

## THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF THE END<sup>1</sup>

A FUNDAMENTAL tenet of the Old Testament prophets was that Jehovah was Lord of all. He created the universe and sustains it. He created men and controls their history. He has a purpose that both must subserve, an End to which all things move. That end men designated the Day of Jehovah.

This "Day" is characteristic of the Old Testament eschatology and is the basis of its future development, both in Judaism and Christianity. Amos revealed it as a time when God would vindicate His moral character by executing judgment on evil doers, Israelite as well as Gentile. Isaiah spoke of it as the inauguration of a new and blessed era, when the purified remnant should be governed by the Anointed of God. Ezekiel speaks much of the terrors of the Day, when sinners will be overwhelmed by famines, pestilence, the sword of Jehovah, etc.; Israel is to be "resurrected" from her dispersion and enjoy the rule of another David. These ideas were developed by Daniel and the later apocalyptists, especially in the direction of universalising them. The doctrine of resurrection was more clearly explicated, the Judgment became universal, the Kingdom world-wide, though in it Israel had a foremost place; the scene of the eternal Kingdom of God was to be a new earth. The conflict of earthly powers was seen to be but the reflex of strife in the heavenly spheres. The woes preceding the End of the age were dwelt upon. So was preparation made for the New Testament revelation.

In considering the various elements in the New Testament Eschatology, it must be borne in mind that we have no systematic presentation of these doctrines, any more than we have in any other branch of Biblical Theology. But the data given in this realm appear to be so diverse as to make a synthesis well-nigh impossible. The attempt is not often made, for the Synoptic eschatology is regarded as at variance with the Johannine, that of the Apocalypse as irreconcilable with both, while in the case of Paul, R. H. Charles traces out four incompatible stages of

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Graduates' Theological Study Group, led by Rev. A. M. Stubbs, M.A., Vice-Principal of Oak Hill College, London.

his thought. It is assumed in this article that, despite the differences of style and presentation, there is an underlying unity of doctrine in the New Testament writers, and that that unity is to be traced ultimately to Christ Himself.

The subjects will be dealt with in a quasi-chronological order for the sake of convenience, though it is realised that the use of the term "chronological" can be misleading, as there is so much overlapping of events. They are as follows; (1) The Apostasy, Antichrist and the Great Distress, (2) the Parousia, (3) the Resurrection, (4) the Judgment, (5) the Eschatological Kingdom and the Renewed Creation.

#### I. APOSTASY, ANTICHRIST AND THE GREAT DISTRESS

The expectation of an apostasy preceding the Parousia runs throughout the New Testament. It appears to include two notions, that of defection from the faith already held, and a rebellion against the Faith on the part of those who may never have embraced it. Our Lord alluded to the former when He asked, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find (the) faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). The latter conception may reasonably be held to apply to our Lord's comparison of the state of affairs at the End time with those of the ages of Noah and Lot (Luke xvii. 26f.). Apostasy in Judaism is apparently alluded to in the prediction of the rise of false messiahs who shall deceive many (Mark xiii. 6, 21-23).

This diversity of spheres of apostasy in Christ's teaching, viz., the Church, the World and Judaism, should be noted. It is the connecting link between the divergent presentations in Paul, John's epistles, and Revelation, as to the rise of the apostasy and Antichrist. Paul, in 2 Thess. ii, tells of the appearance of the man of sin, who sits in the temple of God and by his lying wonders deceives the perishing; most commentators believe this impersonator to be a Jew supported by Jews. John, in his first epistle, sees the spirit of Antichrist at work in the Church in the persons of the Gnostic teachers, while Rev. xiii and xvii seem to point to a ruler of the Empire (of Rome?) as the culminating Antichrist, whose sphere of influence is particularly in the Empire, but is also universal. Instead of placing these conceptions in an unfavourable antithesis, may we not see in them a development of the teaching of our Lord, who expected to see the influence of Antichrist in each of these

spheres? The agreement of the descriptions given of Antichrist and his end is remarkable. As Satan's counterfeit of God's Messiah, (1) he has his parousia (Mark xiii. 6; 2 Thess. ii. 9; Rev. xvii. 8), (2) he does lying wonders (Mark xiii. 22; 2 Thess. ii. 9; Rev. xiii. 2f.), (3) he deceives the faithless (Mark xiii. 22; 2 Thess. ii. 10; Rev. xiii. 4), (4) he claims worship (Mark xiii. 14; 2. Thess. ii. 4; Rev. xiii. 4f.), (5) he will be destroyed ([Luke xvii. 26-30;] 2 Thess. ii. 3; Rev. xvii. 8, 11), (6) by the breath of Christ's mouth (2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 15-21).<sup>1</sup>

