

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROOFS OF A PREMILLENNIAL ADVENT

THIS is purely a question of *interpretation*. The order in which events are to occur depends entirely on God's eternal arrangements; and our knowledge of that order must depend upon our right understanding of what God has written in His Word concerning it. Man's theories cannot aid us here; nay, they may hinder us much. We must listen to the voice of God. Let us calmly and simply interpret His Word, throwing aside all bias, and being willing to learn of Him alone.

How often have human systems perverted the spiritual judgment, and unfitted us for listening to what the Spirit saith unto the Churches! Have they not been used as instruments for corrupting the simple Word, and explaining away its natural meaning? How frequently, when departing from the plain sense of the words, has our only reason been, that, if interpreted thus, our system must fall to pieces! Had the fear of this collision not been in the way, the simpler view of the passage would undoubtedly have been acquiesced in. This abuse of system needs to be guarded against, and nowhere more than in the present discussion. Our appeal is directly to the Word of God.

In more than one of the previous chapters I have had occasion to touch upon proof of the premillennial Advent; let me now take up the question directly. It is impossible for me to adduce here the hundredth part of the proofs on this point, which lie scattered over the whole of Scripture.

I. *Isaiah 34*.—This chapter commences with a summons to all the nations of the earth, announcing to them that the great day of God's wrath had come. At the third verse there is a

description of the terrible slaughter. Then, in the fourth, we have a picture which cannot be mistaken—

All the host of heaven shall be dissolved;
The heavens shall be rolled together as a
scroll.
All their host shall fall down,
As the leaf falleth from off the vine,
As a falling fig from the fig-tree.

This passage is very easily identified. It so corresponds in word and figure with Christ's description of His coming, and with Peter's description of the day of the Lord, that it is impossible not to conclude that all three refer to the same day and the same desolation. Indeed, this vision of Isaiah is one of the strongest passages which prophecy contains regarding that crisis of vengeance and despair. If it admits of being explained away, so as to mean nothing but mere natural disasters, such as the overthrow of kingdoms and calamities of nations, then in truth it might be shown that there is no such day of judgment at all, as we have been accustomed to expect. All that is written of the coming of the Lord, and the accompanying terrors of that day, may be turned into figures signifying nothing but actual overthrow and slaughter.

Taking, however, this passage in its obvious meaning, until a good reason can be shown why we should use it in a *non-natural* sense, let us mark what follows. In this day of the Lord, this day of the dissolution of heaven and convulsion of earth, the awful doom of the adversaries of Jehovah and His people is foretold, the utter desolation of the people and the land. This occupies the remainder of the

chapter; and then comes the glowing picture of millennial blessedness—"the times of the restitution of all things" [Acts 3:21]. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" [Isa. 35:1]. I need not quote the rest. It is obviously the conclusion of the whole prophetic burden, and shews us very distinctly the order of events. The millennial scene of the 35th chapter *succeeds* the Advent scene of the 34th. In other words, the millennium *follows* the coming of the Lord.¹

II. *Isaiah* 65:17-25.—The former part of this chapter describes the apostasy and punishment of Israel, the state in which they have been for many generations, and still are. At the close of the 16th verse, the prophet very briefly adverts to the time when these "troubles shall be forgotten;" and then he proceeds to tell us the time and circumstances at large, and to give the reasons why all the past shall be remembered no more:—

For, behold!
I create new heavens and a new earth:
And the former shall not be remembered nor
come into mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I
create.
For, behold!
I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,
And her people a joy.

¹ Lowth, in his notes upon this chapter, states the connexion thus. His interpretation is given in very general terms, but it is very explicit as to the order and connexion of events:— "These two chapters make one distinct prophecy—an entire, regular, and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts; the first containing a denunciation of Divine vengeance against the enemies of the people or Church of God; the second describing the flourishing state of the Church of God, *consequent upon* the execution of these judgments. . . . It seems reasonable to propose, with many learned expositors, that this prophecy has a further view to events still future—to some great revolution to be effected in later times, *antecedent* to that more perfect state of the kingdom of God upon earth, and *servng to introduce it.*"—LOWTH'S *Isaiah*, p. 296.

Now, here again we have an inspired interpreter to guide us. The Apostle Peter quotes this very passage in his second epistle: "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth" [II Pet. 3:13]. And in the 21st chapter of the Apocalypse the same language is used. In Peter, and in the Revelation, there can be no doubt that the new heavens and earth are *literal*. Indeed, I do not suppose that any one denies this. Moreover, they evidently are not "created" until the second coming of the Lord. And if so, we can be at no loss to discover the meaning of Isaiah's words, *which are the basis of all others*. They cannot refer to the first, but to the second coming of Christ. Nay, what follows in the chapter proves this. For none of the blessed events predicted in the succeeding verses have yet been accomplished. They are still future. Jerusalem has not been delivered from her weeping. Longevity has not yet been restored to man. "The wolf and the lamb have not yet fed together." Nor has the time come when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in God's holy mountain." These are things for whose accomplishment we still wait. They are to come to pass in the day when Jehovah creates new heavens and a new earth." The advent of Christ must then *precede* the millennium.

