was so unprepared to meet, not knowing the day of her visitation? Is it not a picture of the "Coming" in its consequences for Israel and the world, given directly to those who were historically concerned, and were accounted worthy "to stand before the Son of Man."

Without attempting an analysis let us follow rapidly the order of the discourse.

It springs naturally from the remark of Christ that the fate of those beautiful Temple buildings, so wonderful in the eyes of the disciples, was to be destroyed.

The apostles at once connected this with the thought of the coming of the Son of Man and, accepting Christ's right to use that significant title, ask for signs which are to attend the great transition from the one age to the other.

Then, in obedience to their request, the Master unrolls before them the history of their generation. "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." There is no confusion, no leaping backward and forward from subject to subject as suggested by purblind commentators, no attempt at mystification; the whole prediction moves clearly, naturally, rhythmically and majestically from point to point.

The world is described in its travail-pangs, about to bring forth that Manchild who shall rule the nations. The time is so far denoted that the Apostles learn that all Judaism, wherever scattered, shall be appealed to before the final execution of judgment begins. "Then cometh the end." "The abomination of desolation"—the eagles of the Roman legions—will be set up in the holy place; there will be persistent rumors of the false Messiahs which the circumstances of those times shall produce; there will be great upheavals and convulsions of society which are spoken of apocalyptically as the falling of the heavenly bodies from their orbits, and then as the climax, will be "the presence of the Son of Man." But by no means are the apostles to suppose that this "presence" (*parousia*) is to be a local manifestation, an appearing to the bodily eyes. Should such a rumor go forth, says Christ, "Believe it not." Such an appearing would be "to conceive Christ's glory under the very limitations

which He is throwing off by His death and resurrection; it is to contradict the most vital and essential meaning of His Parousia, or Presence, which is *absence* if it is not as universal as His Church, as ubiquitous as God Himself; and it is to turn back to the very idea of a temple presence which Christ is dying to make obsolete."

The coming is to be like the dawning of the day, like the new light shining from the East even to the West, like the summer whose advent is attested by the bursting forth of the buds and the unfolding of the leaves to the sun. This Christ declares again, is for the generation then alive, although as with the arrival of the summer, the exact day and hour of its arrival cannot be marked by men. The important thing is to be prepared, for no such convulsion has been since the flood in the days of Noah, wherein, as should be the case again, the old world was baptized by judgment into a new relation with God. For the judgment should be sharp discrimination between the ready and the unready. It should separate between two men working in the field, between two women grinding at the mill; yea, it should be a "sharp two-edged sword" for the individual himself, who, if not watchful, should be "cut asunder."

Then follow those terrible illustrations of the discriminating function of the Judge—the Parables of Messianic Judgment.

The ten Virgins, waiting at "midnight" for the coming of the Bridegroom, are surprised by the suddenness of His coming, at an hour when they looked not for Him, and are instantly and categorically divided into the two companies, the wise who enter into

the joy of the Marriage Supper, and the foolish whose "candlesticks" are taken away and are left in the darkness outside the Kingdom.

The servants entrusted with the talents are likewise judged by their Lord's return. "The faithless and slothful are to be blotted out of the Book of Life, while the loving and diligent servant is to be made a pillar in the Temple of God, and, it may be, allowed to enter so far into the joy of his Lord as to sit down with Him on His throne."

The nations, moreover, as well as individuals, are to be judged, separated as the sheep are separated from the goats. The "highly dramatic setting" of this striking parable has to do with a present and continuous reality, the actual function of Christ in history. "Christ came," says Bishop Westcott, "in the lifetime of St. John. He founded His immovable Kingdom. He gathered before Him the nations of the earth, old and new, and passed sentence upon them. He judged in that shaking of earth and heaven, most truly and decidedly, the living and the dead. He established fresh foundations for society and a fresh standard of worth." Such was the answer given by Christ to the inquiry of the Apostles on Olivet.

A good deal of misplaced pity has sometimes been bestowed upon the apostles, as by Gibbon and Matthew Arnold, for their "mistake" concerning the time of our Lord's "appearing." It ought to be plain that the pity is misplaced or that, if there was any mistake at all, Christ Himself, was responsible for the belief that they had, that the "Parousia," and the judgment and the establishment of the Kingdom "out of the heavens" was for their own time and generation.

