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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VI.

THE SECOND-ADVENT THEORY REVIEWED. ✓

BY THE REV. EDMUND B. FAIRFIELD.

By the "Second-advent Theory" I mean the theory that teaches a future personal coming of Christ to the earth; or, in other words, a future incarnation. With some, this advent is to be premillennial; with others, it is to be post-millennial. With many, it is an event to be looked for soon.

That when Christ speaks of his "coming," he does not always refer to any reincarnation, or to any visible advent, will scarcely be denied, I presume, by any; for example, when he says, in the fourteenth of John: "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"; "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you"; "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"; and in numberless other similar examples. It is not to be assumed, therefore, that his "coming," so-called, necessarily implies a second incarnation, either before the millennium or after it.

In discussing the theory, as I have defined it, it has not been entirely easy for me to decide as to the order of presenting the subject; but my final conclusion was, that I could perhaps not do better than to take up the different points in the same order as that in which I studied them.

In doing this I come first to the principle of interpretation that is generally, if not universally, assumed by Adventists of every type, that, in interpreting the prophecies,

the rule is, that in giving the time of any event predicted a day stands for a year. And so the passage in the eighth chapter of Daniel, speaking of two thousand and three hundred days, and also those in the twelfth chapter (verses 7, 11, and 12), "It shall be for a time, times, and a half" (meaning three and one-half years, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days), "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days," and "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days," mean respectively 2,300, 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 years.

Now that a day stands for a year is not said in these chapters in connection with the mention of these numbers, and of course there must be some show of proof outside. This proof is submitted by a reference to Dan. ix. 24-27; also to Ezek. iv. 4-6.

We take up this last passage first. It reads thus: "Lie thou upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And again, when thou shalt have accomplished these, thou shalt lie upon thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: *I have appointed thee each day for a year*" (Ezek. iv. 4-6). This last clause is supposed by our Adventist brethren to be a general statement directing us how to interpret prophetic numbers. The pertinency of the argument does not appear. It seems, upon the face of it, to be simply an object-lesson, impressing upon the mind of the prophet the number of the years by representing them in this way. How many scores of

times I have heard this clause—"I have appointed thee each day for a year"—quoted as the law for all prophetic numbers, I cannot pretend to say. Enough surely to have made it true if the oft repetition of an idle fancy could transform it into solid fact. But I think we may waive this aside without further ceremony.

The passage from Daniel is a much more plausible and effective one, as it is addressed to a popular audience, composed of those to whom the original Hebrew is not familiar. This passage I quote in full: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations shall be determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator" (Dan. ix. 24-27).

Now it being admitted on all hands that a week means here seven years, it is not unnaturally inferred that a day stands for a year. The whole difficulty has grown out of an unfortunate translation. The word translated "week" does not mean week at all in our ordinary sense. It means

simply "a seven." In this passage it is plural as well as singular; and whether it is seven days, or seven weeks, or seven months, or seven years, *depends entirely upon the context.* Here the context is very plain, and there is no dispute as to its meaning seven years—not because a day stands for a year, but because *years are the thing spoken about.* The prophet had been studying the prophecies relating to the captivity from which he was suffering with others who had been carried away to Babylon. The seventy years were coming to a close. He fell to praying and making confession. The angel Gabriel appeared to communicate to him marvelous things which were to come to pass in the future; as though he said to him, "Your seventy years of captivity are drawing to an end, but seventy sevens [of years, of course] are determined upon thy people." And then he goes on to tell him how these seventy sevens of years were to be filled up. Simply translate correctly, and it is plain. The Hebrew words, even to one who does not understand them, indicate the relationship between the "seventy" and the "sevens"—*shaw-boo-eem shib-by-eem—shibbyeem* meaning "seventy," and *shawboo-eem* meaning "sevens" (in the plural).

Opening any Hebrew lexicon, one finds the definition of *shaw-boo-ah* (the singular) given as meaning "a seven." *Shaw-boo-eem* (or *shib-by-oth*) *yaw-meem* (a "seven of days") is the full form of the word "week" in our ordinary sense. If one has no acquaintance with the Hebrew characters, he may look into Young's Analytical Concordance, which gives no other meaning as the primary one, but "a seven." No theory of a day standing for a year receives any support from these chapters in Daniel.

That this theory in the general interpretation of prophecy is a mere dream, will sufficiently appear when we begin to apply it to the prophecies of the Old Testament, in all other cases. The first prophecy involving time is

found in Gen. vi. 3, given to Noah: "Man's days shall be a hundred and twenty years still upon the earth." Certainly no one will claim that this meant 43,200 years, which would be required if a day stood for a year. The next is to Abraham, in Gen. xv. 13, telling him that his posterity should be strangers in a strange land, where they should suffer affliction for four hundred years, which would sum up 114,000 years, on this theory. In Num. xiv. 33 it is predicted that the children of Israel should wander in the wilderness forty years; certainly not 11,400 years. The captivity of the Jews in Babylon was foretold to be seventy years, by Isaiah, and also by Jeremiah. A day for a year would make this captivity to last 25,200 years, instead of seventy. In short, there is not a single case of prophecy from first to last (unless this in Daniel be an exception) in which a year means any more than a year, or a day more than a day. Now, as all the attempts to fix the time of the second coming of Christ as near at hand have been based upon this assumption, that a day in these prophecies in the eighth and twelfth chapters of Daniel stands for a year, and as nothing of that sort is said in connection with them, and as in every other case of prophecy it is universally conceded that no such principle applies, I think we must agree that that theory evanishes into the thin air.