With the appearance of Antichrist and the spread of apostasy is connected *the Great Distress*. Much confusion would have been avoided if it had been borne in mind that this Distress is twofold, in two spheres and from two sources. The first type of distress is that experienced by Christians at the hands of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. This is taught by our Lord in Mark xiii. 9-13, by Peter in 1 Pet. iv. 12, and by John in Rev. vii. 14. Distress of some sort is always the lot of the Christian (cf. Rev. i. 9, "your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation [*θλίψις*] and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus"). When evil and antipathy towards Christianity are rampant among the rulers of the world and their subjects, an intensified *θλίψις* is inevitable. But there is a second kind of Distress which is to come, not on Christians, but on their persecutors, and that from God Himself. These are mentioned briefly by Jesus in Mark xiii. 8, 19, and more fully by John in the woes of the Seven Seals, Trumpets, Thunders and Bowls of Revelation; the culmination is the catastrophe of Harmagedon. That Christians are exempt from these judgments is shown directly by the description of the judgments and their effects,<sup>2</sup> and indirectly by the vision of the woman who gave birth to the Man-child. The latter represents the Messianic community and her child the Messiah. When the dragon fails to destroy her child he seeks to persecute her, but she is given wings to fly into the wilderness, where she is protected for three and a half years, i.e., the period of the domination of Antichrist (for which see Rev. xii. 6, 14; xiii. 5). This epoch of Distress is to be brought to an end by the appearance of Christ, who destroys Antichrist with his accomplices and followers.

<sup>1</sup> The references in Paul and Revelation are from Charles, *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 441. He does not connect them with those in the Gospels.

<sup>2</sup> Note the close parallels between the plagues of the Bowls and the plagues of the Exodus, the latter being *for the Egyptians only*.

An interesting question is raised by R. H. Charles, who considers that Paul held this teaching only in the earlier part of the Christian life, but abandoned it by the time he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Here, it is claimed, he teaches that the precursor of the Parousia is not a general apostasy, but the conversion of the mass of mankind together with Israel. This conclusion is based on Rom. xi. 25, "Blindness in part has happened unto Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in". It is a hazardous interpretation of one statement of any man which sets it in opposition, not only to his earlier doctrine, but to his later; for the Apostle gave clear teaching on the coming apostasy in both letters to Timothy. The conversion of "the full complement (*πλήρωμα*) of the nations" cannot imply the turning to God of every Gentile, since the earlier argument presupposes that the repentance of the Jews would result in their being used to convert many more Gentiles to the Faith (v. 12). The "fullness" is therefore to be made yet more full! But it is to be observed that the turning of the Jews is represented as the concomitant of the Parousia, not its precursor (v. 26). Even this might appear to contradict the general setting of the Revelation, but a consideration of such passages as, "all the nations shall come and worship before thee" (xv. 4), and "he should not deceive the nations any more till the thousand years be completed" (xx. 3), show that even John realised that the majority of earth's inhabitants would enter the Messianic kingdom, despite the fact that the armies of the kings confederate with Antichrist would be destroyed at the Parousia. The two presentations, therefore, are complementary and serve to correct false inferences both as to the extent of the apostasy and its alleged falsity.

## II. THE PAROUSIA

The days are past when it could seriously be suggested that our Lord did not assert His Return to earth at the consummation of the age. The Gospels abound with utterances of His concerning this event. Without them we could not account for the universal expectation of the primitive Church that He would indeed come again in glory.