And one of the apostles, at least, reflecting on his memory of Christ's words, set down in solemn and significant words the teaching of the Saviour on this point: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself even so gave He to the Son to have life in Himself: and to have authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."

He declares that judgment, indeed, is not the ultimate purpose of the coming, but salvation. Nevertheless judgment is the means by which the separation of the bad from the good, the false from the true, is effected, and salvation assured. "He that believeth is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. *And this is the judgment* that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." And again, "For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not may see, and that they which see may become blind." And, to quote one last passage, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."

In his memory of the above, St. John was already viewing the judging function of Christ as an absolute and eternal fact. But ere this language could be gen-

erally intelligible for the world, it had to receive its historical illustration in the judgment of Judaism itself and in the manifestation of the Kingdom as an historical fact.

That this historical illustration was not a crisis of the far off future is made plain by the words of Christ to the high priest when adjured to say whether or not He were the Messiah. He replies, "From *now on*, ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The Jews understood what the words implied. Their thoughts flew at once, not to any final outburst of divine wrath in which the fair world should be scorched to a cinder, but to the predicted Theodicy. The guilty Sadducean priest felt how awful for him and his fellows that "unveiling" of Messiah must be. So he rent his clothes and cried, "What need we any further witness? He hath spoken blasphemy."

IV

“THE UNTOWARD GENERATION”

“The tree of Faith its bare, dry boughs must shed
That nearer heaven the living ones may climb ;
The false must fail, though from our shores of time
The old lament be heard, ‘Great Pan is dead !’
That wail is Error’s, from his high place hurled ;
This sharp recoil is Evil undertrod ;
Our time’s unrest, an angel sent of God
Troubling with life the waters of the world.
Even as they list the winds of the Spirit blow
To turn or break our century-rusted vanes ;
Sands shift and waste ; the rock alone remains
Where, led of Heaven, the strong tides come and go,
And storm-clouds, rent by thunderbolt and wind,
Leave, free of mist, the permanent stars behind.”

— *Whittier.*

IV

“THE UNTOWARD GENERATION”

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”—*Acts 2 : 40.*

WE have now seen what was the teaching, both public and private, of our Lord with regard to the time and manner of His appearing. Let us now see how the apostles understood that teaching and interpreted it to the world.

It is a commonplace assertion that they continued to hold material views of the Kingdom of God. Their views, doubtless, were not illuminated all at once, but nevertheless Pentecost had its influence and gave them the “power” Christ promised. As a matter of fact, after Pentecost, there is little evidence of their holding material theories of the new Kingdom to be established. Yet, they continued to hold with unabated confidence their belief in the imminence of the Parousia.

The Calvinistic conception of the Second Advent so far from escaping any mistake made by the Apostles has simply doubled the error. For, surely, the conception of a Second Advent with literal falling of sun and planets, and a visible Judge, a reproduction on the large and physical scale, of Michael Angelo’s “Last Judgment” is materialistic enough. (I have heard a sermon which proved the existence of a certain locality, in Colorado, I believe it was, where there was a plain large enough to gather all who had ever lived for judgment, and a mountain high enough from

which to judge them.) And in the second place, to transfer the event to the dim and distant future always a little beyond the experience of the generation, is surely an error more gigantic than any the Apostles could ever have made, even before Pentecost. It is this which Matthew Arnold may fitly call "*The Aberglaube* of the Second Advent."

But the Apostles were quite clear and unperplexed as to the nature of the preaching they were commissioned to give. "When the Apostles," it has been said, "went forth to preach the Gospel, their first duty was to announce that Jesus whom the rulers had crucified, was both Lord and Christ; their second was to preach the remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit in His name; their third was to foretell the coming of a great and terrible day of the Lord, and to say to all who heard, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' The Gospel was to explain the meaning of the great crisis which was about to occur; to tell the Gentiles as well as the Jews what it would imply; to announce it as nothing less than the commencement of a new era in the world's history when the Crucified Man would claim universal Empire and would contend with Roman Cæsar as well as with other tyrants of the earth who should set up their claims against His."