There are many other difficulties connected with this interpretation, that a day stands for a year, of which I may mention a few as examples. At the end of 2,300 days, the sanctuary was to be cleansed. This is made to mean the burning-up of the world, or its purification, so as to be fit for Christ to reign in; an interpretation in face of the one uniform meaning of "sanctuary," and strikingly absurd when we see what the connection requires. I quote the whole passage: "He [the little horn] magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was

taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said, Unto 2,300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. viii. 11-14). The simple reading of the whole passage is a sufficient refutation of the interpretation which makes this cleansing to mean the purification of the earth by fire, or by any other means.

So also, after the 1,335 days are mentioned, the angel said to Daniel, "Go thy way: thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days"; certainly not at the end of 1,335 years. And yet even this has been insisted on—that Daniel must have been brought into the world somehow at the end of these years!

The thousand fancies that have played their part in finding what events can possibly fit into the 1,260, 1,290, 1,335, and 2,300 years are in striking contrast with the rational interpretation which finds the events in the compass of the time as days, not years. So far as I know, the exact scholarship of the world is all on one side—rejecting entirely the theory of a day for a year, in the interpretation of these numbers.

Next I came to the study of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and the corresponding chapters in Mark and Luke. And here I made some interesting discoveries. (To me they were discoveries: to the reader they may not be: but I give them in order, as they come up.) First, I noticed the question which the disciples asked, in reply to which Christ spoke the wonderful words recorded in these chapters. Jesus had just been at the temple, and the dis-

ciples had taken pains to show him the wonders of its architecture, and he had said to them, "See ye all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Then came the question, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the signs of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Here I discovered that the word translated "world" did not mean "world" at all in our sense of the term, but "a long period of time." Very unfortunately there are two entirely different words which are both translated in our Authorized Version by the same word—"world."¹ They are *kosmos* and *aion*. *Kosmos* means the material, visible world, and *aion* means something entirely different. Both words have been transferred into our own tongue, and it will be convenient for me sometimes to use them in this form—"cosmos" and "eon." "Eon" is a word of time, and never of place or physical form. "Cosmos" is a word of place (or form), and never of time. And when I had traced the thing through I found that the end of the "cosmos" was never spoken of—*never*. If this material world ever comes to an end, it will not be in fulfillment of any word of prophecy. Absolutely the only sentence in the Bible that alludes to the end of this globe is found in Ecc. i. 4: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but *the earth*

¹The fact that the word "world" was used in these different senses in our "authorized translation" is not at all chargeable to any incompetency on the part of the translators in 1611. If the reader will turn to the word in the Century Dictionary, he will discover that "world" originally meant "an age of man; a generation." A lengthy quotation from a work published in 1577 is given to illustrate that usage. Its meaning, soon after that, began to change: so that in 1611 it was used also in another sense, very similar to that which it now has: at the same time retaining its first meaning: so that the translators might consider themselves as fully authorized to use it in both senses. At present it has entirely lost its original meaning, and so is misleading to the ordinary English reader. It is this fact which makes it unfortunate.

abideth forever." But the reader will want more than the writer's say-so upon so important a point as this. Let him open, then, any Greek lexicon, and he will find that only one thing is taught by them all—and that is, that *aiōn* means an age, a period of time,—ordinarily a very long period. (Etymologically it means, "always existing.") The writer has examined eight or ten of the most reputable lexicons in this country and in Europe, and never has found a suggestion of any other meaning. Occasionally we may find an apparently close resemblance between *cosmos* and *eon*, which may lead us astray, without careful discrimination—such as we have in our own language. For example, one may say, "The greatest statesman in the history of the *world* is Moses, the lawgiver of Israel," and another may respond, "Yes: I agree in the belief that *all the ages* have produced no one who was his equal." The two have expressed the same general sentiment, but in a different way. The history of the "world" is the history of the globe, and of those who have lived upon it. The ages are periods of time: and their history would cover the same ground. The men of this world and the men of this age are terms used in a loose way as synonymous. But no one is misled; for we understand our own language, and know that "world" means the physical globe, and "age" means something else. The *place* in which I live and the *time* at which I live are very distinct. *A period of time comes to an end, but the place does not.*

We are all aware that the Septuagint was the translation used by the Apostles much more than the Hebrew Bible itself. The Hebrew had well-nigh become a dead language at the time of Christ's being on the earth. Hence the importance of referring to the use of Greek terms in the Septuagint as helping us to the meaning of the Greek of the New Testament. So after examining all the lexicons in several countries to which the writer could get access, and

finding no variation in the meaning of *aion*, he sought most carefully and laboriously to ascertain whether there was any variation from the classic Greek in the use of this word in the Septuagint, which might have led the writers of the New Testament to employ it in a different sense from that which it uniformly has in the classic literature of Greece. Accordingly he examined every passage in the Septuagint in which this word is found. There are more than 420—(his count made exactly 433). And it was found that everywhere it is a word of time—never of place. Almost always it means a very long period of time. “From everlasting to everlasting” is literally “from eon to eon.” “The Lord reigneth for ever and ever” is “for an eon and an eon.”