III. *Daniel* 7.—Here we have a description of the four successive Gentile empires; Babylonian, Media-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. These extend over "the times of the Gentiles," when Jerusalem was to be trodden down by them. During the existence of the fourth empire, the little horn, or Antichristian power, is seen to arise. Now, while this empire and the little horn which "came up" were still flourishing, we read, "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the SON OF MAN CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, and came to the Ancient of Days, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." In these words we have the second coming of the Lord predicted. The language is such as cannot be mistaken. But besides we have an inspired interpreter here

also, our Lord himself, who quotes these very words, "Then shall they see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN;" and, when answering the high-priest's adjuration, He again uses these words, Caiaphas at once understood the reference to the words of Scripture, and accused Him of blasphemy for applying them to Himself. The links in this chain of reasoning are thus very clear and simple. Daniel predicts that the Son of Man was to come and receive His kingdom, while the little horn and the Roman empire were still in being; nay, that He was to come in order to destroy both of these, and to set up His kingdom. Our Lord quotes these words of Daniel, and applies them to His second Advent. If so, there cannot possibly be a millennium before Christ comes; nay, it is expressly declared that the kingdom is to be given to the saints *at His coming*, not before it. There are other allusions in the New Testament to this passage in Daniel, such as Revelation 1:7, "Behold, He cometh with clouds;" all of them confirming the application of the prophecy to Christ's second coming. Indeed, it seems difficult to imagine how it can be applied to anything else. What reason can be given for departing from the simple meaning of the words?

IV. *Daniel 12.*—The 11th and 12th chapters of Daniel are one continuous prophecy. The former chapter begins with a prediction of Xerxes, King of Persia, and carries us toward the last Antichrist, whose destruction is announced in the concluding verse. Then the 12th chapter begins with predicting Israel's "time of trouble;" a time of trouble "such as there never was since there was a nation;" and also their deliverance from it by "Michael the Great Prince." Then it is added, "And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake." Here, then, we have the downfall of Antichrist, the deliverance of Israel, and the resurrection, all placed side by side with each other. The inference from this is surely plain enough. There can be no millennium before the destruction of Antichrist, or the deliverance of Israel, or the resurrection. Now, we are sure that the last of these three events, at least, is at the coming of the Lord, and hence we conclude

that the Advent must be before the Millennium. We do not see how this can be evaded, save by denying that the second verse refers to the resurrection. But this we hardly think will be attempted by any.

V. *Joel 3.*—Twice over in this chapter God proclaims His purpose of gathering the nations together into the valley of Jehosaphat, there to sit in judgment upon them. He speaks of this as the time of the harvest and of the vintage, and we know the harvest is "the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39). He speaks also of the "multitudes," assembled for judgment in the valley of decision. He speaks, too, of "the sun and the moon being darkened, and the stars withdrawing their shining." He tells us, also, that in that day "the heavens and earth shall shake." Now every one of these expressions is quoted in the New Testament, and applied to the time of the second coming. As to the harvest, the Lord tells, that in that day "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that shall offend, and them that do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41). And this is at His advent. As to the multitudes assembled in the valley of decision, our Lord also thus speaks of that day of "decision," or *separation*—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and *he shall separate them* one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32). As to the signs in the sun and moon, I need add nothing to what I have quoted in other parts. As to "the shaking of the heavens and earth," we have the authority of Paul for referring it to the last crisis, as we shall immediately see. And thus it is manifest that it is of the second coming of the Lord, with its attendant signs and judgment, that God is here speaking, by the mouth of His prophet Joel. Keeping this in mind, let us mark what follows. "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no stranger pass through her any more." The times of the Gentiles are here described as fulfilled. Jerusalem has ceased to

be trodden down by the foot of the stranger. Then it is added: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Such is Joel's picture of Jerusalem in the day when her walls shall be rebuilt, and of Judea in the time when her former fruitfulness and plenty shall be restored, or rather multiplied sevenfold. Is not this the millennial state? Yet it is *after*, not *before*, the coming of the Lord, as the passage most plainly shows.

VI. *Haggai* 2.—This chapter contains a prediction of the universal shakings which are to lead to the final stablishing of all things. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" [vs. 6-7]. And again, v. 21, "I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother." This prophecy has never yet been fulfilled. It was not so at the First Advent, because that period, instead of being shakings, was a time of universal peace. The kingdoms of the earth underwent no change at all. The heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land have suffered as yet no convulsion, but continue firm and stable. Peace, not war, calm, not commotion, heralded the Savior's Advent. Besides, we have the testimony of the Apostle Paul, that in his days it was unfulfilled. "Whose voice then (at Sinai) shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" [Heb. 12:26]. The shaking is to be somewhat like the former one, but far more terrible and *universal*. He contrasts the *then* and the *now*; the *hath shaken* with the *hath promised*. *Then* He actually shook the earth, but *now*, at this

present time, we have His promise that He will shake it again, and not the earth only, but also heaven. How distinctly he tells us that, at the time he wrote, there was *a promise of a future shaking!* Of course that could have nothing to do with the First Advent. But in connexion with the Second Advent there are numerous predictions of earthquakes and convulsions.

