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THE CHURCH'S FORGOTTEN HOPE

OR THOUGHTS ON THE TRANSLATION OF
THE SAINTS

BY

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“O LORD, THOU HAST BROUGHT UP MY
SOUL FROM THE GRAVE THOU HAST KEPT
ME ALIVE, THAT I SHOULD NOT GO DOWN
TO THE PIT.” - PS. 30.3.

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.”
- ST. JOHN 11.25.

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SCRIPTURAL PREFACE; OR, PROLEGOMENA.

ST. PAUL, the great apostle of the Gentiles, writes
these inspired words to the primitive Churches:

I.

UNTO the Church of the Thessalonians:

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,
concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not,
even as others which have no hope.

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring
with Him.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the
Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the
coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are
asleep.

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven
with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and
with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall
rise first:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. iv. 13-18)

II.

UNTO the Church of God which is at Corinth:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1.Cor. xv. 51-57).

III.

UNTO the Church of God which is at Corinth (second epistle).

“For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

“Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of His Spirit” (2.Cor. v. 1-5).

INVOCATION OF THE BLESSING OF GOD ON THIS TREATISE.

“O Almighty God, who hast instructed Thy Church with heavenly doctrine, and hast caused the light of Thy glorious gospel to shine into the world; Give unto us Thy grace, that we may be no longer children, tossed about with every blast of vain doctrine, but may be established in Thy most holy truth: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”

“Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.”

INTRODUCTION.

THE important subject of this treatise, viz.: the translation or rapture of the saints raised and changed, having been too much forgotten by the Church Catholic as a point of faith and hope, is brought before the minds of earnest seekers after truth, who, like Simeon, are “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” and, like Anna, are looking “for redemption in Jerusalem.”

The moment appears to be at hand when the first resurrection may begin, and when the living saints of the Lord, elected to this glory, may be changed into His likeness without tasting death; while both shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall await the completion of the whole Church, the Bride of the Lamb.

Our thoughts in this treatise seem frequently limited to the firstfruits, to events in the immediate future and to the special hope for which the Church should be daily watching. But the translation of the risen and changed saints is not a disconnected act of God. It is a prelude to other mighty acts which must follow in due sequence. We speak of the gathering of a firstfruits, but we must not forget that the firstfruits are firstfruits of a harvest, and that the husband-

man’s heart, while thankful for his sheaf of firstfruits as an earnest of the coming harvest, is set upon the whole harvest which is to fill his garner. So we must not limit our thoughts only to a firstfruits, though we in this generation hope to have our part with them; all our prayers and thoughts must embrace the whole Catholic Church, the whole body of the baptized living or departed.

The Lord Jesus Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life has come that every member of His mystical Body might have life and have it more abundantly. What thousands of volumes have been written on death! We have most of us heard from our youth up that there is only one thing certain, namely, *death*; Christians having been forgetful of the words of the inspired Apostle – “We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed.” (1 Cor. XV. 51).

Alas! how little has been written on the other side, viz.: that it is not *necessary* that we should *all* die, nay that it is certain that *some will not die*. There is, therefore, scope for a humble attempt to recall the Church to her “blessed hope,” especially *now* when, in the opinion of thousands of intelligent and godfearing Christians, we have arrived at the close of this dispensation, and should be expecting these great acts of God - the resurrection, the change and the

translation of the saints at any moment - these acts being bound up with the glorious appearing and kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us define the word "translation" and the fact which it embraces. "Translation" is derived from two Latin words, and means - borne across, carried over - as when thoughts expressed in one language are carried over into the word-symbols of another. There is an inaccuracy in the popular use of the word "translation" in its theological sense, which it is often difficult to avoid. The Scriptures teach us (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18) that some of the dead are to be raised before the rest, and some of the living are to be changed into immortality without death, and that both these companies are to be caught up as one body to meet the Lord in the air. Their removal is properly set forth by the word "translation"; though in current exposition it is often applied only to the change of the living and *their* rapture to meet the returning Lord. The word occurs three times in Heb. xi. 5 in connection with Enoch.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." (Psa. cxix. 18).

"Prosper Thou the work of our hands; O prosper Thou our handy-work" (Psa. xc. 17, Prayer Book Version).

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THE CHURCH'S FORGOTTEN HOPE.

CHAPTER I.

The Scriptural Doctrine of the Translation.