Let us survey, as briefly as we can, the teaching of those members of the Apostolic body of whose words we have some record in the Scriptures of the New Testament. Let us glance first at the words of St. Peter, with whom the coming of Messiah as Judge was an ever-present hope. We find him on the day of Pentecost itself, immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, standing up to declare in the most

emphatic way that on that very day the prophecy of Joel, which described the "last days" and their attendant convulsions, was being fulfilled in their midst. Unless he was utterly mistaken on the very first occasion it was given him to speak in the power of the Pentecostal fire, the people he addressed were living in "the last days" and the "wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood, were already beginning to come to pass."

It would be easy to show how all St. Peter's preaching as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, is dominated by this note at the beginning.

But let us pass on to the Epistles which bear his name. The strain which runs through them both is the expectation or hope of "the revelation of Jesus Christ"; Christ manifested at the end of the times for your sake is the subject; that all, Jews and Gentiles may "glorify God in the day of visitation," is the object of writing. The Apostles are looking forward to a certain fiery trial through which all must pass; Christ is "ready to judge the quick and the dead"; "the end of all things is at hand"; that trial by fire "cometh upon you to prove you"; "the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." But faithfulness is to be rewarded; "when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

In the second Epistle, we have apocalyptic illustrations crowded one upon the other. They, to whom the Epistle is addressed are to give diligence to make their calling and election sure; "for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal

Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The false prophets and teachers are foretold, as St. Peter had heard from the lips of Christ Himself, the mockers who say "Where is the promise of His coming?" are warned by the parallel case of the days of Noah. Just as then "there were heavens from of old and an earth" and these went through a baptism of water, so the present heavens and earth are to go through a baptism of fire, that yet again there may be new heavens and a new earth. For this, Christian people must be "looking forward and earnestly desiring," for "the day of the Lord will come as a thief."

These warnings were given "that knowing these things beforehand" they might not "fall from their own steadfastness." In brief, St. Peter's purpose is exactly that of St. John in the Apocalypse. It is the echo once again of the words of their Master. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Turning now to the *Epistle of St. James*, we have the same plain and practical teaching. Extreme critics have admitted the Epistle to have been written before the revolt of A. D. 66, which put an end to the supremacy of the Sadducees in Jerusalem. The whole letter is written in the solemn shadow of a great impending judgment. The rich are to weep and howl for their "miseries which are coming" upon them; the brethren are exhorted to "be patient until the parousia of the Lord." "Behold," he cries, "the Judge is standing before the doors." Their case is parallel, he affirms, to that of the patriarch Job; like him, they must be patient through all the tribulation, and like him, they shall see "the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity and merciful."

It was for testimony such as that of this Epistle that, according to Eusebius, St. James was put to death.

The *Epistle of Jude* is written quite in the strain of the apocalyptic books. The writer is constrained to write at that critical time "concerning our common salvation." "The Judgment of the great day" is pressing upon them; the words of the apocalyptic Enoch are repeated in tones of earnest warning; also the words of the Apostles who had predicted "in the last times there shall be mockers." St. Jude leaves his people under the protection of Him "who is able to set them before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy."

To the writings of *St. Paul*, which occupy so large a part of the New Testament Canon, we need not refer at any length, chiefly because the great Apostle of the Gentiles in turning away from Palestine and Judaism to the evangelization of the heathen, had less occasion than the rest of the Apostles to direct attention to the judgment about to fall on the Jewish world.

Nevertheless, he was by no means blind to the crisis which was on its way.

We notice its influence especially in the first Epistles and in the last. It is practically the subject of the first letters which have come down to us, viz.: the Epistles to the Thessalonians. He tells the Thessalonian Christians that their turning to God from idols involved also that they should "wait for His Son from heaven; they are to be the Apostle's crown of glorying before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming"; he prays that the Father may stablish their hearts for "the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." He describes in a wonderful passage, couched in true

apocalyptic language, the Parousia of Jesus, with all its effects upon the living and the dead, and reiterates the words of Christ, "concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." But, come when it may, they are prepared, "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." The first Epistle concludes with the fervent prayer that the God of peace may so wholly sanctify the Christians of Thessalonica that their spirit, soul and body may be "preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As the background for the affectionate entreaty of the second Epistle we have the same solemn sense of "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in flaming fire." The Apostle beseeches his people, "touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him." Like St. John, he looks for the incarnation of the forces of evil in a Man of Sin, a False Prophet, who shall sit as God in the Temple of God, and, like St. John, again, he sees this "Anti-Deus" conquered and overthrown by Christ. We have here, indeed, what Hilgenfeld calls "a little Pauline Apocalypse," and we can imagine the Apostle already looking beyond "the golden quinquennium" of Nero's early years to the Apocalypse of the Lawless One which challenged the might of God and received its death wound from the revelation of the Lamb. We may very well accept, with Hitzig, the identification of the "one that restraineth" ("qui claudit") with the Emperor Claudius, and can at any rate feel the essential unity of St. Paul and St.

