

THE HOPES OF THE EARLY CHURCH RESPECTING OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING.

SOME earnest and faithful Bible student has published a little tract treating the above subject so simply and beautifully that we feel constrained to lay before our readers copious extracts therefrom, as follows: –

No one can read the New Testament with care without discovering that the members of the early Church were men of hope as well as men of faith. Indeed, hope seems, more than faith, to have been the outstanding feature of the character. Not that they really had more of this than that; the twain were one; they formed one noble edifice, one stately ship. But faith was the foundation work; hope, raised upon it, caught the eye of the beholder. Faith lay beneath the water line; hope reared the mast and spread the sail high in the sight of men. Their faith looked back to Calvary; but, in a sense, it was an act completed. They were not always looking backward; forward they peered, with steady gaze. The attitude of expectation was their daily, hourly attitude. Something was about to happen – someone was coming – and they are seen to be on tip-toe, looking for and hasting unto the event. To them it clearly seemed a consummation most devoutly to be wished. They constantly referred to it as "a lively hope," "that blessed hope," "this hope," "one hope," "our hope," "the hope of our calling," "the hope set before us." Every reference shows that it completely filled their hearts, and was the dominating influence in their lives. It almost diverted them from ordinary work and duty, the warning being required not to stand "gazing up into heaven."

The hope thus cherished was not of a private kind, attainable by this believer at a certain time, and that one at another. It was one great hope, to be fulfilled to all the church, not even excluding them that slept, at one defined and selfsame time. "No prophecy of Scripture is

of a private interpretation," and this hope, it is evident, was not to be fulfilled to individual believers. It was not a matter of personal and private experience; not the coming of Christ to the individual heart, nor the approach of death to each separate person; but something affecting the entire community of Christians at the same point of time.

I. What was that hope which so controlled and cheered those early saints? None other than "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." They believed with all their hearts in Jesus Christ, in his wondrous life of miracle and grace, and in his sacrificial death on Calvary's sad tree. They believed that he had triumphed o'er the grave, and had come forth to resurrection life. Many of them had seen him in his resurrection form, and had been witnesses of his ascension to the heavens. They remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said unto them, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." They had heard "two men in white apparel" say, "This same Jesus [R2954 : page 51] which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." With simple faith they all accepted these great promises. The authority appeared to them sufficient, the meaning transparent. The Lord had gone; the Lord would come. He had disappeared from view, but only for "a little while," until the "times of restitution." When these times came, he would appear again, and each one seemed to say, "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This was to them the "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves."

IT WAS THE LODESTAR OF THEIR LIFE,

the goal and climax of their being, and round it their communion with each other, like their testimony to the world, continually revolved.

Even if men try, they cannot keep this subject out of sight, so long as the New Testament is read. The late beloved evangelist, D. L.

Moody, made the admission that he was originally much opposed to this doctrine, "until," said he, "from constantly meeting with it in the reading of Scripture, I was constrained to become a believer in it; and now it is, to my mind, one of the [R2954 : page 52] most precious truths in the whole Bible." One verse in every thirteen in the New Testament refers to it more or less directly; in the Epistles alone the proportion is much greater, being more like one in ten. In First Thessalonians it is fully one in seven, and in the Second Epistle nearly one in three.

First Thessalonians is usually recognized as the earliest Epistle we possess. In our inquiry now it is of value, then, to note that the belief in Christ's return was a conspicuous feature of the Church to which it was addressed. In the opening chapter the apostle testifies, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." The second chapter ends with a reference to the prospect of meeting "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." At the close of chapter three the prayer is offered. "That he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Chapter four finishes with the announcement, made by direct inspiration, that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." In chapter five the letter is brought to a conclusion with the prayer that they who received it may be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Second Thessalonians there are but forty-seven verses, yet in no fewer than fifteen reference to the Lord's return is made. The apostle declares "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." He beseeches the brethren to steadfastness "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." He speaks of "the brightness of his coming," and the "consolation and good hope" it brings; also he prays, "The Lord direct

your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

First Corinthians is another of the older writings; and it proves that there at Corinth, as at Thessalonica, the Church had taken up the hope of which we speak. "Ye come behind in no gift," says the apostle, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He tells them not to sit in judgment upon one another, but to wait "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." Above the table where they sit to celebrate the scene on Calvary, he writes the superscription,

"TILL HE COME";

and over all the tombs where sleep the silent saints, he carves the sentence, bringing hope and joy, "Christ the Firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Even when the apostle has to utter the dread word "Anathema," he straightway softens it with "Maranatha," "The Lord comes," as though to let them know that, after all, judgment belongeth to another; men need not quickly curse their fellows.