A typical utterance is Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him,

when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels", and again in the Eschatological Discourse, Mark xiii. 26, "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds with power and great glory". John also preserves some sayings of Jesus concerning the Parousia, "If I go . . . I come again, and will receive you unto myself" (xiv. 3)<sup>1</sup>. With this compare xxi. 22, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?", and the references in 1 John, certainly by the author of the Fourth Gospel.

For the apostolic teaching, we may cite as examples Acts i. 11, where the Coming is likened to the Ascension; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, which is based on reported words of Christ (*ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου*, v. 15) and resembles closely the quotations we have made from the Gospels; Heb. ix. 27-28, where the Parousia is as certain as the coming judgment; and Rev. i. 7, again in the spirit of our citations.

Besides this definite eschatological coming at the End, several writers of the New Testament speak of intermediate comings of Christ, not to be confounded with the final Parousia. John, in the Revelation, shows this most clearly in ii. 5, where Jesus says, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else *I come to thee* and will remove thy candlestick out of its place". Here Jesus "comes again" to a particular Church, that of Ephesus, at an unspecified time. Probably a similar interpretation is to be given to the threat to the Church at Sardis, "If thou shalt not watch, *I will come as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (iii. 3). In the familiar words of iii. 20, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, *I will come in to him* . . .", the coming is to an individual believer.

The juxtaposition of a present and "spiritual" coming with a final and outward coming in such a book as the Revelation, makes us inquire if such a phenomenon is seen elsewhere in the New Testament; we answer in the affirmative. Is not this the key to the difficult passages which refer to the Lord's coming in John xiv-xvi? John xiv. 3 seems clearly to speak of the final Advent. Yet xiv. 18, "I will not leave you desolate,

<sup>1</sup> It is unnatural to apply these words to the coming of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as His *coming* to the disciples can hardly be spoken of as His *receiving* them. Neither do they refer to death; the N.T. nowhere speaks of Christ coming to fetch His saints at death; they are translated into His presence.

I come unto you", in a context which speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit, seems equally clearly to refer to the coming of the Paraclete at Pentecost. So also *v.* 28, "Ye heard how I said, I go away and I come unto you". In *v.* 23 a coming of the Father and Son is spoken of, "*We* will come unto him . . .". There is no need to try to make these passages fit into one category, as expositors are wont to do; they refer to different comings and were so intended when uttered.

This conception has bearing on the thorny question as to the time of the final Parousia. Our Lord expressly said that He did not know when it would be (Mark xiii. 32); yet He commanded His disciples to be ready at all times, e.g., "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding" (Luke xii. 35f.). It is natural that such teaching would engender a high expectation of our Lord's return in the first and second generations. That such was the result is seen from the most casual perusal of the epistles: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 11f.); "The time is short" (1 Cor. vii. 29f.); "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. iv. 7); "It is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18); "Things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. i. 1). This fervid awaiting of the consummation need occasion no surprise; it is part and parcel of the prophetic genius to overstep time and see only the end, as can be seen in almost all the prophets. But did our Lord expressly teach that His Parousia would be in the lifetime of His disciples? If there is only one coming of Christ to earth, the answer must unhesitatingly be "Yes". But our findings as to the various "comings" in John and Revelation make us pause.

What are we to make of the reply of Jesus to the High Priest, when He was asked, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"? His words were, "I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark xiii. 61-62). Luke's version significantly omits the clause "and coming in the clouds of heaven", giving the suggestion that Jesus meant the Jews would see His Kingdom "coming", i.e. advancing, in power. If Jesus could deliberately use the language of the Parousia to express the idea of communion with the disciples (as in John) and of executing judgment on a Church (as in Revelation),

there is every reason, in such a context as this, for His using the popular terminology that went with the conception of the Parousia, to express His triumph over his persecutors. This contention is borne out by the interpretation given by all three Synoptic evangelists to Jesus' words, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1; Matthew says, "till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom", xvi. 28). The prediction is fulfilled six days later, when Jesus is transfigured before the chosen three, in the midst of the eschatological figures of Moses and Elijah, with a surrounding cloud which envelops the *disciples* as well as *Jesus* and the *glorified saints*; a clearer picture of the coming of the Son of Man in His kingdom could not be given. What the Apostles experienced on that mountain top, they saw in another fashion on the day of Pentecost and in the subsequent spread of the Gospel.