John in their understanding of "the signs of the times."

Leaping from this point to the last extant epistle of St. Paul, the second Epistle to Timothy, we discern that, though in so many intervening Epistles the Apostle had said little on the subject, he had not outgrown his earlier expectations. He writes, indeed, for the very purpose of warning a Christian Bishop with regard to conditions which he will have, himself, to meet.

"In the last days grievous times shall come." There is the growth of iniquity, the gathering together of all the forces of Satan for the decisive conflict, the rising up of the spirit of falsehood to withstand Christ, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses in Egypt, the necessity of persecution for the servants of Christ, and the approaching appearance of false Christs. Timothy is to preach, reprove, rebuke, exhort, in season, out of season, "in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead," and whose "appearing" and Kingdom are matters of anxious expectation.

The dying faith of the great Apostle is that the Lord "will save" him "unto His heavenly Kingdom."

There is still one Epistle in the New Testament, apart from the Johannine writings (which we must consider separately), which furnishes important and persistent illustration of the truth we are considering. This is the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. It probably emanated from the same circumstances as those which produced St. John's apocalypse, and was in all probability written to the little community of Christian fugitives who had made Ephesus a rallying point after the

Neronian persecution. The whole object of the letter is to explain to Christian Jews the meaning of the abrogation of Judaism, the vanishing away of the outworn and the shaken, and the initiation of the new order which can never be shaken or removed.

It may suffice to direct attention to the following points :

1. The meaning of the opportunity now being given to Judaism. It was the "forty years' trial" which corresponded to the forty years between the crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan. It was to make the appeal to that generation complete. Would they hear the Divine voice? This was the question the Apostles carried through the Dispersion. Was the generation to be "untoward"? From A. D. 30 to A. D. 70 the door of opportunity was open. Then the Judgment came. Those who were ready entered the promised land; those who refused to believe left their carcasses in the wilderness.

2. So the time was a transition time and the writer was justified in speaking of his day as "the end of these days," and the "end of the ages." He was justified also in regarding the dispensation just about to be revealed as "the age to come," "the world to come, whereof we speak," and to speak of Christians as having "tasted of the powers of the age to come."

3. But the end of the transition time is close at hand. The believers are exhorted to continue the assembling of themselves together "so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh." "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come and shall not tarry." It is impossible not to attach importance to the terms, "quickly," "shortly," "a little while."

4. The day will be a day of Judgment. The Epistle speaks of an "eternal judgment" and of a "certain fearful expectation of judgment." And the position of the Christians is described by way of contrast to that of the old Jewish Church in the wilderness, "Ye are come unto Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly, and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

5. This Judgment is the inauguration of the eternal Kingdom of Messiah. "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged, is nigh unto vanishing away." Thenceforth, the privilege of the believer is the "receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken."

6. The inauguration of this Kingdom to take the place of the Jewish dispensation is the manifestation on earth of the Heavenly City, the new Jerusalem. Speaking on the threshold of the new order, with the old crumbling around him, the writer says, "we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is about to come." That city is the Church of God, the Kingdom of Christ, which on the dissolution of Judaism enters for the first time into the fulness of its heritage. It can truly be said that they "who have believed do enter unto rest" and that here, in very fact, "there abideth a rest for the people of God." Thus the teaching of the Epistles of the New Testament bears out the assertions of Christ Himself.