In the Epistle to Philippians the time of the Advent is repeatedly referred to as "The Day of Jesus Christ," and for it they are taught to wait. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain." It is clear that the Philippians shared the apostle's hope, because he says, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

In the Epistle to Colossian saints, the same glad note is rung; "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Everything in the early Church was made to hinge upon the coming of the Lord.

To Timothy, the apostle Paul gives various charges, and he makes each binding "until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ." In view of the same event he shows that he can hold death in contempt: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

To Titus, too, he makes it clear that, by this truth, not only is the fear of death removed, but life is made pure and beautiful, men "live soberly, righteously, and godly," "looking for that blessed hope."

The Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with all the other apostolic writings. Repeatedly it speaks of the expected day.

"UNTO THEM THAT LOOK FOR HIM

shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." "Cast not away therefore your confidence...for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

The apostle James adopts the same appeal; "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The apostle Peter makes much use of Second Advent truth. It is the vermilion and the gold with which he illuminates his precious manuscripts. To saints in suffering he writes, and thus he seeks to cheer their hearts: "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith...might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"When his glory shall be revealed, ye shall be glad with exceeding great joy." "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation....But, beloved, ...the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness,...but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." "What manner of persons ought ye to be,...looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Saint John cherishes the same glad hope, and seeks [R2954 : page 53] by it to strengthen and to stimulate the Church. "My little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

As for the Book of the Revelation, it really is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ," and is all about the Second Advent. In it we have the facts, circumstances and judgments connected with the Lord's unveiling, or apocalypse. "Behold he cometh," is the burden of the book; and there can be no understanding of the "words of this prophecy," if the coming of the Lord be doubted, or be lost to view. Again and again, in the midst of its mysteries, the Master's voice is heard crying, "Hold fast till I come!" "Behold I come as a thief;

BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH."

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." To this, the seer himself would have us all say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is well for us to scan the Scriptures thus, in order that, by line on line, we may convince ourselves what was the hope that cheered and edified the early Church. After a reading, such as this, there is no room for doubt regarding it. The hope they had was that of Jesus Christ's return, and nothing else can be maintained as answering to the language they employed.

It could not be a spirit blessing they were looking for – a coming of the Lord into their hearts, for quickening and enlightenment; for such sweet spiritual presence they had never lost. "Lo, I am with you always," he had said, "even to the end of the world"; and evermore "Christ in the heart the hope of glory" was to them a living, grand reality. They did not need a coming of that kind. **[R2955 : page 53]**

Nor could they mean the destruction of the city of Jerusalem; and passing strange it seems that this should ever have been thought to have fulfilled the prophecy. What was there in this sad event to constitute a hope? It was a hope these men possessed! What had this city's fall to do with Gentile saints? Yet they, as well as Jews, were made partakers of the Church's hope. Above all, why, if the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures relative to Christ's return – why was the coming of the Lord proclaimed, and eagerly desired, long after Salem's towers were in the dust? The Gospel according to John was surely written after that. So were his three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. The testimony of the early Fathers is also to the effect that the hope of Christ's return remained, like a meteor in the heavens, long after Jerusalem was removed. Clement of Rome, in his first Epistle, written about A.D. 95, says, "Let us be followers of those who went about in goat skins and sheep skins, preaching the coming of Christ." Ignatius of Antioch, about A.D. 100, wrote to Polycarp, "Be every day better than another; consider the times, and expect him who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible." Polycarp, in an Epistle dated about A.D. 108, said, "that God had raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead, and that he will come to judge the world and raise the saints, when if we walk worthy of him we shall

reign together with him." Papias of Hierapolis, the intimate friend and companion of Polycarp, taught the coming of the Lord in all the churches that he visited. Justin Martyr, about A.D. 150, spoke of those as "destitute of just reason who did not understand that which is clear from all Scripture, that

TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST ARE ANNOUNCED."

Ireneus also, who flourished as a writer about A.D. 180, says, "The Lord shall come from heaven in the clouds with the glory of his Father, casting the Antichrist and them that obey him into a lake of fire; but bringing to the just the times of the kingdom." These men all, with one accord, waited for the coming of God's Son from heaven. They did nothing so ridiculous as to believe that the promises to that end were fulfilled when Jerusalem was burned.