We shall not do violence to the words of our Lord if we similarly interpret Matt. x. 23, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come". It is clear that it is not in its chronological context, for it is impossible that Jesus should have meant that His Coming would take place before the mission of the twelve had ended. The preceding verses are placed by Mark in the Eschatological Discourse, where this statement also presumably belongs. If so, it belongs to the same group of sayings as Mark xiii. 30, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be done", which remark is of the prediction of the Fall of Jerusalem. Our Lord's words on this matter are undoubtedly mixed up with His prediction concerning the final Parousia, probably from the very reason we are considering, viz., that at one time our Lord speaks of a coming which is a special manifestation of His activity among men, and at another is the final glorious revelation of His Person. Read in the light of this distinction, the difficulties of interpreting the Discourse largely disappear.

The fact that Jesus should have given explicit instruction on the necessity of an indefinitely prolonged period between His departure and return, when the Kingdom grows unto its consummation, is yet another pointer in the direction of this line of interpretation. This is particularly brought out in some of His parables, the Silently Growing Seed, the Wheat and

Darnel, the Pounds, etc. G. B. Stevens gives his own summing up of the matter when he writes, "Jesus anticipated a great process of conquest, marked by special crises, and issuing in a final victory when he should appear as the glorious Leader and King of mankind" (*Theology of the N.T.*, p. 162).

### III. THE RESURRECTION

Our Lord and the New Testament writers all teach a future resurrection. Jesus describes it as an "angelic" life (Mark xii. 25), which is to take place "at the last day", i.e. at the Parousia ("I will raise him up at the last day", John vi. 54). Paul's summing up in 1 Cor. xv. 52 is, "The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible". It is needless to multiply references.

Many contend that the subjects of the resurrection are Christians only, and that such is the teaching of Christ and Paul. Good deeds are rewarded at the "Resurrection of *the just*" (Luke xiv. 14). Our Lord's argument for the fact of the resurrection proceeds on the basis that God is the God of the living, hence those whom He raises are "*sons of God*", being sons of the resurrection", and are "equal to the angels" (Luke xx. 36). In the Fourth Gospel, resurrection is the natural development of eternal life; "I am the resurrection and the life; *he that believeth in me*, though he die, yet shall he live" (John xi. 25). Paul teaches that it is only those who are "in Christ", i.e. in ethical and spiritual fellowship with Him, who are to be raised, whereas those who are "in Adam", i.e. in ethical and spiritual fellowship with him, die (1 Cor. xv. 22). To attain that resurrection, one must strive and sacrifice all ("If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead", Phil. iii. 11; cf. also Heb. xi. 35).

This view can only be held if one uses the critical knife with great savagery. E.g., the second resurrection of Rev. xx. 11f. is too hopelessly Judaistic to merit serious consideration. The statement which Luke puts into the mouth of Paul in Acts xxiv. 15, "There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust", could never have been uttered by Paul. The pronouncement of Jesus in John v. 28f., "all in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth . . . unto the resurrection of life and . . . unto the resurrection of judgment", was inserted by a clumsy redactor, who did not understand Jesus' doctrine of



the spiritual resurrection; to this same editor is due the insertion of the words "at the last day" in John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54; xii. 48. When Luke, after saying, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living", then proceeded foolishly to add, "for *all* live unto Him", he revealed that he completely misunderstood the passage! Surely this drastic dealing with our sources, however they be viewed, excites our suspicion of the validity of the interpretation which necessitates it.