HOLY SCRIPTURE - God's prophetic chart - is the only basis of Christian Doctrine, and to it the final appeal must ever be made. In it the future and the great hopes for our acceptance and consolation are revealed. Our trustworthy knowledge of the future can be derived only from Revelation. God only can lift the veil, and woe be to us if we seek to lift it by any unlawful means. If then God in His grace and foreknowledge has unveiled certain events in the future, it becomes our duty to study that revelation, and not to come under condemnation for neglect of what the Lord has been pleased to make known. The coming of the Lord, the first resurrection, the change of the living, the translation of the saints, the judgement to come, the kingdom of God, the deliverance of the groaning creation, the final victory of good, are all matters of pure revelation; and, if we believe this revelation, it will affect our lives, and we shall walk by faith in the light and power of the same, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God [002].

These holy mysteries were set before the members of the early Church as sources of consolation

under the trials, sorrows, and persecutions which they were called upon to endure. As they are all clearly set forth throughout the accepted canon of the holy Scriptures, and professedly received by the five hundred millions who form the multitude of the baptized, it is a matter of no slight wonder that practically they have been forgotten by the whole Christian Church - speaking generally - for centuries. These truths, to which we would call renewed attention, being thus enshrined in holy Scripture, to acknowledge them is only our duty, and cannot be fanciful or heretical; on the contrary, to ignore them must be a spiritual sin of no small guilt, with serious consequences to ourselves and others.

We find these doctrines nowhere so clearly and directly stated as by St. Paul the great apostle to the Gentiles; for he reveals the mystery of the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the change of the living without death, and their joint rapture to meet the Lord in the air, with explicit clearness; and we cannot doubt that what he taught the Church in Thessalonica, he would also teach all the churches which he planted in Asia Minor, Greece, or Illyria. Yet, though we shall adduce other Scriptural corroboration of these great truths, it is remarkable how little allusion to them can be found in the writings of the other apostles, with the exception of St. John.

May we offer a suggestion which may throw light on this difficulty? St. Paul, we know, was the recipient of many and special revelations. Is [003] it not probable that in his rapture into heaven (2 Cor. xii. 1-7), he heard and saw much which it was not possible to utter, but also much which he was permitted to reveal? He certainly had special revelations from the Lord, for example, respecting the holy Eucharist; respecting the Church as the Body of Christ; as to the Gentiles being one with the Jews in the Church; and thrice in his epistle to the Romans does St. Paul use the expression "my Gospel," on which he throws light in Gal. i. 11, 12, saying that he received it not of man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Hence the full doctrine of the first resurrection, the change of the living, and the translation, may have been one of these revelations - a revelation which, so far as we know, was not vouchsafed to any other of the apostles save to St. John when he received that wonderful apocalypse in the isle of Patmos. St. Paul also speaks of the "abundance of revelations" which were given to him, on account of which he received the thorn in the flesh that he might not be exalted above measure. There is one point of interest about the passage in 2 Cor. xii. which is worthy of note. We have suggested that in these visions St. Paul may have received certain special revelations, and the dates correspond with this view. He speaks of the time as being "about

fourteen years ago" when he had these spiritual experiences; and, as he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians about the year 60 A. D., this would assign the date of his visions to about 46 A. D., while the first epistle to the Thessalonians was written A. D. 54, or about eight [004] years later than these revelations. Moreover, as St. Paul had not "companied" with our Lord on earth like the other apostles, whose minds the Lord had opened "that they might understand the Scriptures," and "all things that were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45), and as he was the Lord's chosen apostle to the Gentiles, he needed the special revelation that he received from the Lord pertaining to the faith and hope, the doctrine and ordinances of the Church, which were to be set in order according to the mind of Christ. Furthermore, for the instruction and guidance of the Gentile Church, it was necessary that his teaching should be written as well as spoken to the churches, and that certain of his epistles be handed down to posterity. It is only in his epistles to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians that St. Paul writes in detail about the first resurrection, the change of the living without seeing death, and the translation of the saints.

It is noteworthy that these epistles were not written to individuals - "to the saints" - but to "the *Church* of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1. 2), and "unto the *Church* of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess. 1.1), and that in both churches there was the manifestation of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost. Though the church in Corinth was "enriched by Him (the Lord) in all utterance, and in all knowledge," and came "behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord," yet St. Paul perceived that plain teaching on resurrection, on immortality, on the change without death, and the translation, [005] were required, to enable the wavering members of that church to confute those who doubted or denied the resurrection of the dead. He wrote 1 Cor. xv. to impress on the Church for all time the absolute necessity of the resurrection of the dead, and of *faith in the resurrection*, and in immortality, which would be manifested at the Lord's coming.

To the church at Thessalonica St. Paul wrote as to those who, having "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven," had laid hold of the hope of His coming again. He places before them the first resurrection, the change of the living, their translation at the coming of the Lord, in order to *comfort* them in their persecutions and tribulations - while they are exhorted

not to quench the Spirit, nor to despise prophesyings (1 Thess. v. 11, 19, 20).