His coming into the world is something larger than the story of the Ministry, something larger even than that of the ministry supplemented by another manifestation some thousands of years later. He came, never again to withdraw Himself, except for those "little whiles" of which He spoke which were not really withdrawals after all, but only steps by which He was leading the world to a higher conception of His presence. For a little while the bodily and local presence was necessary to give faith a starting point for growth. But from the beginning Christ began to train His disciples for some better and closer fellowship than this. He would have them trust Him while He lay asleep in the boat; then He would have them trust Him when on the mountain top, they in the boat alone. By and by He would have them believe and preach Him, "with them all the days, even unto the ages of ages," though they know Him no more after the flesh. It will be at least their pride and joy to know Him so no more, but to proclaim Him ever in the world as the King ruling an eternal Kingdom which can never be moved, as the Judge of living and of dead, as the eternal manifestation of the face of God. If Judaism will not accept this leadership, but will turn back in heart to the Egypt of unbelief and slavery to the material, then the coming of Christ shall be her day of doom and the Psalm shall once more prove true —

"I was grieved with that generation and said:
They do always err in their heart;
And they have not known My ways,
So I swear in My wrath,
They shall not enter into My rest."

V

“THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM”

“If you want these dreadful times explained to you, I do not think you can do better than to take your Bibles, and to read the Revelation of St. John the Apostle. . . . You may see the world wondering after the Beast, and worshipping brute force, as the only thing left to believe in. You may see the nations of the world gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming God, but not repenting of their deeds. . . . You may see Babylon the great fallen, and all the kings and merchants of the earth bewailing her afar off, and watching the smoke of her torment. . . . And lastly, you may see, if God give you grace, One who is faithful and true, with a name which no man knew, save Himself, making war in righteousness against all evil; bringing order out of disorder, hope out of despair, fresh health and life out of old disease and death; executing just judgment among all the nations of the earth; and sending down from heaven the City of God, in the light of which the nations of those who are saved should walk, and the kings of the earth should bring their power and their glory into it; with the tree of life in the midst of it, whose leaves should be for the healing of the nations.”—*Charles Kingsley.*

V

“THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM”

“Verily, I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.”—*St. Matthew 16: 28.*

THESE are the words of our blessed Lord, spoken to the Apostles and, unless a mere piece of mystification, explicitly referring to something which was to happen in the lifetime of certain among them.

The prediction was, by common consent, taken to apply to the Apostle St. John, and this understanding of the matter was confirmed by our Lord after the Resurrection. When St. Peter curiously enquired of Christ respecting the destiny of his brother apostle, the answer was given, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” From that day the disciples understood that in “the day of Messiah,” St. John, like another Enoch, would be “caught up” to the manifested Son of Man without dying. “Yet,” says the aged apostle, gazing thoughtfully and reverently back upon his as yet imperfect knowledge, “Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die, but if I will that he *tarry till I come*, what is that to thee?”

And surely the words of Christ had a most exact fulfilment, since to St. John it was given to see the Apocalypse, the “Unveiling of the Presence,” to cry

out from amid the signs of the times, " Even so, Come, Lord Jesus," and to receive the assurance, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Journeying to Rome, possibly in the company of St. Peter, it must have fallen to him to see much of " the great tribulation " through which " a great multitude " of Christians passed in the days of Nero. Perhaps he himself narrowly escaped becoming a victim to that madness which lighted up the imperial gardens with living torches and, possibly, some such escape forms the groundwork for the legend of the caldron of boiling oil. From Rome the apostle went as a prisoner to Patmos and there he passed in spirit into " the day of the Lord " and was enabled to describe it for the edification and consolation of the Christian Church in the province of Asia.

The materials for his picture were all ready to hand in the events of the time, the conflict of the unseen forces of the spirit world with the brute force of Rome, the fight of the Lamb and His martyred followers with the Dragon and the Wild Beast, the judgment on the apostate Church and city of Jerusalem.

In these things the blind eyes of the world saw only the triumph of a material despotism. Even the Church was perplexed and troubled. There was fighting without and fear within ; persecution and heresy alike threatening its existence. Many found it hard to keep the lamp of their vigil supplied with oil. Loss of love, spiritual and intellectual error, antinomianism, lukewarmness, deadness, threatened them with exclusion from the Marriage Feast when the bridegroom should come. Like Elisha's servant, they saw themselves surrounded with the horses and

chariots of evil and cried out to the Apostle, "Alas, master, how shall we do?" and St. John, like another Elisha, sought to open their eyes that they might see how

"Within the dim unknown

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

Through the "revelation of Jesus Christ" he would enable them to see that "the mountain is full of horses and chariots round about" them, and that more are with them in their seeming weakness than with the enemy in his pride of power.