When our Lord contended with the Sadducees, it is true that He spoke primarily of the resurrection of the righteous; but it was in order to show "that *the dead* are raised" (Luke xx. 37); Luke's additional clause "*all* live unto Him" is therefore likely to be original. Naturally the type of life to which the righteous and wicked should rise would be wholly different, so that the terms "resurrection of life" and "resurrection of judgment" are eminently suitable. As to Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. xv, it is not agreed on by all that the above interpretation of "in Adam" and "in Christ" is correct. Some, e.g., hold that the resurrection of Christ in its universal effects is here in view, just as the fall of Adam has occasioned universal death (see Peake's Com. *in loco*). But even if this interpretation be adhered to, it ought to be remembered that Paul was giving teaching *in relation to a special situation*, just as he did in the Thessalonian epistles and as our Lord did in the encounter with the Sadducees. It can no more justifiably be held that in 1 Cor. xv we have an exhaustive statement by Paul as to the scope (and even the grounds) of the resurrection, than that our Lord exhausted His thought on the extent (and grounds) of the resurrection in His discussion with the Sadducees. The fact that both in the case of Jesus and Paul we have apparently conflicting teaching on the resurrection on other occasions, surely justifies this conclusion. Combining with this the testimony of the book of Revelation, we feel justified in postulating that the uniform teaching of the New Testament writers as to the resurrection is that it is universal.

The *time* of the resurrection has proved another matter for contention. Paul's words in 2 Cor. v. 1, "If the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens", are construed to mean that he has now come to believe in a resurrection for the righteous immediately upon death. Charles

insists on rendering *ἐὰν . . . καταλυθῆ* as “when the earthly house . . . be dissolved”, and stresses the present *ἔχομεν* to imply an immediate possession of the house after death. This seems arbitrary, especially in view of the ideas Paul has expressed such a short time before in the first letter to the Corinthians, and in view of his known anticipation of the Parousia as being “soon”. It is not to be wondered at that Paul, with the prospect in view of a body conformed to that of Christ’s glory at His Parousia, groaned in his earnest desire for that body. Never did he cease to look forward to it (Phil. iii. 20). It is therefore unnecessary to construe 2 Cor. v. 1f. in any other way than that which sees in it an expression of a longing for the resurrection body which will be provided at the Day of Christ.

An important element in the New Testament teaching on the resurrection is that which sees it as in some sense an achieved fact in the lives of Christians. Just as there is a spiritual parousia to the individual who yields to Christ in faith, so there is experienced, with that parousia, a resurrection from spiritual death. The hour “now is” when the Son “quickeneth whom he will” (John v. 21, 25). Such a resurrection is a guarantee of the possession of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, and indeed the two terms “resurrection” and “eternal life” are all but synonymous in John. Hence, “He that believeth *hath* eternal life” (vi. 47), and this eternal life is the indestructible germ of the future resurrection life (“I will raise him up at the last day”, vi. 40). The same teaching appears in Paul: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein *ye were also raised with him* through faith in the working of God”, Col. ii. 12. So also Eph. ii. 6, “He quickened us together with Christ . . . and made us sit with him in heavenly places”. The possession of this life by the Spirit is, in Rom. viii. 11, stated to be the pledge of a future resurrection by the same Spirit; “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you”.

#### IV. THE JUDGMENT

As in the case of the former concepts, Judgment has a twofold nature, present and future.

It is an event of the future, *the* event with which we particularly associate the Second Advent. “When the Son of Man

shall come in his glory and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. xxv. 31f.). "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel" (Rom. ii. 16). The Judge is variously represented as God Himself or as Christ; e.g. in Matt. x. 32-33 our Lord appears to have a subordinate position, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father", yet the judgment scene of Matt. xxv sets forth Christ as sole judge. With this compare Rom. xiv. 10-12; "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of *Christ*" (v. 10), and "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to *God*" (v. 12). The two conceptions are reconciled in the above citation of Rom. ii. 16—God judges by Jesus Christ. Note also John. v. 30, "I can of mine own self do nothing; *as I hear I judge*; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me".

Judgment is also a process now in action. "He that believeth on him *is not condemned*; but he that believeth not *is condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God . . . For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, *neither cometh* to the light, lest his deeds be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth *cometh to the light*, that his deeds may be made manifest" (John iii. 18-21). Clearly, the separation of the sheep and goats is already taking place. The final judgment is but the manifestation of what the individual has already brought to pass by his own choice, plus the sentence of God upon that choice.