Nor was it death for which these early saints were waiting. Not one of them is known to have confounded that with Christ's return. In no epistle is death set before the Christian as the object of his hope. The approach of death, the enemy, can never be the coming of the Lord – his friend. It may be that the time between the hour of death and the morn of resurrection shall pass even as "the twinkling of an eye"; one moment may be heard the voices of earthly friends around the bed, and the next (as it appears) that call that wakes the sleepers in the tomb. But we must carefully distinguish between things that differ. Falling asleep is not the same as waking, though hardly an instant may appear to pass between them; nor is grim death the coming of the Lord, though no time seems to elapse between the two events. If it be otherwise, and the return of Christ means the believer's death, then is the Resurrection "past already," for that is always associated with the Lord's return. But against this heresy we are expressly warned.

No; if Greek and English words have any meaning, those employed by the apostles and the Fathers, with their equivalents in our own mother tongue, all go to show that a personal and glorious coming of the Lord was what those men of God were waiting for. No other

coming ever crossed their minds. It was not till the middle of the Third century that serious opposition, or even question, arose as to the doctrine of the personal coming and reign of Jesus Christ. "Now," says Mosheim, "its credit began to decline, principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favorite sentiments."

The English Baptist churches in their Confession of Faith, presented to Charles II. in 1660, said, "We believe ...that the same Lord Jesus who showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, which was taken up from the disciples and carried into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory; for then shall he be King of kings and Lord of lords." Here there is quite enough to show what was the hope within them when the early Christians spoke with one another of the coming of the Lord. It was "the Lord himself" – for whom they looked and longed.

II. The reason for such unanimity and enthusiasm in the entertainment of this hope must have been both **[R2955 : page 54]** weighty and worthy. The early Christians did not lightly hold it, and it would not be with light and careless hand they took it up. They must have had as cogent reasons for believing in, and hoping for, their Lord's return, as they possessed for trusting and rejoicing in his first appearing. Back to the first by faith, and forward to the next by hope, they looked, with as solid assurance in one case as in the other. These were the two pivots on which revolved their Christian life, the two wings on which they mounted up as eagles; neither pivot could be weakened, nor could either wing be clipped, without grave injury immediately ensuing. "Take unto you the whole armour of God," said the apostles, and we may be sure they gave as good reasons why the Christian should "take for a helmet the hope of salvation," as for his "putting on the breastplate of faith and love."

The foremost reason must have been, that Christ himself had said he would return. The word of seers and prophets, of apostles and of angels, was of use; and these had all united to affirm that he would come again; but, after all, the Master of the House, rather than any servant, was the One whose word was to be heard. If he said, even once, he would return, that would be quite sufficient for the faithful heart. Already we have seen that many times the

LORD HAD PLEDGED HIS WORD

to this effect. He said distinctly, "If I go...I will come again." "I will come to you." "I go away and come again unto you." He spoke of himself as the "Son of man," who should "come in the glory of his Father"; as the "Nobleman" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return"; as the "Master" for whose coming the servants were to watch; the "Bridegroom," whose appearing the wise virgins all would hail; and as the "Lord" who yet would come and reckon with the stewards of his house. In these, and many ways beside, the gracious Lord assured his loved ones he would come again, and they, with trustful hearts, just took him at his word. "To doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin." Then, as their faith laid hold, their hope was born; for they soon found, wrapped in the promises of his return, as in a garment fair, all scented with sweet lavender, things rare and beautiful, that made those precious promises the richest heirloom of the Christian Church.

The first thing they discovered there was this, that in the certainty of Christ's return there lay the guarantee – the only guarantee they had – that they would see their Lord. Some of those early saints had seen the Saviour when he stood on earth; but now his words were true, "You see me no more." Oh, how they longed to view him once again. To many of them the apostle Peter's words were more appropriate, "Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." But all the Church most earnestly desired to look on him whose love had won their hearts. There is

evidence that at a very early date the words of Isaiah were appropriated, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."

Apart from the Saviour's coming most assuredly there is no warrant given that these anticipations shall be realized. It is then that "every eye shall see him." No wonder that the early Christians "panted for the appointed hour." Then would be the revelation, the unveiling of the Lord; "the day of his appearing and his kingdom;" and till it came they could not be at rest.

WE SHALL BE "CHANGED" AND "SEE HIM AS HE IS."

They also learned to say, "when he shall appear," and "we shall see him as he is," "we shall be like him," "changed into the same image, from glory to glory"; for "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This is a marvelous announcement, and hardly could we credit it, unless it were most clearly given in God's most Holy Word. For the assistance of our faith, it is even given repeatedly, and we can only gratefully accept the truth. The early Christians certainly did this.