We find in St. Paul's writings three grand passages bearing on our subject: the first, the sublime Christian classic passage in the first epistle written to any Christian church, viz.: that to the church of Thessalonica in the year 54. He alludes to the same subject in his first epistle to the Corinthians in the year 59 A. D., and in his second epistle to the same church in the year 60 A. D. We have quoted these passages in full as our Scripture Preface, and by way of vindicating our meditations on these subjects, so that we need not repeat them here *in extenso*.

The first is from St. Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians: 1Thess. iv. 13-18.

This, his earliest epistle, is full of the hope of the Lord's second coming, to which reference is [006] made six times; and in the fourth chapter we have this new and clear statement of the doctrine of the previous resurrection of the dead in Christ, of the change of the living, and of the joint translation of the raised and changed. St. Paul prefaces this revelation with a peculiar formula which indicates its importance - "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (1.Thess. iv. 13) -

(1.Thess. iv. 13) - which he uses on three other solemn occasions when uttering special revelations (see Rom. xi. 25; 1 Cor. x.1; xii. 1). The apostle would comfort the Church concerning some of her faithful members who had died, and for whom the survivors mourned as having lost the prospect they once had of entering the kingdom by translation without death. He says that they will come back with the Lord when He returns personally. He then claims special inspiration for the revelation he is about to make, and he tells them that the living shall have no pre-eminence over the sleepers; that the Lord will descend from heaven; that the dead in Christ (not all the dead) shall rise first; and that the living faithful believers shall then, together with the raised saints, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. But to enable them to do this, the body must have undergone a change - the change alluded to in 1Cor. xv. 51, 52, to which we shall presently advert. The two united companies (the two armies of Canticles vi. 13) shall then be for ever with the Lord, their culminating joy and privilege. These four sublime points of revelation were for the comfort of the mourning Church [007].

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” In the next chapter he writes in the same strain - “God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether

we *wake* or *sleep*, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1Thess. v. 9-11). This was the apostolic comfort ministered by means of revelation from the Lord Himself.

St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians writes on this subject as follows - “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1Cor. xv. 51-53). Here we have the same distinction between the dead who are raised and the living who are changed, which we notice in our Lord’s words, where He says - “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John xi. 25, 26). In 1Cor. xv. 51 we have the contrast between the dead and the living fully brought out, thus - “We shall not *all* sleep, but (whether dead or living) we shall *all* be changed.” In verse 52 the apostle states that “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we* shall be changed.” Now, let us notice the sequence. The first allusion here is to those who have fallen asleep, and who [008], as the

dead in Christ, shall rise first (1Thess. iv. 16); so “*we*” clearly must refer to the living, the word being equivalent to the expression - “then we which are alive and remain” (1Thess. iv. 17). So the same truths and in the same sequence are brought before the Corinthian as before the Thessalonian Church, though in a more summarized manner. In verse 53 we perceive the same distinction between the first resurrection and the change without seeing death. The words are - “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,” i.e., the bodies of the departed saints must be raised incorruptible, while the mortal bodies of the living saints must be clothed with immortality. “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption (in the first resurrection), and this mortal shall have put on immortality (in the change without death, 1Thess. iv. 17) *then*,” and only then, “shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” The apostle then exclaims, “O death, where is thy sting?” Not in the living saints who have escaped death. “O grave, where is thy victory?” Not over the raised saints, who have been set free with the life that dies no more. Well may we say, “Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is a third passage in St. Paul’s writings in which he distinctly refers to the change which we are

considering. “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring [009] to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” (2 Cor. v. 1-3). In this passage, after comparing our present body to a tabernacle or tent, and, by inference, the resurrection body to a temple, he goes on to say, “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” Here he distinctly expresses the wish not to be unclothed, or, in other words, not to die, not to become a mere spirit or ghost; he would not be unclothed, but would be clothed upon, receiving the immortal body with such a change of the mortal body as is expressed in the words - “that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” Nothing can be stronger than this assurance that the mortal really can put on the immortal through such a change as is set forth by the expression “swallowed up of life.” The expression “swallowed up” (used in Isa. xxv. 8; 1Cor. xv. 54; 2Cor. v. 4) is a very expressive one, and suggests an overwhelming victory, not merely over death by emerging therefrom, but from having been overcome by death in any shape whatever.

The figure of being “unclothed” brings before us the idea of death; while that of being “clothed upon” inspires us with the hope, not of resurrection out of death, but of change without death followed by removal into the presence of the Lord, to be effected by means of translation.