Let me further observe, that it is *after* this mighty and universal commotion that the Desire of all nations is come. The shaking of all things is to precede and prepare the way for His arrival. And, after this, comes the promised "glory" (verse 7), and the promised "peace" (verse 9); Jehovah at the same time as it were putting in His claim to the precious things of earth, the silver and the gold to be used by Him as He shall see fit (verse 8). Then, as if to give us the loftiest anticipations of coming grandeur, He tells us that great as was the glory of the former temple, over whose fallen beauty the ancient men of Israel wept, yet far greater shall be the glory of the future house, of which He gives the promise; or rather, as it should be rendered, "great shall be the glory of this house, the latter glory more than the former glory," for the comparison is not between a first and a second temple, but between a first and a second glory, as is evident from the third verse of the chapter, where we read, "Who is left among you that saw *this* house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now?" And from this we see that all the temples, beginning with Solomon's, are considered as *one*, even though they had been leveled and rebuilt. There have been three temples; Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's; but all these are regarded as but one house.

This promise of glory is a theme often sung by prophets. "I will glorify the house of my glory" [Isa. 60:7], says Isaiah; and there are many such visions of future grandeur, which I need not quote. They all concur in predicting the glory of the house and the people of God in the latter day, when Mount Zion shall be the joy of the whole earth, and Jerusalem the city of the Great King.

There is "peace," however, as well as glory, promised, after these convulsions, and after the arrival of the Desire of all nations. This peace

has not yet been given to any land or city or nation of our troubled earth. But there shall be “peace” upon Israel, and “peace” over all the hills and valleys of this earth. After the tempest comes the calm; after midnight comes the morn; after wars and rumors of wars comes the day of universal peace.

Very distinct, then, is the *order* of the events here set forth to us by the Prophet Haggai. There is first the universal shaking, and “the removing of those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Then there is the arrival of Messiah. Then there are the times of the restitution of all things, the glory and the peace of the millennial reign.

VII. *Zechariah* 14.—The whole of this chapter points forward to “the day of the Lord,” and the events which are to follow it. I do not lay any stress upon the expression, “day of the Lord,” though in the original it is different from and stronger than many similar ones. I do not say that this term itself can determine the time here spoken of to be that of the Advent. It is on what follows that I lean for fixing this.

The second verse predicts a siege of Jerusalem, and paints it very minutely. This cannot be the siege by Titus, nor any other that has yet taken place, for the description is totally unlike anything that has yet befallen the city; so totally unlike, that it must refer to something yet to come. In the midst of this siege, when the nations are gathered against the city, the Lord appears for its deliverance. “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” To make this more specific, and to point it out to us as really the Advent, it is added, “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the east and towards the west, and there shall be a very great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south: . . . AND THE LORD MY GOD SHALL COME, AND ALL THE SAINTS WITH THEE.” What can this be but the Second Advent? “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.” If these words do

not describe the Coming, what language can do it? There is nowhere in all Scripture a more minute and explicit statement regarding the Advent; and if *this* does not mean the literal Advent, how shall others mean it?² What reason can be given for not accepting the plain sense of the words? Why seek another? Ought we not to abide by the *natural* meaning of the passage, unless it can be proved that the *non-natural* is the proper one? Taking the passage, then, as predictive of the Advent, let us mark what follows that event. After mentioning the struggle between light and darkness which was then to take place, it is added, “It shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the former sea (Dead Sea), and half of them towards the hinder sea (the Mediterranean): in summer and in winter shall it be. AND THE LORD SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. And all the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate, unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s wine-presses.” I need quote no more. The entire chapter from

² So thought John Bunyan, who thus writes in one of his works:—“The Quakers are deceivers, because they persuade souls not to believe that that Man that was crucified and rose again, flesh and bones (Luke 24:38-40) shall so come again, that very Man in the clouds of heaven to judgment, as He went away—and at the very same time shall raise up all the men and women out of their graves, and cause them to come to the valley of Jehoshaphat—because there will He, that very Man, sit to judge all the heathen round about. I say, they strive to beat souls off from believing this, though it be the truth of God witnessed by the Scripture (Joel 3:11-12, as also Acts 1:10-11), “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come (mark, the very same) in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” “And His feet shall stand in that day (the day of His second coming) upon the mount of Olives” [Zech. 14:4]. Where is that? Not within thee! But that which is without Jerusalem, before it, on the east side.”—*A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened According to the Scriptures*—Works, vol. v., p. 486.

the eighth verse onward is descriptive of millennial glory and the blessedness of Messiah's reign. Let the whole of this remarkable prediction be read in succession from the commencement of the chapter, and I do not see it possible to avoid the conclusion that the Advent must precede the Millennium.