They believed that this "glad change" in them "which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," would be accompanied by the awakening of them "which sleep in Jesus." For their dear ones who were dead, as well as for themselves, their only hope lay in the Second Advent. They did not say, "There is no death; what seems so is transition." No, they accepted death as a reality. "We believe that Jesus died," they said, "even so," there are "them also which sleep in Jesus." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Still, they are dead, and Resurrection is required to make them live. Not by making light of death did they attempt to comfort one another; but by making much, yea, everything, of the sure and certain hope of joyful Resurrection, to take place at the coming of the Lord. He was the mighty magnet that would yet "descend from heaven," and as steel is drawn to steel, so they declared "the dead in Christ" would rise to him.

They believed that that would be the day of their presentation to the King. By the apostle Paul they were distinctly so informed. In writing to Corinthian [R2956 : page 54] saints, he said: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Until that day, on various grounds, they could not be presented. Christ would not even, until then, be King. So long as he was Priest within the veil, they could not go to him. The type forbade it: "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out." The Lord himself declared it: "Whither I go ye cannot come." "I will come again and receive you unto myself." For that day of joyful welcome to his court they had to wait. They did not dream of "going to heaven one by one"; they would "be caught up together to meet the Lord." They could not think of entering his glorious presence until they were "presented." They could not be presented until they were prepared and fitly robed. Not in the drab dress of this mortal body could they stand before him. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." But they believed that when he came this necessary *change* in their apparel would be wrought; and then should they be brought into the presence of the King in "raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold," "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

That would be the time, then, of their triumph and reward. Sometimes when men die their friends [R2956 : page 55] affirm they have gone to their reward; but

NOT SO SAID THE EARLY CHURCH.

They could not; for the Lord had definitely named another time than that of death: "Thou shalt be recompensed," said he, "at the resurrection of the just"; "in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." "Behold, I come... and my reward is with me to give every man [then] according as his work shall be." The apostle Peter confirms that with the word, "When the chief

Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" before reward can be distributed, and we are distinctly told it is at "His appearing" that this seat shall be set up. "Henceforth," said the expiring Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He had no thought of going by himself into the presence chamber, and in some private way receiving his Lord's "welcome" and "well done." No! he wanted "all them, also," whom he had known on earth to be beside him then; especially those whom he had led to taste redeeming love. "For 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?" It is when the nobleman returns that he will call his servants, and hold reckoning with them. No wonder, then, that faithful men kept ever in their minds that great event. The coming of the Lord was not denied, nor lost to view, until, in later days than those of which we speak, the Christian Church had lost its zeal, and in sad, wanton ways was walking with the world.

"Thy kingdom come," he had himself instructed them to pray thus, and they believed that till he came the kingdom would not come. Not for the gradual spread of truth, and the conversion of the world, they looked...They knew that all the purposes of God regarding men would be fulfilled, but they appear not to have thought of that as one. The Gospel must be preached in all the world, 'tis true; but they accepted Christ's own words, that this should be but "for a witness unto all nations"; and as James the apostle said, "to take out of them a people for his name." They did not vainly hope the world would better and yet better grow; they knew that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." They never said that things would so improve that the last days of this dark age would be its brightest and its best. "This know," said they, "that in the last days

PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME";

for wickedness shall be rampant even with "a form of godliness." With one consent these early Christians waited for the Lord. By his appearing would his kingdom be secured.

Many members of the early Church were Jews, and for their nation's sake they wanted Christ to come. That day would be a glorious day for them, the time of Israel's repentance and recovery. Then "the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth," and from their eyes the veil shall be removed. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

The thought of Israel's salvation at the Lord's return would make glad the hearts of the Gentile saints as well as Jews; for Israel's restoration, they were told, would girdle the whole globe with the glory of the Lord. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Then it is that the Lord, by his Advent, "shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel"; then it is, and not in this the Gospel day, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Then "He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."

Peace shall spread through all the earth,
When the Lord doth come.
Truth and righteousness go forth,
When the Lord doth come.
God with men shall then be found,
Every place be hallowed ground,
Life and beauty shall abound,
When the Lord doth come.

With such results expected from the coming of the King, it is no surprise that it became the early Christian's hope. Each member of the Church seems to have held it. A Christian who had not this hope was an anomaly. Milner says, "This constituted in the second century so decidedly an article of faith that Justin held it up as a criterion of orthodoxy." Bishop Newton says, "It was generally believed in the

FIRST THREE, AND PUREST, AGES [CENTURIES]."