Thus we have at once the temporal and eternal subject of St. John's "*unveiling*." It is the opening up of Heaven,—the place "where God can fully manifest Himself"—to the eyes of men, that, through the Incarnation, they may be able to discern between the things which are transitory and the things which are real. And this is what he saw, as he entered into the meaning of the manifestation of Him on whose breast he had leaned.

I. The Judgment and condemnation of all that opposed itself to the teaching of the Christ, the inevitable doom of that brute force which appeared to be so irresistible and eternal.

II. The supersession of the Judaism, with its Temple and Priesthood and Sacrificial system, whose mission was now accomplished in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

III. The coming down of the City of God out of heaven, to remain upon the earth in the Church of God, the Bride City, which should draw men from every direction within its gates, and shine forever with the light of the presence of God.

That is the glorious vision which the Apostle sees becoming realized where other men saw only anarchy and cause for fear.

Down from Heaven where, in the Divine thought, Humanity had thus existed from all eternity, comes the fair city like a bride adorned to meet her husband. Here is the "continuing city" for which mankind has waited; here is the home for those who have overcome, where they may sit with Christ on His throne; here are the "mansions" prepared by the bridegroom for the children of the bridechamber; here, even on earth, so long the theatre of war and discord, the idol temple of Violence and Falsehood—is the Church of God, foursquare to all the winds of heaven and shining with the light of God's face like a single pearl. It is the City of God, which is also the City of Man, the city

"Built to music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built forever."

Outside, indeed, is as yet many a nation vainly trying to enjoy by itself its riches and its glory, fatuously trying to resuscitate the dead Power slain by the Faithful and True, despairingly seeking for a voice from Baal or an oracle from the deserted shrine of Falsehood,—but all at last are to find their rightful home, the native land of the soul, with God, who made them for Himself.

With such a vision before his eyes, we can understand that the Apostle has done with Time. For him the historic has served its purpose and the eternal dawns. The divine illustration which had had all history for its material is now complete in Christ. The River of Evolution is seen to empty itself into the Sea

of the Absolute. Through the Risen and Ascended Christ, St. John gets a glimpse of things, no longer as they are becoming, but as they *are*. The poet does not misrepresent him when he makes the dying Apostle exclaim:—

“ Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
Of which I wrote ‘ it was ’—to me, it is;
Is, here and now: I apprehend naught else.
Is not God now i’ the world His power first made?
Is not His love at issue still with sin,
Visibly, when a wrong is done on earth?
Love, wrong and pain, what see I else around?
Yea and the Resurrection and Uprise
To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
When such truth, breaking bounds, o’erfloods my soul,
And as I saw the sin and death, even so
See I the need yet transiency of both,
The good and glory consummated thence?
I saw the Power; I see the Love, once weak,
Resume the Power: and in this word ‘ I see,’
Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
That moving o’er the spirit of man, unblinds
His eye and bids him look.”

So St. John’s voice becomes the final and ultimate gathering up of the New Testament revelation, the voice which speaks no longer from the world which is temporal, but from that which is eternal. This is his description of the city in which he dwells, the New Jerusalem which is being practically realized through the teaching and presence of Christ in His Church:

“ We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, but He that was begotten of God keepeth him and the evil one toucheth him not. We know

that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God *is come* and hath given us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. *This is the true God and the life which is eternal. My little children, guard yourselves from the shadows.*"

Thus was the hope of Israel realized in history to become forever to the faith of men an eternal fact. Nor was it the hope of Israel only. Israel had been chosen as Jehovah's servant to "follow the quest" through all the ages and to be the means of revealing to the world the realization of the vision. But the longing itself was universal and expressed itself in many other ways than the dreams of apocalyptists and the predictions of prophets. When in the Eddas we have the picture of the world lying under the shadow of Nidhogg and in pain through the mischief of Loki and the fury of Fenriswulf and the deathfulness of Hela, we feel the necessity for the intervention of the gods in Asgard. And in the pity of Odin who looks down into Niflheim till tears swim across his vision, and in the love of Baldur, the beautiful, we have a foreshadowing of the good purpose of God and the sacrifice of the Lamb. And when the Judgment comes, as it is described —

" Then comes the Mighty One
To the great judgment,
The powerful from above
Who rules over all,"

we are led to look for, as coming out of the Judgment "the holy peace which shall ever be" and

“The hall standing than the sun brighter,
With gold bedecked in Gimill.
There shall the righteous people dwell,
And forevermore happiness enjoy.”