In the New Testament the word is used 122 times; and generally where it is translated “world” or “worlds,” there is no very obvious change in the general sense. But in one or two cases it is so translated where the true idea is entirely lost. Take, for example, the third verse of the eleventh of Hebrews: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God: so that which is seen was not made of things which do appear.” This verse is manifestly invested with a fog, which entirely disappears when the true version is given. The argument against our translation may be thus briefly stated: (1) As already remarked, there is no authority whatever, either in the classic Greek or the Jewish Greek, for ever expressing any other idea than that of a period of time by this word *aion*, whether singular or plural. (2) The Revisers have themselves disclaimed in a quiet but most effective way their own translation, by inserting in the margin, “Gr. ages.” Now if “ages” is the proper equivalent for the Greek, and as the Greek, and that only, is inspired, why should not the English equivalent be introduced into the body of the text? (3) The doctrine of a plurality of worlds

is not brought out in the Bible. It is probably true; but the Bible was not intended to teach us modern astronomy. *The word cosmos* (meaning "the world") *is never used in the plural.* There is but one *cosmos.* The only apparent variation from that is the way in which the Bible speaks of this world, and of the world to come: but it is *aion*, and not *cosmos*, in that case. *Cosmos* is used 184 times in the New Testament, and 28 times in the Septuagint, but it is always singular. *Aion* is often used in the plural, as it is here. It should be translated "ages," or by some equivalent form of speech. (4) The true translation of this verse would be something like this: "By faith we understand that the ages were fitted together by God's word: so that the thing which is seen to-day did not come to pass in accordance with the appearance of things." When men, for example, looked upon old Tyre, or Babylon, or Nineveh, or Thebes, or Jerusalem, it was no human foresight that predicted the future desolation of those cities. Only the omniscience of God could have indited the prophecies respecting future events which have so impressively contradicted all the expectations or hopes that men would have built and did build, upon the evident look of things as they once appeared. There are at least two other inaccuracies in our translation of this verse besides the main one involving the use of *aion*.

These inaccuracies have been suggested in the rendering which has been given. Where our translation says, "the worlds *were framed,*" the writer has rendered, "the ages were fitted together"; the verb being *katartizo*—the same used in 1 Cor. i. 10, where the translation is, "that ye be perfectly joined together." The ages were fitted to each other, not by the foresight of man, but by God's foresight. So when our translation says, "that which is seen *was not made* of things which do appear," the word is *ginomai*, which is translated properly, "come to pass." "That

which is seen has not come to pass according to the appearance of things," is a much more exact rendering. To change the meaning of "ages" so as to make it mean "worlds" required the perversion of both the other words—*katartizo* and *ginomai*—from their ordinary meaning. The Revisers, I think, would have corrected the entire verse, but for their limitations.

The question, then, to which our Lord addressed himself was, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the *eon*?" They were approaching the end of an *eon*—the end of that long period, which was just closing, when most of the New Testament was written. John the Baptist had come preaching "the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*." When Christ sent forth the twelve he had said to them, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven *is at hand*." A year before the time of that conversation of which we have a record in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, he had told them that the Son of man was to come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels, adding, in the *same sentence*, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here who shall not taste of death, *till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*" (Matt. xvi. 27, 28). Mark and Luke also record this conversation of the previous year. (That conversation was in Cæsarea Philippi.) So the questions, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the *eon*?" were most natural on this second occasion.

Another thing was noticed in this talk on the Mount of Olives, namely, that he said to them, after going through with the signs,—such as wars and rumors of wars; famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places; great tribulation, such as had never been before, nor should ever be again; the coming of false Christs, and false prophets; the sun should be darkened, the moon

should not give her light, the stars should fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens should be shaken, —“When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors,” adding immediately, “Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*” The remarkable fact was noticed without a parallel, that each of the three Synoptists had given these same most solemn and emphatic words.

Now let the reader observe that the very first question which the disciples asked, was, “*When shall these things be?*” Hence the significance of the declaration, “This generation shall not pass away till all these things shall be fulfilled,” cannot be overestimated. It was the prominent inquiry in their minds. Christ did not give them a false answer, nor an ambiguous one.

For years I tried faithfully to find that this did not mean what it says. I tried to make it mean that the fulfillment was to *begin* in that generation; but I could not. There was not a single sentence in the Greek Testament, nor in the Greek Septuagint, nor in any Greek lexicon, upon which could be based such an interpretation. Then I tried to find that the word “generation” might mean the church, or the Jewish nation. But no: there was no help in that direction. The word *genea*, here translated “generation,” means generation *just as we use it*. It is used forty-one times in the New Testament, and ninety-one times in the Septuagint, and always in the same sense. No word in the Greek Testament is any more uniform in its meaning. And then the fact was recalled that the other form of expression, “There be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they shall see the Son of man coming in his kingdom,” was entirely unambiguous, and yet expressed the same fact.

But may be the reader will ask, “Does not Peter speak

of the church as "a chosen *generation*, and a royal priesthood?" Most assuredly, according to our translation he does. But the translation ought to say "a chosen *race*," or "a chosen sort of people." It is a different word, with a different usage. A kind of second cousin to *genea*,—namely, *genos*,—but by no means identical with the other.

When we adopt any principle of interpretation that can allow us to change the plain, uniform meaning of any word in that saying of Christ,—a saying repeated by every one of the Synoptists,—Matthew, Mark, and Luke,—we are all at sea; and without pilot, rudder, or compass. And yet every system of Second-adventism that I ever heard of, is obliged to eliminate that passage, or give it some meaning which the plainest laws of interpretation utterly forbid. It would seem as if our Lord, not only, but the inspired Evangelists, intended that whatever else might be misunderstood, this should not be. Christ did not use that form of emphasis very often,—“*verily*,”—*and never in any other instance did he add that most impressive sentence*, “Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” But Matthew, Mark, and Luke all alike give that also.

“Are we to understand, then, that in that first century, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the sun was darkened, and the moon; that the stars fell from heaven; that the Son of man came in the clouds of heaven, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God?” I answer:—

1. Yes: we most assuredly are to believe, that *in the sense* in which these expressions were meant to be understood, just exactly that took place, because Christ, in uttering these predictions, expressly declared in the most emphatic way possible, that that generation should not pass till they were all accomplished.