VIII. *Luke* 21:24.—“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Now, what follows the fulfillment of these times? The Advent; for it is added that “then there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” No one doubts that our times are the times of the Gentiles,—the times of Israel's down-treading. When are these to end? At the coming of the Lord; not before. Gentile tyranny and Jewish suffering are to continue till the Lord shall come. How, then, can the Millennium be *before* the coming? Surely during it the Gentile will not tyrannize, nor the Jew be trodden down: and if so, then the Millennium must succeed that Advent, which is to put an end to the misery and oppression, to dethrone these abusers of their kingly power, and to exalt Israel to honor among the nations.

Besides the proof derived from this verse, the whole chapter in which it occurs is a testimony to the premillennial Advent. In it and in the corresponding chapters of the other evangelists, our Lord is enumerating the *signs* of His coming. He points to not a few, and on the ground of these He says, WATCH—“When ye see these things come to pass, then know that your redemption draweth nigh.” Now, had the Millennium *preceded* the Advent, could He have failed to allude to it? Would it not have been by far the most prominent, the most striking, the most incontestable sign of His coming? It would truly have been the sign of signs, which no man could mistake. If a thousand years' blessedness on earth were to be the forerunner of His Advent, why does He not point to this sign as by far the most notable of them all? What reason can be conceived for its not being enumerated among the many others,

save this, that it was to *follow*, not to *precede*, the appearing of the Lord.

The only answer I have heard to this is, that the millennial state will not be so very different from the present as to make it a notable sign at all. The binding of Satan is said to mean his having somewhat less influence than he has at present, and “the people being all righteous” is called an Oriental figure. To this I have no other answer to give than a repetition of the innumerable passages which most broadly and most brightly declare the very opposite. Are these rich visions of glory upon earth a mere shadow? Is the Word of God to be thus diluted and made void? I cannot but think that there are few who have any real reverence for Scripture that would allow themselves to be so blinded by system, as to adopt such principles of interpretation. It is sad that men should deny the literal reign of Christ; but it is matter of yet more solemn sadness, that Christians should be found, who, in carrying out their spiritualizing theory, should have landed themselves in so meager, so barren a vision of the future. What though it should save their system, and harmonize its parts? Is that a sufficient reason for representing the glory of the latter age as a mere improvement and slight expansion of what is good in the present day? When God tells us that Satan is to be bound, does that mean that he is *not* to be bound, but still to roam at large? Incredible! When God presents to us prophetic pictures of universal holiness, as the very scenes that are yet to gladden the earth, heaping figure upon figure to exalt our conceptions of the universality of millennial peace, does He really mean us to understand that these are exaggerations, mere Eastern figures from which we must make large deductions, in order to arrive at the truth? The *prophetic* scene is certainly very glorious; will the *real* scene only be an improvement upon what we see around us every day? I would not even seem to use the language of unkindness, but I should be speaking untruly and unfaithfully if I did not say that I regard such *dilutions* of Scripture with astonishment and alarm. First, we are asked to believe in a Millennium without Christ in person, and then,

as if that were not enough, millennial blessedness must be stripped of all its glory, and reduced to a shadow or a specter!

IX. *Acts* iii 20, 21.—“And he shall send Jesus, which before has been preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things.” Here it is distinctly asserted that Christ is to remain in heaven until “the times of restitution of all things,” and then He is to be “sent.” The “times of restitution of all things” and the “times of refreshing” [*Acts* 3:19] explain each other, for they obviously refer to the same period, a period which is to be introduced by Christ in person. This is the natural meaning of the passage.

It is objected to this that the expression “times of restitution,” &c., means “times of the *fulfilling of all things* which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets.” On this I remark, that this is not the meaning of the word as given in any dictionary. There it is said to mean “the bringing back of things to their former state.” And this surely ought to weigh with us. But let us see how it is used in Scripture. The *noun* itself occurs nowhere else either in the Old or New Testament; but the kindred verb is found frequently, and means *invariably* to “restore,” not to “fulfill;”—as, for instance, *Matt.* 12:13, “It was *restored* whole like as the other;” chap. 17:11, “Elias must first come and *restore* all things;” *Acts* 1:6, “Wilt thou at this time *restore* again the kingdom to Israel?” Or, turn to the Old Testament—*Jer.* 16:15, “I will *bring them again* into their land;” *Ezek.* 16:55, “They shall be *restored* as at the beginning.” These instances are sufficient to show the meaning of the word, which is uniform in all the passages where it occurs. It never means *to fulfill*; there are other words for *that* in frequent use throughout Scripture. Our translation is, in truth, the exactest that could be given; all our former English translators, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, &c., give the very same sense; and thus Calvin expounds the passage. After translating the words as we do, “the times of restoring,” he remarks, “If at this time we see many things confused in the world, let this hope refresh us, that Christ *shall once*

come that He may restore all things.” How can anything, then, be more explicit? And looking at these words alone, though no others were to be found, may we not (to use the words of Bishop Horne) “expect Christ’s second Advent to restore all things, to judge the world, and to begin His glorious reign?”