In the epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul gives us another beautiful example of this twofold hope [010]. In Phil. III. 10,11, he lays great stress on the first resurrection - the resurrection “out from among the dead” (Greek) - as a special prize worthy of our ardent pursuit; and in verse 20 he speaks of “our citizenship being in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory” (Phil.III. 20, 21, R.V.). Here we have the first resurrection, the change without death, the Lord’s coming and our subsequent union with Him clearly revealed for our encouragement in faith and in the patience of hope.

As regards the coming of the Lord, from which the truths of the first resurrection and the change of the living radiate, we may briefly prove its truth from holy Scripture. Let us first quote the testimony which fell from our Lord’s own lips, when He explicitly said, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that

where I am there ye may be also” (John xiv. 3). We surely need no more than one direct statement from Him who is the Truth and the Life; for *one word* from Him must be more authoritative than volumes of human arguments. Again He asks, “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke xviii. 8). “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching;” - “Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke xii. 37, 40). To apply these passages to death, as is so often popularly done, is to pervert their obvious meaning [011].

Neither need we dwell on the first resurrection, as distinguished from the general resurrection, save to state its truth in the language of holy Scripture. In Daniel xii. 2, we read that many [i.e., some, not all] that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake at that particular epoch. In Luke xiv. 14, we read in our Lord’s own words of a special recompense which shall be given at the “resurrection of the just.” The same truth is hinted at in our Lord’s words - “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and *they that hear* shall live” (John v. 25). In the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. xi. 35) we read of a “better resurrection”; and the truth is stated plainly in Rev. xx. 5,6, where the first resurrection is twice distinctly mentioned as a special reward.

St. Paul also alludes to it in 1.Cor. xv. 23, 24, when he says - "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end." And lastly, in Phil. iii. 11(Greek), we find the expression, "the resurrection out from among the dead," to which reference has already been made.

But, turning to the New Testament, can we quote anything from the lips of our Lord Himself with reference to the particular truth which we are specially examining, viz.: that of the change of the living at His coming? In John xi. 25, 26, our Lord says, "I am the Resurrection *and the Life*: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever *liveth* and believeth in Me shall never die." The Lord here declares Himself to be [012] the *Resurrection*, as concerning those who have fallen asleep [i.e., the dead]; and He declares Himself to be *the Life*, as concerning those who are alive and remain unto His coming, that they should not taste death. The whole passage must be read to see its full significance. In describing Himself as "the *Resurrection* and the *Life*," Jesus is not employing mere synonyms. Each word has a separate significance. He is the Resurrection as the first begotten of the dead, because of whose resurrection His dead saints shall be raised incorruptible, receiving spiritual, immortal bodies, like unto the

Lord's glorious body; this is the first resurrection. But the risen Lord is also the Life, not merely as the divine embodiment of eternal life out of death, so that, though His saints be dead, yet shall they live; but as having power to quicken them without their seeing death, so that when He shall appear, if they be then living and believing in Him and be looking for Him, they shall never die. This we believe to be the full force of His words; for He is made, as the last Adam, a quickening Spirit. Thus hath the Father given to the Son to have life in Himself; and He is come that His saints might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly* (John x. 10). The Lord through His death has destroyed him that had the power of death, and would "deliver those [us] who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14,15). Let us note also that the Lord's order is exactly that of St. Paul when he gives his new revelation to the Thessalonian church. "The dead in Christ [013] shall rise first; *then* [Gk. *epeita*, , i.e., thereafter] we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." And it is after giving utterance to this grand spiritual axiom of His being the Resurrection and the Life, that the Lord goes on to say, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever *liveth* and believeth in Me, shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26).

We must, however, be looking for the Lord's return; for it is written, that "unto them *that look for Him* shall He appear the second time without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). Again we read, "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1.John iii. 2): this implies that some shall be alive at the moment of the Lord's appearing. "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee" (Isa. xxxviii. 19).

In the Old Testament, we are not without rays of light on this glorious revelation in the New Testament, though there we see it as in a glass darkly. Still, we thank God for two historical cases of translation, viz.: those of Enoch and Elijah, which we shall consider in detail in a subsequent chapter. We have three historical types bearing on our subject. In one sense the Red Sea is a type of Christian Baptism, but in view of the dangers to which Israel was exposed, shut in by Pharaoh and by his hosts, and by the wilderness and the sea, without any visible way of escape, might not the passage of the Israelites dryshod over the Red Sea be a type of the translation, even as the passages of Israel and of Elijah [014] dryshod over the Jordan are often regarded in the same aspect; the river Jordan being accepted as an acknowledged figure of death? "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Tremble, thou

earth, at the presence of the Lord" (Ps. cxiv. 5, 7). Hannah in her glorious song of triumph (1.Sam. ii. 1-10), hints at the resurrection, and even at the change of the living, when she sings, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up [the resurrection]...He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit His throne of glory" [the change of the living, the rapture and glorification of both the raised and the changed].