2. These highly wrought figures of speech are so often

found in the Old Testament that they were perfectly well understood by Christ, and the Apostles, and all the people, to be only the oriental drapery, the rhetorical costume, in which the great and stirring events which were soon to take place, were set forth. We must bear in mind that the Old Testament constituted a large and important part of the literature with which the hearers of Christ were familiar. These Old Testament Scriptures were read in their synagogues every Sabbath. And so this furnishes the best help in interpreting the New. Especially do the prophecies of the Old Testament aid us in interpreting the prophecies of the New.

Turn, for example, to the thirteenth chapter of Isaiah, which is entitled "The Burden of Babylon," and see in what forms of speech the destruction of that city is foretold: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to 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 the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of her place" (ver. 9, 10, 13). Did any of those things happen literally in the destruction of Babylon?

Take, as another example, this same prophet's prediction of the capture of Jerusalem, and the laying waste of Palestine by Sennacherib: "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down. . . . The earth is utterly broken, is clean dissolved. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man. . . . The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed" (xxiv. 1, 19, 20, 23).

Another, in which the judgments of God are denounced against Edom, is especially interesting, because no imagery found in the words of Christ as he foretells his second

coming, and the so-called "end of the world," is so highly colored as that used by Isaiah in this prophecy: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host shall fade away. . . . The sword of the Lord has drunk its fill in heaven: it shall come down upon Edom to judgment. . . . The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever" (xxxiv. 4, 5, 9, 10).

And not alone does Isaiah indulge in such gorgeous drapery. When Ezekiel predicts the overthrow of the king of Egypt, these are his words: "When I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark: I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee" (xxxii. 7, 8).

When Joel foretells the desolations produced by the locusts, he does it in such forms of speech as these: "The day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: . . . a great people and a strong. . . . The earth quaketh before them: the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining" (ii. 1, 2, 10).

You will see that there is not one form of speech employed by Christ and the apostles in foretelling the desolations of Palestine and the destruction of Jerusalem—from Matthew to Revelation—that they might not have drawn from the old prophets in their predictions of the calamities that were denounced against Babylon, Edom, Jerusalem in the olden time, and Egypt. And the reader of Josephus must conclude that more terrible things never could have befallen those ancient cities and countries than fell to the lot of the Jews in the lifetime of the Apostle John. The highly wrought figurative speech of Isaiah and Ezekiel and

Joel did not mean the end of the cosmos in the days of Pharaoh and Sennacherib, and the son of Amoz: neither did the same figures of speech mean the end of the cosmos when used by Christ and Peter and John. The Bible is its own best interpreter. Those who were familiar with the Old Testament were not misled by these strong Orientalisms.

I must call attention to one more illustration. It is found in the Eighteenth Psalm, in which David describes his merely personal deliverance from the hand of his enemies, especially of Saul. He prayed for victory: and here is his account of God's coming to help him: "The earth shook and trembled. The foundations also of the mountains were moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. . . . He bowed the heavens and came down. A smoke came out of his nostrils and fire out of his mouth. Thick darkness was under his feet. He rode upon a cherub and did fly. He flew upon the wings of the wind. . . . He thundered in the heavens: he uttered his voice: hail stones and coals of fire were the arrows which he shot. . . . The channels of the waters appeared: the foundations of the world were laid bare."

Does anybody imagine that there were literally earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and tidal waves and terrific thunder-storms sent to David's help? Those who heard the prophecies of Christ on the Mount of Olives, and of John from the Isle of Patmos (for, as John published his Apocalypse before either of the Gospels was issued, he had given his version of the terrible things that were to come to pass about the year 70 in the first part of that marvelous book: so he had no occasion to repeat in his Gospel what the other Evangelists have given in their narratives; and Peter also, in his second Epistle, had set it forth to the churches), were all accustomed to such modes of speech. From the beginning they had heard the reading of such

words every Sabbath in their synagogues. They knew that the sun and moon and stars had never literally been disturbed at Babylon, or Jerusalem, or Egypt, or Edom. They knew that all this was the rhetorical costume of the thought. Those who survived with John the events of the year 70 knew that every word uttered on the Mount of Olives had been fulfilled—just as it was intended to be understood—in the momentous events which had taken place in their day.

“But do you really believe and teach that the third chapter of Second Peter referred to the times of the overthrow of Jerusalem; or do you reject from the canon this Epistle?” So it was asked of the writer a while ago.

He answers most decidedly, that he does accept of Second Peter as belonging properly to the canon, and as decidedly does he believe with fullest conviction that every word of it was fulfilled at that time. In setting this matter forth, three things may be said:—

1. This Epistle indicates most plainly that the events of which the Apostle speaks, especially in this third chapter, were to occur in the *near* future; so that those to whom he was writing were personally interested and concerned in them. There is a feeling of the *intense* in the whole style of the chapter. The air which the writer breathes is full of oxygen. No one can read the passage in the original, or in any translation that is at all accurate, without being impressed with the urgency of it. Something should be done, and done now, and done by the very persons to whom he was writing, to get ready for events which were just at hand. It has the atmosphere of a military encampment, amid the blare of trumpets, calling to battle-array, with the enemy in sight, and coming on at double-quick. He “stirs up” (ver. i.) their minds vigorously. His appeal is all on fire: “Seeing that all these things are about to be dissolved, what manner of persons

ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and *hastening* unto the coming of the day of God?" Now, bearing in mind that the date of this writing is the year 66; that, more than thirty years before, the Master had said, "There be some of you standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"; remembering that Peter had heard him say this, and had also heard him say those other words of terrible import: "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: . . . and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn," adding in the same breath, "Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled,*"—it is not strange that the soul of the Apostle should be charged with the electric fire. The fulfillment was already beginning: The mourning of the tribes was even now swelling in a deep undertone, and was ready to break out into a wail such as had not been heard since the world began: no, nor ever should be heard again.