Bishop Russell, though an anti-Millennarian, says, "Down to the beginning of the fourth century the belief was universal and undisputed." While Gibbon, with no prejudice either way, says, "It appears to have been the reigning sentiment of orthodox believers." He also adds, "It was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians." Of course its effects were salutary! It disposed the Church to prayerfulness and patience, to purity and peace, to sincerity and soberness, to loyalty and love, to fidelity and firmness, to watchfulness and work. Solace it gave in suffering, and in bereavement balm; in persecution perfect peace, and even in the martyr's fire the Master's joy.

Would God this were the Church's hope to-day! Only comparatively few within her bounds lay hold of it. The doctrine of the Second Advent is by most neglected, altho the word of God is full of it.

When not entirely relegated to the lumber room, it is often held up to ridicule, and they who dare to say that they believe in it are treated as – well-meaning folk, perhaps, but – simple souls, and far behind the age. Well, some of us are quite content to be behind the age. Whenever it, in any matter, goes ahead of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers, we shall let it go. "The goodly fellowship of the apostles" is good enough for us, and on the subject now before us we are with that noble company. Simple we may seem to modern men [R2956 : page 56] to be; but it is the ancient truth we hold, the good old way we tread.

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THE PAROUSIA FIRST – THE EPIPHANIA AND APOKALUPSIS FOLLOW.

As in the distance the various peaks of the mountain are blended so as to be undiscernible, so in the distance the various features of the Second Advent of our Lord were indistinct. But now is our salvation near – "nearer than when we first believed"; and we should expect that the holy spirit, which we were assured would bring truth to the attention of the Lord's people as "meat in due season," would continue to "show them things to come" as they would be due to be understood. And thus we have found it, praise the Lord! God's word is as a shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day. In its light we can now see that our Master will be *present* for a time, in the harvest time of this age – *invisibly present* doing a work in his church, before any outward sign or revealing to the world takes place. His work in his church will be the separating of the true from the merely nominal – the "wheat" from the "tares." His *revealing* will be in the "flaming fire" the great time of trouble with which this age will close, and in which the "tares" shall cease to be "tares": but *before* that fire can come, as the parable was given to show, he will be present in his wheatfield gathering the wheat into the garner and bundling the tares for the burning.

Another parable also shows that before *revealing* himself in any manner to the world, he calls *first* his own servants and reckons with them. (Luke 19:15-27.) Ah! dear brethren what a holy awe it brings to our [R2957 : page 56] hearts to know that we are *now* living in the *presence* of the Son of Man; that now the "wheat" is being gathered and the "tares" being bundled; – that *now* the servants are reporting their use of the pounds and talents entrusted to them, while the world sees nothing and enquires, "Where is the promise of his *presence*, while all things continue as they were from the beginning?" Nor can any but the few hear and appreciate the evidences, or understand the Master's words that as the world *knew not* in the days of Noah, even

thus shall it be in the *presence* of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:37) – they shall *know not*, and the ordinary avocations of daily life shall continue, – until disturbed by the commotion and trouble of the *Epiphania*, the *Apokalupsis* of the King in the pouring out of the seven last plagues – when the judgments of the Lord shall be abroad in the earth and the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness, and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord's house. He shall teach us of his ways and we shall walk in his paths." – Isa. 2:3.

Think up the addresses of all your earnest and pious Christian friends and send them to us for samples of this issue; and if they are interested assure them that if they will request it, mentioning this offer, we will send them a pamphlet on "*The Parousia, Epiphania and Apokalupsis of our Lord*," free! Call to their attention, also, the still fuller treatment of this subject in "*The Time is at Hand*," 360 pages, 25c. or loaned free to all who promise a careful reading and to return it postpaid.

"THE MORNING COMETH."

"Lo! from his Eastern heights sublime,
I hear the herald's joyous warning;
Day's glory deepens; far upclimb
The rosy splendors of the morning;
See yon triumphant steeds of light
Chase the retreating hosts of night;
The valleys sing, the hills rejoice,
And sounds aloft one cheering voice,
'Tis coming. Yes, 'tis coming.'

"'Tis coming. Yes, our night of tears
Shall fade before Immanuel's glory,
Which now, to gild our earth, appears,
Foretold in ancient song and story;

Foretold in that seraphic strain,
With notes which haunt our world again,
For traveling through the shadowy years,
The Just, the Merciful appears.
Behold! the Lord of glory."