X. *Romans* 8:19-23.—Here creation is spoken of as being made “subject to vanity,” and lying under a curse, evidently the curse which was pronounced against it for man’s transgression. It “groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” But there is a promise of deliverance,—a deliverance which is evidently the same as the “restitution of all things,” or the millennial state of blessedness. This, the apostle tells us, (v. 23), is to take place at “the redemption of the body”—that is, the resurrection, which we know is to be at the coming of the Lord. Thus creation is represented as looking forward to its restoration to that very time to which the saints are looking forward, the resurrection and the Advent. That event is to bring deliverance to them and to the whole creation. Mr. Haldane, in his “Commentary” on this Epistle, brings out the sense very forcibly, and at great length. He shows that it can have no meaning but the one given above. Thus he writes:—“The apostle means to say that the creation, which, on account of the sin of man, has, by the sentence of God, been subjected to vanity, shall be rescued from the present degraded condition under which it groans; and, according to the hope held out to it, is longing to participate with the sons of God in that freedom from vanity into which it shall at length be introduced, partaking with them in their future and glorious deliverance from all evil.”³ The creation then, is to go on groaning and travailing, the curse still weighing it down, and sterilizing the soil, until Christ shall come to make all things new.

XI, *II Thessalonians* 2:1-8.—In both Epistles to the Thessalonians the coming of the Lord is frequently referred to, and indeed the whole

³ Haldane, *Romans*, II, p. 285.

emphasis and meaning of the Second Epistle rest on the literality of that event. Let us gather out the different allusions to it which are scattered throughout both.

1. "To wait for his Son from heaven" (I Thess. 1:10).
2. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (I Thess. 2:19).
3. "To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (I Thess. 3:13).⁴
4. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent [or go before] them that are asleep: for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:15-16).
5. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2).
6. "I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless

unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23).

7. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:7-10).
8. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him" (II Thess. 2:1).
9. "As that the DAY OF CHRIST is at hand" (II Thess. 2:2).
10. "THAT DAY shall not come unless there come a falling away first" (II Thess. 2:3).
11. "Then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2:8).
12. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ" (II Thess. 3:5).

Here, then, are no fewer than twelve passages in which the coming of the Lord is spoken of; and this in two brief Epistles, or eight chapters in all. The Thessalonians could attach but one meaning to all these various allusions, and would never think of understanding them in different senses, and with reference to different events. Besides, we know as an historical fact, that they really did so. Before the apostle wrote, they doubtless, like all the early saints, were looking for the Lord's coming. His First Epistle confirmed them in this, and awakened yet more fervent expectations. They were now filled with one thought, the immediate Advent. Someone, either belonging to themselves or another church, took advantage of this, and wrote an epistle in the name of Paul, foretelling the *instant* appearing of the Lord. They were thus

⁴ This verse has been quoted to prove that, after Christ comes, conversion cannot go on upon earth, for *all* His saints are to come with Him. I confess I am surprised at the stress laid upon the word *all*, as if it necessarily meant every one. Owen, in his work upon the Death of Christ, after pointing out that many passages in which the "all" has restricted meaning, thus concludes:—"Therefore, from the bare word nothing can be inferred, to enforce an absolute unlimited universality of all individuals to be intimated thereby." But passing from this, let me observe, that when Christ is said to come with all His saints, it must of course mean *all who are saints at the time when He comes*. It can mean nothing more. It cannot, of course, mean that He is to come with those who shall be saints after He comes. That is an absurdity. And if this passage simply means all who are or have been saints up to the time of His coming, it of course settles nothing as to future conversions. *That must be determined by other passages*. To determine it by this is an entire begging of the question. There are many direct texts which prove that there are to be conversions after He has come. But I do not enter on this here.

“shaken in mind, and troubled.” On receiving intelligence of their excited state, the apostle wrote his Second Epistle to allay this agitation. In correcting their error, he takes for granted that they were right in waiting for Christ, and also, that when he spoke in his First Epistle of the Advent, he really meant Christ’s literal, visible, and personal coming. What, then, was the error which he corrected? That the day of the Lord had *arrived*.⁵ To correct this, he points out an event which must occur before the Advent,—the rising of Antichrist. But this is all. This apostasy was already in action; it was to go on and exalt itself; and then, when this Man of Sin had reached the very pride and pitch of his grandeur, the Lord was to come and smite him to the dust.

Thus it is very plain that the destruction of Antichrist and the Lord’s Advent must be simultaneous, for *He comes in order to destroy him*. The apostasy began in the apostles’ days. It has been growing and spreading ever since. It is to increase in greatness, “wearing out the saints of the Most High;” writing the name of blasphemy upon men’s foreheads and hands; prevailing upon all the world to worship it and to wonder after it. Then, when seated most proudly upon the throne of iniquity, the Lord shall descend from heaven and destroy this destroyer of the earth. How, then, can the Millennium be *before* the Advent? If the Lord comes to slay the Man of Sin, He must also come to begin the millennial glory.