With this understanding of it, the writing of Peter is entirely intelligible. But on the theory that the Apostle was writing of things yet two thousand years in the future, it is quite impossible to understand it. Just imagine, for a moment, that Peter is saying to his readers (or better, to his hearers; for no doubt all these Epistles were written to be read to the people in their assemblies), "Beloved, this world is one day to be burned up. Not in your day or mine; not in a thousand years. Not in eighteen hundred years. But some day in the remote future it is to be burned up. Seeing then, that all these things shall, two thousand years hence, or later, be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye who are now living to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens,

being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—two thousand years hence!"

Such a juxtaposition of ideas, such basing of a fervid appeal to present Christian life and action *upon a remote event in the history of the physical globe*, would be so absurd that it seems well-nigh irreverent even to hypothecate it. The Apostle Peter was never guilty of such preposterous preaching as that. No man outside of a madhouse would be expected to put things together in such a fashion as that. Yet just that was what Peter did; or—

2. If he appealed to them in view of events which *he supposed to be near at hand*, but which were yet many centuries distant,—what, in that case, becomes of his being an inspired teacher? If he were *mistaken*, by more than eighteen hundred years, as to the *time* of the events which he foretells, what ground of confidence have we left that he might not have been mistaken in the occurrence of the events at all?

How is it that some of my Second-advent brethren hold to the destruction of this world, except that Peter and others of the New Testament writers (as they understand them) so declare? Yet if Peter's prophetic gift was not adequate to save him from an error of more than eighteen centuries as to the *time* when this catastrophe should take place, what ground of faith is left us, either in his prophetic gift or in any divine inspiration whatever?

The preachers of fifty-eight to sixty-three years ago who went everywhere declaring that the end of the world was to be in 1843, lost their hold upon the people when the year 1844 smiled upon a world not yet in ashes. They ought to have lost it. Those other preachers, thirty-five to forty years ago, who placed the date of this catastrophe in 1866, had no more any power with their hearers when the year passed, and their predictions had failed. This was inevitable. And the good brethren and learned doc-

tors who tell us that the Apostles were all mistaken about the *time* of the coming of Christ and the end of the world, may not know it (they certainly do not intend it), but just as certainly they are in fact destroying the very foundations of all faith in apostolic teaching, and indeed in the prophetic teachings of Christ himself. And yet, if those predictions *have not already been fulfilled*, there is no other possible conclusion. For I do not know of a passage of Scripture quoted to prove the yet future personal coming of Christ, that was not spoken at the time of an event *then near at hand*—within the lifetime of the generation then upon the earth. I read a little while ago a long discourse, preached in Chicago, upon this subject, in which the eloquent preacher quoted from the words of Christ and the Apostles sixteen passages to prove Christ's second coming as still in the future and near at hand: and I found in the immediate context of every one of them most clear and unequivocal proof that they were spoken of an event or of events *just about to take place then*.

The quotation of "proof-texts" upon this subject has more than once reminded the writer of a little bit of personal experience which the reader will pardon him for introducing here. Coming home one evening with a letter in hand, I said to my family, consisting of children and boarders, all of whom were in a healthful mood for a harmless practical joke (the younger members of the household had retired): "I have a letter from my sister J. Would you like to hear a sentence or two?" "Yes, yes: hear, hear." I read, "I am expecting to come to you next week." "Good, good: I'll meet her at the train," cried one. "I'll give her up my room," said another. "I'll stay at home from college to see her," shouted a third. One of the company at this point quietly asked: "What is the date of your letter?" Just as quietly I said: "It is only twenty-two years since it was written!" Of course it was well for

me to make a speedy escape from that room. And yet who has not heard, time without number, such passages as "Lo, I come quickly," quoted to prove that the second coming of Christ was now to be expected very soon? words uttered more than eighteen hundred years ago—and if ever they were worthy of belief, must have been fulfilled more than that long ago—quoted as if they were just now spoken from heaven? But for the good intentions of those who are guilty of this "fallacy of quotation," what else could it be called but consummate trifling with the word of God? I knew that I was, for the moment, trifling with my sister's old letter; but I did it for a moral purpose, and to illustrate and enforce a principle of interpretation that it was important to learn, namely, that a disconnected sentence, taken from any document, without reference to its date, may make a very false impression. This is, perhaps, the most common and the most hurtful of all fallacies in the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures.

Just here I may say a word or two in allusion to some things which I have often heard repeated. One is this, that Christ had himself said, that of the day and hour of his coming, even he himself did not know—only the Father. But the reader will find that this was said directly after the saying, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled"; adding "but of the *day* and *hour* knoweth no man, not even the Son, but only the Father." It was to be in that generation: it was to take place before some who were then present should taste of death. That general statement was enough for all practical purposes. The precise day and hour had not been revealed.

And another thing often said is, that as with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, so any time will be "quickly." But we surely must not forget that when God speaks to men it is in their own language, and when he

says to the children of men, "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice: behold, *now* is the day of salvation," it will be a little dangerous to say that "with God it is always to-day," and that it is "one eternal now" in his reckoning. I do not know of anything else in which men are so constantly guilty of that sort of fallacious interpretation except in this matter of the second advent.

3. The third thing which I wish to say is this, that, upon the hypothesis that this Epistle of Peter referred to events then close at hand, the record of which is authentic history, there is not a form of speech in it which is not justified by the laws of language to which Peter and all his readers and hearers were thoroughly accustomed. Suppose Peter had written thus: "Beloved, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The streams of the earth shall be turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone. The earth shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched day or night: the smoke thereof shall go up forever"; suppose he had written that—how eloquent men would have become in showing that such language was too plain to be misunderstood! They would have said, "Such words *must* refer to the end of all things. The host of heaven is to be *dissolved*. No form of words could be more emphatic in setting forth the absolute closing-up of the material universe. And then how plainly the language in reference to the earth must imply its utter destruction, and nothing short of it! So graphic! So explicit! So detailed! The streams turned into pitch! The dust into brimstone! The earth itself becoming burning pitch! And the smoke of the destroying fires to go up forever!"