It is to be observed that in the foregoing passage, judgment is according to one's attitude to Christ, that attitude being revealed by deeds. It is nevertheless somewhat surprising to discover that the principle of judgment is almost uniformly according to works. The standard in the judgment scene of Matt. xxv is kindness shown, or neglected, in regard to the brethren of Christ. In Rom. ii. 6f., Paul enlarges on the statement that God "will render to every man according to his deeds". Concerning the judgment described in Rev. xx it is said, "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (v. 12). Then are faith and grace disregarded in that Day? *Μη γένοιτο!* Our Lord left no doubt on that point when He said that the

Christian, in virtue of his living relationship with Himself, "shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). Paul also held that though the unfruitful Christian is to suffer loss at the great Day, he "shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. vi. 15). We are compelled to conclude, therefore, that the separation made in life between the believer and unbeliever so completely avails at the Judgment as to cause a twofold application of the principle; for the unbeliever it reveals and measures condemnation already embraced (see Luke xii. 47-48, "many and few stripes") but for the believer it reveals and measures the "recompence of reward". There is the further consideration, adduced by Stevens following on Weiss, that "the equivalence between the awards and deeds done is not to be regarded in the rigid judicial sense, but as the natural correspondence of harvest and seed-time".<sup>1</sup> The Christian's deeds are Spirit-inspired, naturally flowing from the Christian life, and as such receive their due reward. We shall therefore be as dependent on faith and grace before the Judgment seat of Christ as at any time in life, or after life.

The place Christ assigns to judgment in the purpose of His incarnation sometimes causes difficulty. Jesus said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John xii. 47), and even, "I judge no man" (John viii. 15). Yet after the healing of the blind man, He stated "For judgment I am come into the world" (John ix. 39). The reconciliation of these apparently conflicting statements mainly lies in the emphasis Jesus puts on the prior purpose of His coming, viz. to save men. Since salvation depends on the attitude men adopt to Him in His redeeming work, their negative response determines their condemnation; hence the saving work of Christ necessitates as its corollary judgment. The Mediator must also be the Judge, but the former is the supreme office of Jesus.

#### V. THE KINGDOM

With the parousia (presence) of the King comes the Kingdom. As the first parousia was in humility, so came the Kingdom; as there is a mystic parousia unto the believer, so is the mystic Kingdom within; as there is to be a manifest parousia in "power and great glory", so will the Kingdom appear.

Constantly the great Parousia and the perfected Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> *Theology of N.T.*, p. 480.

are linked in the New Testament. At the institution of the Supper, Jesus declared, "I will not drink . . . of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come"; Paul's words are, "until *He* come". In the great judgment scene Jesus says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Paul charges Timothy "by his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 1). John sees the future realised when, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, he witnesses the worship of the elders, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God . . . because Thou hast taken thy great power, and hast begun to reign (*ἐβασίλευσας*)" (Rev. xi. 17).

The eternity of the Kingdom is everywhere presupposed. In the Gospels the Kingdom of God is frequently the parallel to eternal life, but viewed communally. Paul anticipates Christ reigning until every enemy is beneath His feet, and God is all in all (1 Cor. xv. 24f.). Peter explicitly mentions "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 11). John hears in the song that "He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15). In face of this, is there any room in the eschatology of the New Testament for a *temporary* eschatological kingdom on earth? Assuredly there is. Despite all the attempts to wrest the text of Rev. xx. 1-6 to prove the contrary, this passage cannot be fairly interpreted to mean anything other than the establishment of a kingdom on earth, after the Parousia and preceding the new heavens and new earth, with Christ and His chosen ones on the throne. Such is the all but unanimous verdict of modern commentators. Nevertheless, the antipathy expressed on all hands to this conception of John's is extraordinary. Conservative theologians, finding it difficult to reconcile with the eschatology of the rest of the New Testament, force an unnatural, and sometimes dishonest, meaning on it. Liberal authors, on the other hand, unanimously read a "Millennium" therein, and as unitedly reject it as Judaistic. Yet the idea is not so foreign to the genius of the New Testament as is so often alleged.