But must the “coming of the Lord” mean His personal appearing here? I think it must. What was it that the Thessalonians were looking for? The literal Advent. Then, by what Advent, Antichrist was to be destroyed. What event was it that was agitating them, and which the apostle tells them was “not to come” till there “should come a falling away?” The literal Advent. Then it must *of necessity be that very Advent which was to take place as soon as the*

falling away had come to pass. Otherwise, how unmeaning the apostle’s argument! When Paul wrote to the Roman Church that he intended to visit them, only he must first go up to Jerusalem with the contribution for the poor saints, did he not mean that when this errand was discharged, he, the same Paul, would visit them in person? Would the postponement of the visit alter the *personality*, transmuting it from a *real* into a *spiritual* visit? In like manner, does the fact of an interval being to take place before the Advent, alter the character of the Advent at the close of the interval, so that that which was understood to be a *literal* thing before the interval, must evaporate into a *spiritual* thing on account of that interval having elapsed? The Thessalonians imagined that there was to be no interval at all, but that the Lord was to come forthwith. The apostle tells them that there was to be an interval, but that, *as soon as that was over, that very same event (not another of a different kind) would happen, which they had been looking for*.

But may the words not admit of a *spiritual* interpretation? The attempt has been made to spiritualize them. Another sense has been given, which is certainly not the natural, but the *non-natural*. Whether it can stand, we shall see.

What, then, is the expression which requires to be spiritualized? It is literally “the epiphany of His presence” [II Thess. 2:8].⁶

The two words, “epiphany” and “presence,” are frequently used separately, to denote the literal Advent; and surely when they both occur together, we are warranted in considering the

⁵ This is the meaning of ἐνέσηκεν, enestekēn. See Romans 8:38—“Neither things *present*, nor thing to come;” οὔτε ἐνεστώτα οὔτε μέλλοντα, oute enestōta oute mellonta. See also I Corinthians 3:22; 7:26; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 9:9.

⁶ I do not think it needful to quote the Greek, as I am not writing a critical treatise: but if any one will carefully consult the original, he will find the above statements not only verified, but mightily confirmed. I might establish what is advanced here by reference to the ablest critics; but I merely quote two, as a specimen of the rest. Schoettgen thus translates the expression, “The Advent of Christ, which shall refulgently strike every eye, and whose majesty and glorious splendor no one shall be able to deny.”—*Horæ Hebraicæ, in loc.*, p. 846.—Again, Küttner paraphrases it, “The Advent of Messiah, illustrious by its splendor and majesty,” *Hypommemata in Nov. Test., in loc.*, p. 465.

expressions as one of the most explicit that could have been used to denote the literal coming. This *double term* is certainly the strongest which occurs in these Epistles, and seems used, of purpose, by the apostle, to prevent the possibility of its being explained away. There are twelve references to the coming in these Epistles,—eleven are admitted by all to mean the literal coming. *Yet all these eleven are weaker* than the one in controversy, which is the twelfth. Is it not, then, most unaccountable, that the weaker should be interpreted literally, and the strongest explained away? Surely there is some bias warping the judgment here.

But further; the word “epiphany” occurs just six times in the New Testament. In one of these it refers to the first coming, which we know to be literal. In four others, it is conceded by all to point to the literal second coming. The sixth is the passage in question, and *it is stronger than any of the five*. They are as follows:—

1. “Until the APPEARING of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Tim. 6:14).
2. “Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his APPEARING and his kingdom” (II Tim. 4:1).
3. “To all them that love his APPEARING” (II Tim. 4:8).
4. “The glorious APPEARING of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13).

A little above we asked, Why, out of twelve passages, all apparently having the same meaning, make that one which is the strongest, and least liable to suspicion, an exception to the rest? So, here we ask, Why, out of six distinct passages, in which the word occurs, make that which (by being coupled with another) is the strongest, an exception to the rest? Why spiritualize the *strongest* and leave the *weakest* to stand as it is? The natural meaning may, no doubt, obstruct or dislocate your system; but will you allow that to be a sufficient reason for inventing a *non-natural* sense?

In reply, it is said, that the word “coming” is used “spiritually in the ninth verse of this very chapter. In reference to this, I crave attention to the following remarks:—