In the writings of David we may discern allusions to the same truth, though in a veiled manner. "O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:" here resurrection is announced; "Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit": here the change of the living is implied, and the sequel is the joint translation of both. "I cried to Thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth? Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (Ps. xxx. 3, 8, 9, 11). "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 17). In the fiftieth Psalm, verse 5, we read, "Gather My saints together unto [015] Me," which may be taken

in connection with 2.Thes. ii.1. where the apostle refers to the gathering of the living saints together unto the Lord at His coming. In Ps. lxxxix. 48, the question is put: "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Let the apostle answer: "We shall not all sleep" - "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living] shall be changed"; and again, "We shall be caught up *together* to meet the Lord in the air" (1.Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1.Thes. iv. 17). There are also other veiled hints in the Psalms. Thus, Ps. xvi. 10, "For Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol [resurrection], neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy ones [Hebrew text] to see corruption" [change of the living]. The title of Ps. xxii. is "The Hind of the Morning"¹. The hind was a clean animal, but not used in sacrifice. The doctrine taught by this title is, that to them that look for Him [Christ] He shall appear the second time without sin, or sacrifice for sin, unto salvation (Heb. ix. 28). Ps. lxxviii. 20, may be read literally, "and to Jehovah - Adonai [i.e. Christ] - belongeth the escape from death," viz.: - of those who are changed at His coming. We may glance at Ps. xlvi. 14, in which a hint of the

¹ Psalm xvi. 10. This passage is so specially consecrated to the case of our Lord (see Acts ii. 24-32), that we have merely suggested in the text, that it may have a certain secondary bearing upon the case of His mystical body at the First Resurrection.

the change without death may be discerned. "For this God.....will be our guide, even unto death" - literally, upon (or above) death. So the Syriac: "He will guide us to the point whereat death shall not overcome us, but we shall *overcome* it." - Cocceius. "He will guide us *over* death." - Pusey. The context is not concerning guidance up to *death*, but deliverance from [016] it, and from destruction when imminent. The ancient promise still holds good that "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. xl. 31). We are longing and waiting for the fulfilment of this promise, not only in the spirit, but in the letter also.

In several passages of Scripture there are hints, not precisely of the change and translation, but respecting those who shall be alive when the Lord returns. St. Peter in preaching to Cornelius, speaks of the Lord "as ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 42), and also in his first epistle, of His being "ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1.Peter iv. 5). St. Paul alludes to the same subject in Rom. xiv. 9, and 2 Tim. iv. 1; and it is embodied in the three great creeds of the Catholic Church, - the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of St. Athanasius - that the Lord shall judge the quick and the dead; in which connection we may remark that to judge does not necessarily imply condemnation, but

embraces praise as well as blame, reward as well as punishment.

The Greek word in the above passage denotes “living,” while “quick” is an old English word from the Anglo-Saxon “cwic,” which means “alive.” We have adduced sufficient Scriptural evidence to establish these three points: that some saints will be raised before the rest; that living saints will be changed; and that both together will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, when He “appears the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. ix.28).

There is another interesting aspect in which we [017] may consider these truths. Not only are they matters of pure revelation, but they are chief among the glories of revelation; for they are pre-eminently mysteries or secrets which, until revealed unto the Church, had been kept hidden from the beginning of the world. There is always a romance and mystery in a great secret; but what shall we say of the secrets of God? Surely they must embody many wonderful things which the wildest human imagination could never have anticipated nor conceived.

Thus we read of our Lord’s teachings, that He uttered things which had been kept secret since the foundation of the world; that many prophets and

righteous men had desired to see and hear the things which were seen and heard by His apostles, and had not done so (Matt. xiii. 16, 17, 34, 35).

St. Paul uses the word “mystery” several times in his epistles, and some Greek scholars consider the word “mystery” as the equivalent of “secret,” and that it bears this meaning. The great secret next to the purpose of God in the mystery of the incarnation was, that the Church should be the Body of Christ - a secret which God has made known to us, and which no human or angelic mind could possibly have discovered nor imagined (Col. i. 24-27). St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, speaks of “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,” which was connected with his Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom. xvi. 25).