When our Lord instituted the Supper, He had in mind not only the perpetuating the memory of His death, but also the bequest He had made to his disciples through His death, viz. the kingdom. Hence He said, "I bequeath (or 'covenant') to you a kingdom, even as my Father covenanted to me, that

ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Luke xxii. 29-30). With similar import is the saying in Matt. xix. 28, "In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*". This clearly refers to the time depicted in Matt. xxv. 31f. Its analogy with Rev. xx. 4-6 is patent and its meaning, on this basis, is apparent. Confusion ensues, and an unnatural meaning is placed on the words of Jesus, if they are referred to the Church's life in heaven. In truth, the picture here given must be placed alongside that presented in Acts iii. 19-21, where Peter pleads for repentance on the part of his fellow Israelites, "that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets". There can be no reasonable doubt that "the restitution of all things" refers to the fulfilment of the declarations of the Old Testament prophets regarding the Messianic kingdom (so Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, I. 145-6). Further, Charles maintains, "The phrase 'seasons of refreshing' is hardly intelligible of any but an earthly Messianic kingdom" (*Eschatology*, p. 433). In other words, the *παλιγγενεσία* of Matt. xix. 28 = the *ἀποκατάστασις* of Acts iii. 21. If John is alone in stating explicitly the limitation of this phase of the eternal kingdom, he surely has not interpreted amiss. But we cannot be sure that he is alone. 1 Cor. xv. 24-28 is a well-scarred battle ground, but none can deny the consistency of the description here given with that in Rev. xx on the chiliastic interpretation; the order of the resurrections is: first Christ, then Christians at His coming, then the last company at the delivering up of the (millennial) kingdom, after the subjugation of all enemies (cf. Rev. xx. 7f., the last rebellion of history against God).

Scepticism is expressed by some when it is learned that 2 Esdras had a Messianic kingdom of 400 years, while quite possibly our author drew his number of 1000 from the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*. 2 Esdras need not worry us, since its apocalyptic section was not written until about A.D. 100, but 2 Enoch may well take our attention. In chapters xxxii-xxxiii of the latter, the writer reveals that history extends over 7000

years; the beginning of the eighth thousand will usher in the eternal ages. These figures are based on the six days of creation and the sabbath. Since one day is with the Lord as one thousand years, history will repeat its initiation by continuing six thousand years, after which the judgment will take place and a further thousand years of sabbath blessing for earth ensue. Then time will cease and eternity commence. The matter is not so clearly stated as this, but is plainly to be inferred from the writer; such, indeed, is the interpretation of Irenaeus, who writes, *δσαις . . . ἡμέραις ἐγένετο ὁ κόσμος, τσσαύταις χιλιοντάσι συντελεῖται*.<sup>1</sup> Do we then imply that our Christian apocalypticist held these views? Such an inference is not at all necessary. We know that John maintained polemical interests in his book against both the heathen cults and the Jews (cf. the "synagogue of Satan", ii. 9). One of the implications of his symbolism here, therefore, is, that though in truth this glorious kingdom would come, its arrival would not be as the Jews envisaged it, nor would its establishment be for the political ends they fondly held. It would come through the Christians' Messiah, whom they had rejected, and primarily for the glory of the new Israel of God. Even more important, however, is the use of the "thousand years", not for the sake of showing the *duration* of the kingdom, so much as *what* it is to be—the *sabbath rest of God for mankind*, a rest at present only entered upon by an elect company, but destined for the whole world. If this be a correct interpretation, are not both the conception and the logic it implies strikingly similar to the argument of the *auctor ad Hebraeos* in ch. iv? Still more closely connected is 2 Thess. i. 7, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted *rest* with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven"; Charles specifically links this notion with the "seasons of refreshing" of Acts iii. 19f. Then we ask, what is the *ἀνεσις* of Paul but the *καιροὶ ἀναπόξεως* of Peter and the *παλιγγενεσία* of Jesus and the *χίλια ἔτη* of John?

There appears to be one fatal objection to the consistency of the New Testament teaching on the Kingdom. John, in the Revelation, locates the last Judgment at the close of the Intermediate Kingdom, whereas it would seem that the apostles and our Lord make the Judgment coincide with the Parousia. On

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Haer.* 5.28.3. Cited by Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, p. 451.