So all the dreams of reformers, revolutionary and utopian as they may have been, have had in them some semblance to the hope of Israel with the double thought of Judgment and Salvation as “the two hands upon the clock of time.”

So Plato pursues the history of mankind into an ideal future in which, spite of the doubts of Glaucon, he recognizes the revelation of a city of God for those who shall organize themselves accordingly.

Even in the “fool fury” of the modern anarchist there is not infrequently to be recognized this dream of the kingdom.

But, what even the Christian world has scarcely as yet got to believe, all that philosopher or dreamer or prophet or reformer have seen in vision, may now find its practical realization in the Church of Christ on earth. “What is not generally realized,” says Canon Medd, in a note appended to his Bampton Lectures, “it is to be feared, among us now, is this, that the Bible revelation distinctly ends with Christ on earth—the renewed earth as the home and dwelling-place of that regenerated humanity of which He is the abiding Head. The ultimate blessing as promised in the Old Testament predictions of the final state and in the New, is ever this,—‘The tabernacle of God is with men,’ and ‘He will dwell with them, etc.’ Earth will then be part of heaven; for heaven is no special distinct locality in the great universe of space, but is wherever God can fully manifest Himself. And

that He will do so on this earth to man, when sin, the one barrier, is done away—this is the final scene and the most blessed closing assurance of the Bible revelation. I humbly believe it to be a great drawback from the strength and definiteness of our faith and hope that this is not more realized among us than it is, and that the minds of so many are possessed with vague ideas of some final disappearance of their present earth—ideas favored by the misrenderings of our English version which speaks of ‘the end of the world’ where it should speak of ‘the close of the age’—and of some shadowy heaven, no one knows where, to follow; a heaven of shadowy, so-called ‘spiritual’ happiness no one knows what, but something utterly unlike and alien from our present social existence. New Testament scriptures warrant a much more glorious and definite anticipation; a far more truly human, real, and presently influential hope.”

We may add that the New Testament scriptures not only warrant such an anticipation but establish the reality. Though blatant and diademed the harlotry of evil seems to sit enthroned, yet its rule has passed away and “the Kingdoms of the world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.” Out from the furnace of judgment comes down to man “Jerusalem the Golden”; out “from the great tribulation, comes the innumerable multitude to fill the City of God. The Lord, whose fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem” spares not His Judgment that He may make the new City out of Heaven coextensive with all Humanity. The Church of God becomes Humanity’s great City of Refuge from the ills of time, her entrance into the joys of Eternity.

She is secure from all attack; her children are all numbered, though like the seven thousand of Israel in the days of Ahab, their names may be unknown to men. As "the founded city," the Church reigns "upon the holy hills" and, like the daughter of Zion shakes her head at every foe, remaining steadfast in her God.

The steps by which such an ideal becomes realized in the sight of men may seem slow indeed, but the fact is a fact and requires not so much time to bring it to pass as faith to conceive and believe it.

It is true that the limitations of old habit may hinder and the clog of the weak flesh may hold us back, but in essence, we have, here and now, all that God has promised or can give.

Here, in the Church, we see God, in the character and work and power and love of Jesus Christ. We shall never see God except in Him—the Lamb who is the light of the City of God.

Here, in the Church, under the moral requirement of Christ, we are being judged, to the end that the chaff in us may be delivered to the ever-burning fire and the good preserved for the garnering of God.

Here, in the Church, is room for all the glory of the nations, secured and made bright forever by consecration to God.

Here in the Church, is food for all our hunger, even the Bread of Life, water of the River of Life, so that we may never thirst again, leaves of healing from the Tree of Life for all our ills, the abiding comfort which wipes away tears from all faces, the eyes to see God through Christ and the power to serve Him as members of His Body. Thus the earth itself is redeemed

as the dwelling-place of man. "Even now its streets turn to gold under errands of duty, and its meanest hovels shine like celestial mansions when the heavenly Father's children are greeted in their doorways and its works, and cares and sympathies, the farm, the shop, the mill, the wharf, hospitals, and schools and hustings, and council chambers and halls of justice—all have tints and lustres that fit them for foundation gems in the City of God."