Those who should question the literal interpretation of such "unmistakable forms of speech" would be chided for

their unbelief, and warned against the doom of those who take away from the words of the book.

Every one of you will admit that the substitution of the words which I have thus put into the mouth of the Apostle instead of the tenth verse of this third chapter would increase, and not diminish, its intensity—would make the destruction of the earth more absolutely certain, and not less so. And yet I have but copied, word for word, the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Edom, instead of that of Peter which is understood to mean the end of all things. Assuming that Peter's prophecy was of the calamities which came to Palestine about the year 70 (which I most fully believe it was), it is even then not by any means so highly colored as Isaiah's, that is known to refer to Idumea. We can understand why. For although all the prophecies of the New Testament, like those of the Old, deal in strong imagery, yet each writer, endowed with the gift of prophecy, has still his own personal characteristics. Had Isaiah, instead of Peter, been the seer of Palestine's desolation, the picture had been still more highly colored than Peter's hand has made it. The calamities that befell the land of Israel in the seventh decade of the first century undoubtedly far surpassed those of Idumea, as predicted by the son of Amoz.

There is not a word in this third chapter of Second Peter that ever suggested to those who read it or heard it read, in Peter's lifetime, or John's, any thought of the literal destruction of the heavens and the earth. All their lives they had read from Isaiah about the sun and the moon and the stars being darkened, when it was merely the desolation of Babylon that was meant by it. They had heard, times without number, that all the host of heaven should be dissolved, and the heavens should be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host should fade away: and that the streams of the earth were to be turned into pitch,

and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the earth was to become burning pitch, to be quenched neither day nor night, but the smoke was to go up forever, when they knew that this was only the rhetoric in which the desolation of Idumea was clothed. They had listened to Ezekiel in similar strains when it was the king of Egypt that was to be overthrown; and when Peter had employed similar forms of speech—though on a lower key, for he was a fisherman, and not a poet—in prophesying of the terrible times that filled up the years from the very date of this Epistle to the final overthrow of Jerusalem, those who passed through the agonies of that unparalleled epoch never thought of charging Peter with overdrawing the picture, but only said, “Oh, if Isaiah had done it, with what flashes of lightning would he have set all the heavens ablaze!”

Much stress is laid upon such expressions as “the last day,” “the last days,” and “the last times,” as proving that this world is to come to an end; and that, at the time of the destruction of this material globe, the final judgment is to take place. But it goes without saying, that, as there was an end of the Jewish dispensation, and as there is to be an end to every human life, these expressions alone do not settle the question. It is a fit subject for examination as to whether these modes of speech should be referred to the end of the world, or to some other end, which may fittingly be spoken of as the last day.

Proceeding with such an investigation, we shall find that in Acts ii. 17 Peter quotes from the Prophet Joel these words: “It shall come to pass *in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: . . . and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come”—telling his

hearers distinctly *that they were then realizing* the fulfillment of that prophecy. (By the way, that shows how Peter understood those emphatic expressions which are so often quoted as yet to be fulfilled.) *Those were the last days.* We have this direct testimony of the Apostle.

In 2 Tim. iii. 1, Paul speaks of the perilous times coming "in the last days," and proceeds to exhort Timothy to be ready for them in such a way as manifestly to indicate that he was to encounter them; and that, too, before long.

Heb. i. 2 says, "God hath *in these last days* spoken unto us by his Son." This is the accepted version from an old Greek text. The Revised Version translates from a revised Greek text, "In the last of these days," but with no substantial change of meaning.

James v. 3 reads, "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days"—R. V. reads "*in the last days.*" Both forms of expression imply that those days were the last days.

1 Peter i. 20 speaks of Christ as manifested "*in these last times.*"

2 Peter iii. 3 alludes to scoffers that should come "in the last days," as though they were then living, and the people to whom he was writing needed to be on their guard against them.

1 John ii. 18 says, "It is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists: whereby we know that it *is* the last time."

All these words were written before the year 70, and so explain the understood meaning of these expressions as referring to the end of the old dispensation, which was then passing away.

Besides these seven examples of the use of these words, there are six others in which the expressions "the last day" and "the last time" are used, and I think that a critical study of them will show that they are used with refer-

ence to the end of human life; and not at all as referring to the end of this material globe. Indeed, I do not find any form of speech in the Bible which properly interpreted refers to the end of this material earth. That *may* sometimes occur; but the Bible has nothing to say about it. There is certainly nothing in science to suggest that this planet is anywhere near the end of its career. The Creator, since in the beginning he created the heavens and the earth, has spent, according to the unanimous agreement of scientists, many millions of years in fitting it up for human habitation—millions of ages before there was a human being upon it. Were any man to spend ten years in building a house, it would be assumed that it was his expectation that it should be occupied by some one *at least as long as it took to build it*. Of course I do not pretend to know that this planet is yet to be inhabited for millions of years, but I most assuredly believe it—*on general principles*. I am sure that the Bible has not a word to say to the contrary. The earth is but in its earliest infancy. Every year it is becoming better and better fitted to live in. If I did not know that heaven was a still better place for our permanent home, I should be glad to live another threescore and ten here.

But some man will ask, "Did not the angel tell the disciples at the time of Christ's ascension: 'This same Jesus, who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come *in like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven,'—and does not your understanding of his coming imply a very different manner?"