1. This argument, even when conceded, amounts only to a “may be,” and a “may be” set in opposition to the strongest “must be” that I can conceive. What I have already advanced appears to me to amount to a positive and irresistible “must be.” Of what force, then, is a mere “may be” in opposition to this? What critic can be content to found his hermeneutics upon so precarious a basis?
2. Though a *weaker* expression may be spiritualized, it does not follow that a much stronger one *may be*, far less *must be*, treated in the same way. A general term may be ambiguous, but that is no reason for a particular and explicit one being equally so. Yet this is the meaning of the objection.
3. The terms are not *convertible*, which they would be, if this argument be valid. If this “brightness of his coming” be applicable to Antichrist equally with Christ, then there would be some force in the objection to our statements. But if this be inadmissible, the objection breaks down. How can we argue thus,—The word *coming* is applied *spiritually* to Antichrist, therefore the words “brightness of his coming” (which cannot be used in reference to Antichrist) may be applied *spiritually* to Christ? If the words were synonymous, I could understand the argument, but when they are not so, I confess I cannot. If $a+b=b$, and convertible with b , then whatever b represents, $a+b$ may represent; but if $a+b$ be much larger than b , and not convertible, then it is absurd in me to say, because I have discovered that b represents a certain sum, therefore $a+b$ must represent the same.
4. Our objector seems to forget that he believes in a literal Advent of Christ as well as we, however far we may be asunder as to the time of it; whereas his reasoning proceeds on the supposition that the Advent of Christ is no more a literal Advent than that of Antichrist.

His syllogism halts grievously. It should run thus: "The word *coming*, when applied to Antichrist, cannot be literal, *because there is no literal Advent of Antichrist*; therefore, the same word, when applied to Christ, cannot be literal, because *there is no literal Advent of Christ*." Though Antichrist's "coming" may not be personal, and therefore we may be at liberty to spiritualize the words, is that any reason for saying that we are at liberty to spiritualize that word (or, rather, a far stronger one) as applied to Christ, when we do believe in His literal coming at some time or other? The reason why the liberty was taken of spiritualizing it, in the case of Anti-christ, was, that we believed he was not to come personally at all. Had we acknowledged a personal coming in this case, we should not have felt ourselves at liberty to do this. How, then, can we feel at liberty to spiritualize the word, as referring to Christ, *when our reason for spiritualizing no longer exists*? The figurative sense may be admissible in the case of him who is to come spiritually, but is that a reason for saying that it is admissible also in the case of Him who is to yet to come literally and personally?

5. Of whatever strength this objection may be to those who deny a personal Antichrist, it has no force at all to those who believe in his personality. Now, though I cannot agree with some of the ancient, or others of the very recent, theories on the subject of a personal Antichrist, yet I do believe that the great Antichristian system is to have an individual head or king. This head or king is frequently prophesied of both in the Old and New Testaments. He is the rep-resentative of the whole vast body of iniquity with which the earth is to be overspread. And, as the head or representative of that body, I, so far at least, recognize his literal personality. And if so, then the objection I have been

refuting, though entitled to what weight it may have with a denier of Antichrist's personality, has no point or strength at all with a believer in that personality. It may be, perhaps, used as an *argumentum ad hominem*, but it can be nothing more.

Thus I have endeavored to fix the interpretation of this passage. I have given what appears to me very strong reasons for taking it in its *natural* sense; it remains for others to produce their strong reasons for understanding it in its *non-natural* sense. They ought, however, to be prepared, not only to show reasons why it *may be*, but why it *must be*, or *ought to be*, so explained. Surely, if their system be strong and coherent, it will be able to abandon mere *negative* ground, and advance to something more positive and aggressive in the matter of Scripture interpretation, by which alone the question between us can be finally decided.

XII. II *Peter* 3:1-13.— The argument from this passage in favor of a premillennial Advent, I have already stated. It is simply this, that the "last days," which had begun in the time of the apostles, were to go on, abounding more and more in wickedness, scoffing, apostasy, and atheism, till suddenly broken in upon by the coming of the day of the Lord. I do not mean, however, to repeat what I have advanced. I wish merely to notice objections.

The chief objection is somewhat of this matter:—"This universal conflagration must so burn up and destroy every living thing upon the earth's surface, that it is impossible to believe that men can come forth out of it to people the earth, as Millenarians believe." On this let me observe,—

This is no answer at all to our argument. It does not touch the difficulty. It may prove that there can be no Millennium at all; but what else can it prove? I adduce the passage to show, that wherever the Millennium be placed, *it cannot be between the present time and the Advent*. The objection may very aptly be used to prove that *the millennium in which we believe is an impossibility*; but how can it answer our argument, that *any Millennium* between this

and the Coming is an impossibility, if those words of the apostle be true? It may compel us to alter our ideas of the *nature* of the Millennium, but not of the time and place which it occupies.