Do we still ask what practical advantages there are in such a view as has been enunciated over the old view that Judgment and Hell and Heaven and all the practical effects of God's presence in the world are merely post-mortem experiences?

I. We banish the terrors of a Calvinistic Day of Judgment to bring home to men the sense of a judgment present and continuous. What was formerly a fearful anticipation of the indefinite future, without real moral power, becomes the consciousness of an everyday and ineluctable process.

We realize the coming of Christ spoken in the Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent,—“O Lord, raise up (we pray Thee), Thy power and come among us and with great might succor us, that whereas through our sins and wickedness we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.”

In other words, our approach to Christ in penitence and faith is itself the coming of Christ to us. “‘When will Messiah come?’ asked Rabbi Joshua ben Laive of Elijah the Tishbite. ‘Go and ask Himself.’ ‘Where is He?’ ‘He sits among the diseased

poor. All the others change the bandages of their sores simultaneously but He changes them successively, lest if called, His coming should be delayed.' Rabbi Joshua ben Laive went to Him, and saluted Him with the words, 'Peace be to Thee, Rabbi, my teacher.' "Peace be to thee, son of Laive," was the answer of Messiah. 'When will the Master come?' asked the Rabbi. 'To-day,' was the answer. By the time the rabbi had finished telling the story to Elijah, the sun had set. 'How?' said the rabbi, 'He has not come. Has He lied to me?' 'No,' said Elijah, 'He meant, "*To-day, if ye will hear His voice.*"' "

It is needless to say how much more real a Coming such as this must be to men than the materialistic expectation of tradition. Christ stands knocking at the door of the heart. He has come for judgment. He is persistent and insistent in His demand for admission. He comes again and again, like the Sibyl to Tarquin, pleading with us to receive the wisdom He brings. When the first volumes of life have been burned in the fire of vanity, He comes again, asking the same price for the volumes which remain, and we learn at last that we are dealing with One who will not renounce His claim to us, who will not give us up as hopeless, but will persevere until we recognize that to sin against Him is to sin against the law of our own being, and that, even through hell itself, we must learn the happiness of fulfilling His purpose in us. Surely, in such a knowledge as this, there is a constraining power not to be overestimated.

II. We gain a fuller perception of the meaning of History as "the day's work of the Spirit" of God. Once, not so long ago, men pushed God, the Creator,

as far back out of history into the past, as they have endeavored to push God the Judge, far out of history into the future. Now the one error is being corrected, not too quickly, indeed, but surely, and men are beginning to perceive the truth of our Lord's words, "My Father worketh even until now." They realize that the story of the Creation is not a story finished some thousands of years ago, but that it is a present process. They have only to turn the lens of the telescope towards the great nebula in the belt of Orion to see the Creator still at work. So also it is possible to see God, the Judge, working to-day.

It is useless to say that our beliefs make no difference to our lives. That they make so little difference is because they are only half-beliefs. Let us consider what the difference would be if we were indeed persuaded of the reality of the vision St. John saw at Patmos. It has its ever practical and present lesson. "To plant the great Hereafter in the Now" is a worthy aim to which all the faculties of life may bend themselves. Each one for himself can help to make more definite to the world the outline of that city, wherein all the riches and glory, all "the desirable things," all ambitions, all longings, visions of beauty, and delight, will find their real native land and home.

Of all the yearnings which burst forth from the human heart, what cry can be more sure of its fulfillment than the Advent prayer, "O come, O come, Emanuel." As we pray, the future loses its darkness, the present its despair. The troubled sea of life, though as yet shot with fire, gives glorious promise of the life which is to come, clear as crystal and smooth as glass.

“Howe'er the uneasy world is vex'd and wroth,
Young children, lifted high on parent souls,
Look round them with a smile upon the mouth,
And take for music every bell which tolls,
(Who said we should be better if like these?)
But we sit murmuring for the Future, though
Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go,
We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, He will build into
With pillar'd marbles rare, or knit across
With generous arches, till the fane's complete.
This world has no perdition, if some loss.”