From the central and fundamental mystery of the incarnation, other and subordinate secrets radiate, each [018] in its place inestimable. Of these we may cite the first resurrection, of which, in the Old Testament, only hints are given by the prophets Isaiah and Daniel, which probably they themselves did not understand (Isa. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii.2). It was a profound secret that some of the dead should rise before the rest; that some of the living should be changed into the Lord’s likeness, without seeing death; and that

the two companies as one should be translated from the earth to meet the Lord in the air.

Our point here is that these wonderful truths with which we are now familiar, but of which we are so forgetful, were once absolute secrets, beyond the imagination of men or of angels. For, so far as we know, from the beginning of the creation, among the unfallen angelic armies there could be no whisper of the unrevealed secrets of God. The incarnation of the Son of God was, of course, originally a divine secret, but it may have been intimated when at this creation, the angels of God shouted for joy, when they might foresee the final victory of good. It has been supposed that the revolt of the fallen angels was consequent on their learning the future high destiny of man; but, if the great secret were outlined, there were many other truths which were kept secret from the foundation of the world, as we learn from St. Paul (Rom. xvi. 25, 26; 1. Cor. ii. 7, 8). There were foreshadowings of God's great salvation in the Patriarchal and in the Mosaic dispensations, but still there were many secrets spoken by the Lord, and revealed by His apostles, which were not so much as hinted at before - among these were the [019] Church, the firstfruits of the new creation, and the Body of Christ; the union of Jew and Gentile in one body, and the change of the living saints without death.

But this secret of the change of the living is almost as great a secret now as of old; for the Church Catholic, to whom it was entrusted, practically ignores it; very few believe in it save as a remote contingency; still fewer lay hold of it as a purifying hope. The limited number elected to be of the firstfruits - prophetically described as one hundred and forty and four thousand - as contrasted with the many millions of professing Christians living and departed, confirms our argument. There are many so-called open secrets, which were once secrets, but have been revealed; and yet, by their being forgotten, they are practically secrets still, so far as most of those interested in them are concerned. But "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant." Oh that by the power of the Holy Ghost, the veil may be removed from our blind and unbelieving hearts!

Let us then, as members of the Church Catholic take a wide horizon in our view of these truths, and not limit ourselves to a narrow circle, if it can be avoided consistently with the truth; for this grand hope of the first resurrection, and of the change without death, is set before the whole Catholic Church, and not in the first instance before any mere handful known as the firstfruits. It is set before us now as our immediate hope, and as the next step onward in the

evolution of God's grand purpose of redemption; thus [020] it belongs to the Church as a whole; but if, through unbelief, the Church will not lay hold of the hope set before her and press on to the kingdom of God, the Lord will, nevertheless, have those who, like a sheaf of firstfruits, shall be an earnest of the coming harvest, of the ultimate great ingathering of the faithful; when the Lord, seeing His garner full, shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

“O my strength, haste Thee to help me.” - “O Lord, make no tarrying.” - “Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down” (Ps. xxii.19; lxx. 5; Isa. lxiv.1).

CHAPTER II.

The Necessity of the Translation.

WE now come to consider an important yet unfamiliar view of our subject, and that is the *necessity* of the translation. The change of the firstfruits of the living, and their translation together with the firstfruits of the raised dead, is a mighty act of God. Is it, we venture to ask, a *necessary act*? God is not prodigal in the exhibition of miracles, and only works them when they are required by the necessity of the case. The raising of *some* of the dead, and not of all at once, is an act according to the free and sovereign will of God; it has its relation to the events of the day of the Lord, and is a matter of pure revelation. The change of the living is also bound up with the raising of the dead just referred to, and both are absolute necessities.

(1) The change of the living is necessary that there may be a witness for Christ as “the Life” as well as “the Resurrection,” according to His word, “I am the Resurrection and the Life”; and it is necessary, because the departed without the living “cannot be made perfect” (Heb. xi. 39, 40).

We must perceive that resurrection is a necessary [022] step in the evolution of God's grand purpose of redemption. Speaking generally, the sentence of death has passed upon all men; so that, if they are to inherit the kingdom of God, it must be under new conditions, and of those conditions *restored life* must be one: in other words, they must be raised from the dead. And we can see how this is true even of our Lord Himself. He was made Man, and bore the sins of the whole world, as the one and only sin-offering, which involved the sacrifice of Himself, even unto death. But it was impossible that He should remain holden of death: for that this sinless Man should remain dead would be nothing less than an injustice, a blot on God's equitable and righteous government, and a stupendous loss to the whole moral and intelligent universe. "It was not possible," says St. Peter, "that He should be holden of death" (Acts ii. 24). Hence His resurrection was a necessity; a necessity, as a proof that God had accepted His sacrifice; a necessity for our salvation (1. Cor. xv. 14-19); a necessity, as fulfilling the promise which the Father had made to Him; a necessity, as His due and purchased reward; a necessity for carrying out His work as High Priest and King, viz.: that of intercession and of everlasting rule. Since resurrection was a necessity in the case of our Lord, so by parity of reasoning is it a necessity for all the members of His Body, - the baptized - and a

- and a necessity, moreover, for the liberation of all those for whom He died. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. As by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection [023] of the dead." All men shall rise again; but resurrection, particularly the first resurrection, is or ought to be the special hope of the Church, that her members may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be advanced as sons into the glorious liberty of the children of God, thus becoming manifested as "the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 36).