This is a very proper and pertinent question. Let me address myself to the answer. And first let me say, that the words *hon tropon*, which are here translated "in like manner," are used four times in the New Testament, and in every other instance are translated simply "as." They do not necessarily imply "identity of mode or manner,"

but simply the same absolute assurance of the fact. Here they are:—

Matt. xxiii. 37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even *as* a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Here certainly there is no intention of expressing identity of manner, but the fact that he would *as certainly* have given them loving protection.

Acts vii. 28: "Wilt thou kill me, *as* thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" Does this imply similar manner of killing, or the simple fact of the killing, without reference to details of mode?

2 Tim. iii. 8: "Now *as* Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." Certainly no identity of manner of resistance is here intended. For Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by magical enchantments. Paul in the immediate connection describes those who resisted him, and in the use of eighteen distinct epithets sets forth their modes of resistance, but not one of them is that of being magicians (see 2 Tim. iii. 2-4).

The New Testament usage, then, gives little countenance to the theory that this form of speech must imply identity of mode or manner. And the Septuagint usage does not sustain this theory any better. I give you but a single example from Isa. xxxiii. 4: "Your spoil shall be like the gathering of the caterpillar: *as* the running to and fro of locusts." Were the men in gathering spoil to imitate the movements of locusts—going in the same way? Or does it simply mean that the spoiling was to be as thorough and as obvious?

But I may still further say that the interpretation of *hon tropon* as meaning "identity of mode or manner" proves too much altogether for those who understand literally what is said of Christ's second coming. His going away was most unlike what was said of his coming again.

His ascension was very quiet. It was in the presence of very few. There was absolutely nothing spectacular about it. But his second coming was to be "with clouds, and the voice of a trumpet, and every eye should see him." There is *no resemblance of manner*. I think, therefore, that we must all agree that all that was meant to be expressed was, that the reality of his second coming was to be as obvious and as unquestionable as his ascension had been. As a matter of fact it was far more impressive, as the figures of speech used in describing it would naturally lead us to expect that it would be. The Jewish system fell with a crash that resounded to the end of the earth. The kingdom of God came with power and great glory.

"Was Christ's second coming, then, at the destruction of Jerusalem, and are we not to look for his personal coming again?"

I so understand it. I cannot get away from that saying of his in Cæsarea Philippi, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till *they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*" It was so impressed upon the minds of those who heard it, and it was so brought by the Spirit of God to the minds of the Synoptists, that they all give it substantially in the same way. And that still more impressive talk on the Mount of Olives, when the subject was amplified, and that "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled"; this with the supplementary words confirming the statement in a most unexampled way, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." There the words stand—in almost precisely the same form in each of the three records. I cannot possibly get away from these words. Every known manuscript and every old version contains them.

Nor do I see why we should still hunger and thirst for Christ's coming in person to reign in this world—either

premillennially, or post-millennially,—when *he has told us distinctly that his spiritual presence is better for the world than his bodily presence.* “It is well for you that I go away: for if I go away, I will send the Comforter, who shall take everything and show it unto you.” As though he had said, “If I were to remain here in bodily presence, you would sometimes be in Judæa when I was in Galilee. You would be in Rome when I should be in Damascus. It is well *for you* that I should be with you in spirit rather than in body. You are going to preach the gospel to all the nations—lo, *I shall be with you always.*”

I traveled for weeks in Palestine. It was with such a realization of the personal presence of Christ as I followed his footsteps from place to place everywhere, that when, by and by, we came to the limits of his journeyings, and pushed our way on through Phœnicia, I had for hours such a feeling of parting from *Him*, that, never as before nor since, there came to me such floods of tears that in my agony I cried out, “O thou blessed Christ, help me!” Then the words seem to drop down upon me from heaven, “*Lo, I am with you always, even forever and ever.*” If the *word* should require me to accept of it, that He was to come in person and reign in Jerusalem, I would do it. But there would be no comfort in it. His spiritual abiding presence is far better. Suppose he were in Jerusalem to-day, how few of all his saints could go there to see him! *Now* he is just as much where the reader at present is, as in any other place on earth. We could not all live in Palestine if he were there. (Read John xvi. 7-15.)

I noticed another thing in this study of the twenty-fourth of Matthew,—the very last, I think, that I did notice,—and that is, that the whole atmosphere of this discourse on the Mount of Olives is *local*. For example, as Matthew repeats the talk of our Lord, he says: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Dan-

iel the prophet, standing in the holy place, then let them that be in Judæa, flee into the mountains." Mark uses the same language. Luke employs a different form of words, but to the same import, thus, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

And another form of words which in our translation is somewhat disguised, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." The more accurate translation would be, "Then shall all the tribes of the *land* mourn." That the word *gee* does not always mean the earth no Greek scholar will claim. For example, it is said of the darkness at the crucifixion of Christ, "There was darkness over all the *land*" (common version). So Matthew, and Mark. The translators have translated the same word "earth" in Luke. The Revisers have translated the word "land" in Luke, as well as in Matthew and Mark. And that it should be translated "land" in this case, in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, is obvious from the fact, that it is "tribes" that are spoken of as mourning, not "nations." And the earth is never spoken of as being divided among "tribes." A "tribe" is properly used only in speaking of a limited portion of the earth. The word *phulee* (singular) is used thirty-one times in the New Testament, and is in the common version translated "tribe" (or "tribes") in all but six of the cases: it is in the Revised Version translated "tribe" (or "tribes") in *every case*, without exception. A few of the instances in which the word is used will illustrate the meaning: "Judging the twelve tribes of Israel," "The lion of the tribe of Judah," "Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand," and so of all the twelve tribes mentioned in the seventh chapter of Revelation. When the whole earth is spoken of, it is as being made up of "*nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues.*" When tribes alone are spoken of, it is always as being limited to a portion of the earth,

and in the New Testament it is confined to the land of Palestine.