this ground Charles contends that there can be no Millennium in the apostolic writers nor in the Gospels. This ignores one vital point, however, viz. that there is only *one* presentation of the eschatological process that has any claim to completeness, i.e. the Revelation of Jesus to John—and *that* presentation makes it specific! It is worthy of notice, however, that even the Revelation does not disclose it till almost the end of the book, despite its many proleptic descriptions of the Parousia. Who, indeed, would have dared to read the millennium, if we did not possess ch. xx, in Rev. xi. 17–18? “We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because Thou hast taken thy great power and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and *thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets . . . and to destroy them that destroy the earth*”. Here apparently, the Coming, the Kingdom, and the Judgment are all coincident; yet we know that we have to read into *ἐβασίλευσας* the whole “thousand years”. The same phenomenon is seen in xxii. 12, “Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me *to render to every man according to his works*”. In this sentence the whole series of events is surveyed and summed up. Then it appears that unless John has specific need to speak of the Intermediate Kingdom, he uses the same phraseology for the Second Coming and Judgment as the other New Testament authors. The inference to be drawn as to what may have been in the minds of the latter is clear. We must, nevertheless, be clear that John, in the Apocalypse, does speak of a judgment attendant on the Parousia, but it is a judgment on the generation of the End. In xiv. 7, an angel cries, “Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment is come”. That judgment is portrayed (from v. 14 on) under the figures of the harvest of wheat (= the people of God) and the gathering of grapes (= the unrepentant). This picture is undoubtedly drawn from our Lord’s parable of the Tares (Matt. xiii. 24f.), in the interpretation of which Jesus speaks of His Parousia, Judgment and establishment of his eschatological kingdom (Matt. xiii. 40–43). That occasion, says John, is the commencement of the Millennium. In view of the parallel ideas expressed in the Parable of the Tares and the Judgment scene of Matt. xxv, there can be no doubt that John interpreted them both in the same way; his version, using



different figures, is given in Rev. vi. 17 ("The great day of Their Wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"), and Rev. xix. 11-20.<sup>1</sup>

Just as John distinguishes two judgments, so he differentiates between the two resurrections. At the Parousia only the saints are raised (designated as the martyrs and the resisters of "the beast", since the resistance had already commenced and the last hour had conceivably struck—the intervening generations not being thought of). The unrighteous dead are raised for judgment at the close of the millennial kingdom (Rev. xx. 4-6, 12-13). Here again, this accords with hints given in the Gospels and Epistles; cf. the rewarding at "the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 14), the "better resurrection" for which men died (Heb. xi. 35) and the *ἐξανάστασις ἡ ἐκ νεκρῶν* for which Paul strove (Phil. iii. 11).

Speculation as to the nature of the millennial kingdom is unprofitable. We have a hint in the Transfiguration scene as to its commencement, and another in Gen. iii as to the conditions of life on earth without evil. The latter passage perhaps provides a clue as to why this period closes in a rebellion of man; its occasion and quenching are described in the language of Ezek. xxxviii and xxxix. Thus arrives the second resurrection and the last judgment, the consignment of the wicked to Gehenna, and the passing of the righteous into the new heavens and new earth (Rev. xxi. 1f.: cf. Matt. v. 18; Mark xiii. 31; Rom. viii. 20-22; 2 Pet. iii. 4-13). At last the ideal Kingdom of God reaches its final stage and perfect realisation. The nations are one, and one with God; Christ and God are "all in all", sharing a "reign in life" with a race of kings and priests. With this great purpose in view, the last cry of the dying Saviour, *τετέλεσται*, gains a new and deeper meaning; it shall "shortly" receive its perfect fulfilment.

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<sup>1</sup> It may be remarked that this choice of symbols which are organically unconnected yet expressive of the same idea, viz. harvest, separation of sheep and goats, deliverance and destruction in battle, should make us realise how great care we need to exercise in the gathering of their essential truth. It should also silence that type of objector who, e.g., points out that the scene in Matt. xxv. 31f. is taken from 1 Enoch lxii; the symbolism is indeed derived from the apocalypticist, but the *teaching* is Christ's. In this case it is the principle of judgment that is illustrated. Though we need not go so far as Burkitt, when he says (*Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 25) that in Matt. xxv. 31f. Jesus is simply relating a well-known story *but with a difference*, we can see what he means. The same general principle applies to the whole eschatological teaching of the New Testament, which, though it oftentimes uses external forms, nevertheless conveys the revelation of the Holy Spirit.