We are considering the necessity in the development of the purpose of God not so much of resurrection as a whole, as of the first resurrection and of translation. If some must be raised to attain to the glory of the kingdom, so must some be changed without dying, that both may be translated into the heavens, to come with the Lord at His second advent. Christ is seen as "the Resurrection" in raising those who sleep in Him, by the word of His power. This is the first step in the manifestation of His great salvation. But He came "that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly"; and how can this superabundance of the eternal life which is inherent in Him be better manifested than by changing the saints, who are alive and remain unto His coming, without their passing through that terrible process of dissolu-

tion which we call *death*? In this way, in both these mighty acts a double witness is borne to Christ as the Resurrection and also as the Life.

(2) The necessity for the translation is seen in this, that while the sentence of death passed upon all (for that all have sinned), yet, inasmuch as Christ received the sentence in Himself, and abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light (2.Tim. i. 10), there was thenceforth *no necessity* for any Christian [024] to die.² In this aspect how sad it is to think of death having reigned not only from Adam to Moses (Rom. v. 14), but from Christ's resurrection to the present time, - over eighteen centuries - and to know that we are not yet set free from its power. Still, as we are united to the risen Man who is the Resurrection and the Life, if we are abiding in our heavenly standing, we should know the power of this immortal life within us, and be yearning, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. The beautiful expression that Christ "brought life and immortality to light," dis-

² This is the drift of Mr. ASGILL'S argument (the curious case referred to in Appendix No. 1), viz: that death is our enemy, but that it is a vanquished enemy, and that we should not fear it, nor yield to its terrors; because Christ "through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, 'the devil,' to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

tinctly implies some great advance in relation to all that has gone before. The Lord would rather see us changed into His image without death than that we should descend into the pit under the grasp of death; and He longs to put forth His great power and to effect these cognate wonders - the raising of the dead and the changing of the living; and the simple question is, Why has He not already done so? What has retarded Him? Surely the hindrance must be in ourselves, because of our indifference and lack of faith. Yea, the Lord is hindered now, even as He was of old when He could not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief. And we shall continue to hinder Him until we come to look upon death not only as a curse and a penalty, but as a dishonour to God, and as that [025] which is abominable in His sight. In the Mosaic law there are frequent references to the defilement of contact with a dead body: "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days"; and for the purification of those thus defiled, the Lord commanded the performance of certain rites, with the use of the water of separation (Num. xix). The Lord's anger was kindled against the house of Israel when they offended by putting the carcasses of their kings in their high places, next to His posts on mount Moriah (Ezek. xliii. 7, 9).

How must the Lord have sorrowed to see for over eighteen hundred years the ravages of the enemy in His inheritance, because His people, instead of pressing on to the first resurrection and to the change without death, have sinned, as did Israel of old, in making a covenant with death (Isa. xxviii, 15), and in remaining among the graves, and lodging in the monuments (Isa. lxxv. 4). The very sanctuaries of the Lord of life and glory - the Christian churches - are used as burial places, and defiled with the remains of the dead (an adopted Pagan practice), who are eulogised in fulsome epitaphs.

(3) Further, we believe that, in the case of those faithful saints who are alive at the coming of the Lord, a necessity there must exist for the direct change into immortality from the very nature of the case, which will result in their translation together with the risen "dead in Christ." The living and watching saints will be in an exceptional position at the Lord's return. How are they to be dealt with, and what is to become of them? They are alive and remain [026], and we can hardly imagine that they will go through the disintegrating process called "death," and then, after tasting of death, be instantaneously raised again.³ Being in

³ Such an idea contradicts that article of the creed, according to which Christ is to be the Judge of the *quick*, as well as of the dead. On this particular point, see also an extract

an exceptional position, may we not expect that they will receive exceptional treatment? We might, perhaps, have been able to make this forecast ourselves, from the necessity of the case; but there can be no doubt about it, when it is recognised as a matter of distinct revelation. The Scripture provides for their case, and it tells us that those who are alive and remain on the earth at the appearing of the Lord shall be caught up together with the raised dead, to meet the Lord in the air; so that these privileged ones shall not taste death, but shall pass into immortality without death, receiving in their sudden change all that is involved in resurrection. They shall not be raised from the dead, for they have not died; they shall be changed, for without a change from mortality to immortality, it would be impossible to "be ever with the Lord."