The whole atmosphere—I repeat it—of the words of Christ, as given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is local. The same thing is true of what John has said in that part of the Revelation which refers to the same period.

But it will be objected to the general view which I have set forth in this article, that Christ said: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all the world*, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” And you may very naturally object, that that had not happened previous to the year 70 of the Christian era. My answer to this objection is:—

1. “All the world” did not mean as much with the people then as with us now. In Luke (ii. 1) it is said, “A decree went forth, that *all the world* should be taxed.” We know that this refers only to the Roman Empire, and yet the Greek is precisely the same as in the passage in hand. And in the account of the temptation of Christ, we are told that Christ was taken into an exceeding high mountain, and Satan showed him all the kingdoms *of the world*,—the same words again as here. And in Acts we are told, “These men who have turned *the world* upside down have come hither also,”—again the same words. It would seem, then, that the word had been preached in all the world, or else it could scarcely be said that the preachers had turned it upside down. It would seem to imply, not only that the gospel had thus been preached, but that it had taken hold of the people. Whatever the expression “all the world” may mean, then, it is plain that in the New Testament usage it did not cover any more ground in the one case than it did in the other. But

2. It is proper to say that the facts show that the gospel had been preached farther than we have generally supposed before the year 70. Paul had been brought to Rome

and put to death before that time. Mark, according to an undisputed tradition, went to Alexandria, in Egypt, and became pastor, and died a martyr there. Previous to that, certainly, he is spoken of as being in the vicinity of *Babylon*. And Peter, in sending Mark's salutations from Babylon (see 1 Peter v. 7), implies that he himself was there when he wrote that Epistle. Paul went everywhere, even to Arabia. The fact seems to be that the gospel was preached everywhere in the known world before the destruction of Jerusalem. Only think of the congregation gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost—representing Parthia, and Media, and Mesopotamia, and Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Lybia, Rome, Crete, Arabia, Elam. But in any case, the meaning of the words "all the world," admitting that they are in themselves ambiguous, cannot override the unambiguous words of Christ, when he said, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things [including this preaching in all the world, which is mentioned just before this utterance] be fulfilled." We cannot set aside this declaration without subverting our faith in any divine inspiration in the Evangelists or in Christ himself. *There is not in the Bible anywhere a plainer statement than that.*

Christ's second coming was eighteen hundred years ago. The Jewish dispensation then came to a perpetual end. According to the prophecy of Daniel, his kingdom was *then set up*. And it is to last forever. Have we not had enough of the folly of "Second-adventism" in our time, without keeping it up any longer? Some of us remember the wide-spread excitement over the coming of Christ in 1843. We remember how large a number of the victims of that delusion went into the insane asylums, and how much larger a number went into infidelity. The harvest gathered from the similar delusion of 1866 was of the same sort. Eight years ago one of the most brilliant of the

French preachers went into the madhouse on account of the excitement of the theory of 1892. All of these speculations have been as baseless as the shadow of a dream. They are the offspring of a totally erroneous interpretation of the Scriptures. Adventism, from first to last, has been delusive, divisive, perverse, subversive. *This world is not made to be destroyed, but to be redeemed.* It is yet to become the kingdom of our Lord and his anointed. But how slow we are to learn that what Christ said was true, and will be true to the end—that the *Spirit of God in the world is of far more worth than Christ's bodily presence.* What the world needs for its regeneration is spiritual power—not physical omnipotence.

This world is to grow better and better. More and more, from age to age, it is to be dominated by the living Christ through the Eternal Spirit. Generation after generation of the believing are to be gathered into the heavenly garner. For uncounted ages this earth is to be the nursery from which will be translated day by day unnumbered thousands into the eternal glory. The spiritual conquest of the nations is to go on, until from all lands shall come up the shout, "Alleluiah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth: the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever."

Would it not be better for us to be expending all our energy in the work of saving men, and training them for this eternal life, instead of spending our time in cherishing the delusion and dream of the bodily presence of Christ as reigning king in Jerusalem?—or even in Chicago? No better instrumentalities or agencies for this world's redemption would be possible under such a *régime* than are possible now: Christ himself being witness. Think of the achievements of the last hundred years! Think of what our ancestors were three hundred years ago, and what the mighty empire of Great Britain has become; and of what

this nation of ours has attained to; of what a few centuries have accomplished; and above all of the assurance that *He* —“who is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace”—will “*not fail or be discouraged* till he hath set righteousness in the earth.” Then why should *we*? He himself, through the Spirit, is with us and will be forever and ever.

“Always with us, always with us—
Words of cheer and words of love;
Thus the risen Saviour whispers
From his dwelling-place above.

“With us when we toil in sadness,
Sowing much and reaping none;
Telling us that in the future
Golden harvests shall be won.

“With us when the storm is sweeping
O'er our pathway dark and drear;
Waking hope within our bosoms,
Stilling every anxious fear.

“With us in the lonely valley,
When we cross the chilling stream;
Lighting up the steps to glory
With salvation's radiant beam.”

A hymn beginning with Christ's spiritual presence with us on earth and ending with his personal presence in heaven.

Finally: *Christ's personal presence is there, not here!* All the testimony is to that point. And to his faithful ones he says, “I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also.” “*So shall we be forever with the Lord.*” He is never to leave that eternal home of the blest. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Brethren who talk about *his personal reign on earth* forget how full the Bible testimony is against them. The glorified saints are not to be defrauded of the

inheritance promised them—an inheritance “*eternal in the heavens.*” And what would heaven be without Christ’s personal presence there? Why, what are we dreaming of? Are we forgetting that we are all of us going home in just a little while? We shall never see him personally on this earth, though we should live here ten thousand times ten thousand years: but we shall soon be “over there,” and see him as he is.