The truth is, that the passage presents difficulties to both parties; and it would be well that, with this concession made, they should sit calmly down to consider it. The Anti-Millennarian has to answer the question, How can you, with such a passage before you, believe that there can be a Millennium before the Advent? The Millennarian has to solve this other difficulty, How can you believe that men can exist in the midst of such wide-wasting fire, and come out of it to inhabit the earth? Leaving the former to escape from his dilemma as he can, I shall try to help the latter out of his; and, in so doing, I remark that this prediction of the apostle is not an isolated passage, but one of a large class, all referring to the same time. I take the first specimen of these from the Apocalypse. Under the sixth seal a desolation equal to that predicted by Peter is described. What can be stronger than this?—"I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as the sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:12-14). Yet *after this we find men inhabiting the earth*. Again, at the pouring out of the seventh vial, we read, "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found;" yet *after this we find men still upon the earth*, who have passed through this universal earthquake. Again we read in Isaiah as follows:—"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than

the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up" (Isa. 13:9-14). Can any intimation of destruction be stronger than this? Yet immediately *after it we find men inhabiting the earth, who have come out of it*. Again, take the 24th chapter of the same prophet. I need not quote it, for I have done so in another place; but I ask, can any destruction be more complete and more universal, in the widest and most unrestricted sense? It is not conflagration only, but convulsion, earth-quake, dissolution, and every form of most thorough destruction.⁷ There is not in all Scripture such a picture of entire, consuming desolation and passing away as there is here. Every wasteful element is introduced. Every annihilating power is brought to bear upon the earth, as if for the purpose of making clean away with it and its inhabitants. Yet out of all this man come forth to dwell upon the face of the earth, after this universal earthquake and conflagration have passed away.

I need not quote other passages, though they are not a few. I give these as specimens. Now, I ask our objectors what they make of these passages? I point to these pictures of terrific wide-sweeping ruin, fire and earthquake, lightning and hurricane, all mingled together. I point to the plain statements which follow, as to men surviving these infinite catastrophes. And I ask, if you do not stumble at these, nor count them difficulties, why stumble at another of the same kind, and pronounce it insuperable? Before you ask me to reconcile Peter with my system, I ask you to reconcile Isaiah with yours. The difficulty exists. It exists in both systems. Both, then, are equally concerned to adjust or remove it. If it be solved against us, if it be found that we cannot account for such a state of things, then our theory of the Millennium

⁷ I would notice here that many of the expressions in this passage are precisely the same as in Peter,—only they are repeated and heightened, and magnified by the prophet far beyond those of the apostle.

must, of course, break down; but our first position remains unassailed, that, let the nature of the Millennium be what it may, its place cannot be between us and the appearing of the Lord. No solution of the difficulty touches that position; and this is all that we adduce the passage to establish.

But, besides this, there are, I think, allusions to this very difficulty in Scripture, and to the true solution of it. The Church, we are told, is to be taken up out of the midst of that fiery desolation and lodged in THE CLOUD with Jesus, safe from the wasting fire. But even though they remained, could they not be as safe in the midst of it as was Noah amid the swelling billows of the Flood; or, as the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace? Israel also, or at least a remnant, is secured from harm. To this there are many allusions in Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, until the indignation be overpast" [Isa. 26:20]. And, "I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isa, 51:16), *i.e.*, "I will secure thee, O Israel, from evil, while I am engaged in preparing the new heavens and earth, so that those calamities which are then to befall the earth shall not come nigh thee." As to the heathen remnant which shall survive that day, I do not find such express promises of preservation; yet as they are spoken of as "the heathen that are left," so it is probable that some method of preservation will be afforded them. And what is to hinder Him, who built the heavens and earth, from preserving for Himself a remnant to re-people the globe when the fiery deluge shall have passed away? Can He not provide a shelter for as many or as few as He shall please to deliver? Is anything too hard for Him? Is His hand shortened that it cannot save? The only question is, has He so purposed and declared? If so, nothing shall hinder it,—fire, nor storm, nor earthquake, nor the terrible hail which "is reserved for the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war."⁸

XIII. *I John 2:18*.—"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." I notice this passage in proceeding onwards, but I do not dwell upon it, as I have already taken out of it the argument which it contains. It states that the last time was come, that the mark of this time was the prevalence of antichrists, whose power was to increase, as we have seen, until the Lord should come. There is no room, then, for inserting the Millennium between the close of this time and the Advent.

XIV. *Revelation 18 and 19*.—The eighteenth chapter describes the greatness and the ruin of Babylon, very minutely and terribly. And how does it close? With the marriage-supper of the Lamb. No sooner is the doom of Babylon secured and her smoke seen ascending, than the ALLELUIA of the Bride begins, and she sits down with the Bride-groom at the marriage-supper. Now, as all admit, that the marriage-supper is not till the Advent and the resurrection, I do not see how it is possible to escape the conclusion that there can be no Millennium till then. Where is there room for it between the fall of Babylon and the Marriage-supper?

I had marked other passages to be adduced as proofs of the pre-millennial Advent, but I have prolonged the discussion on some of the above to such an extent that I must set them aside. Those already dwelt upon are sufficient. Each of them singly might be enough to determine the question; how much more the cumulative demonstration afforded by the whole together? They are not mere *negative* proofs, intended to overthrow an adversary; they are all *positive*, designed to build up a system. Would that our objectors would try this more excellent way!

⁸ Job 38:23.

When the house of Jacob's sons
Their Canaan repossess,
Shall not all thy chosen ones
Abide in perfect peace?
Trusting in the literal word
We look for Christ on earth again.
Come, our everlasting Lord,
With all thy saints to reign.

*Charles Wesley
on Ezekiel 37:25*