(4) We look upon translation (more especially as affecting the living who shall be changed) as a necessity, viewing it as a way of escape from the storm of sorrow and danger which shall overtake mankind, and especially the baptized, in the last days. Holy Scripture reveals in solemn language the great distress and tribulation which shall come upon the earth. Daniel prophesies concerning it (xii.1), "There

from the work of Ben-Ezra on "The coming of Messiah in glory and majesty," in Appendix No. 2.

[027] shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time." Our Lord also speaks to the same effect, "For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. xxiv. 21). But there is one saying of our Lord which claims our special attention in this connection. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36). As, however, we shall consider this saying at length in a subsequent chapter we shall not dwell upon it in this place.

A prophetic figure bearing upon our subject is the rapture of "the man child," recorded in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Revelation, which we will briefly review. Some commentators apply this type of the man child to our Lord Jesus Christ personally, but as the Lord was born at least some sixty years before this vision was given, and the emblem of the woman crowned with twelve stars seems in no wise applicable to the blessed Virgin Mary (though the Roman Catholics do apply this figure to her, and represent her so crowned in their paintings and sculptures), we may dismiss this application, and feel assured that the type applies to some event in the experience of the Christian Church. The figure brings

before us several thoughts akin to those we have considered, or shall consider: the child - organically constituted with its various members proper to a human body - symbolizing a body corporate or company; its deliverance or escape from the dangers [028] threatening it (which is the point we are now considering), typified by its rapture to the throne of God. We have no hesitation in applying the figure of the woman to the Christian Church (as could be verified by many other prophetic passages in Scripture); she is in childbirth pains, which indicate a time of sorrow, distress, and tribulation, in short, the approach of that period of the great tribulation under Antichrist which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth. The child, then, may well set forth a company, part of the parent, yet distinct from her; separate, yet one; a miniature representation of the mother; a company not schismatic, but plainly belonging to the Church, One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. But there is another wonder in heaven - mark "in heaven" also - that is in the heavenly region where the woman is. For the Church on earth is even now seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. ii. 6), and her spiritual foes are there also - the Prince of the power of the air, and other wicked spirits in the heav- enlies. This other wonder or sign is a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. This seems to set forth the

last and most oppressive form of the fourth or Roman empire, when divided into the ten predicted kingdoms. The dragon's tail draws down the third part of the stars of heaven, and the tail sets forth the false prophet (see Isa. ix. 15, and Rev. xiii. 11-15) by whom he casts down to earth, or entices from their heavenly calling a certain number of Christian bishops; the dragon now stands before the woman who is ready to be [029] delivered, to devour her child as soon as it is born. This indicates some great peril to the firstfruits, averted by Divine intervention. The woman brings forth the man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and the child is caught up to God and to His throne. This aptly sets forth the escape and deliverance of the firstfruits from great danger, to be effected by the resurrection and change of those counted worthy to obtain that prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now what does this great red dragon symbolize? Surely an antagonist of great cruelty and power. The hidden agent is the dragon, or the devil, who will persecute the Church and seek to frustrate or delay the translation of the firstfruits. Our point is this, that there is an escape for the man child, but it is by the intervention of God, and the manner thereof assumes the form of rapture or translation.

Comparing this vision with the vision recorded in Revelation xiv., 1-5, we cannot doubt that the man child represents the firstfruits of the Church, who are seen with the Lamb on mount Sion, without fault before the throne of God, and who have experienced a real deliverance from threatened destruction.

We may illustrate our subject by another figure, that of a besieged city. It is surrounded by the enemy, it is desolated by famine, like Jerusalem when assaulted by Nebuchadnezzar, or when encompassed on all sides by the Romans. We are familiar with the account of many sieges as given by ancient and modern historians, such as that of Samaria in holy Scripture (2 Kings vi.); of Plataea, as narrated by [030] Thucydides; of Rome, as narrated by Livy; with those of Malta, Saragossa, Vienna, Sebastopol, and many others; the horrors of which have been recounted with graphic fidelity.

Now there seems to be no deliverance for the beleaguered city; there is no withdrawal of the armies of the Romans, that the faithful few may reach their Pella: there appears to be no escape - no escape on earth. But is there none? Yes, upward into the air; caught up out of the blockade, in a manner unexpected, at least by the enemy.

This figure or parable we would apply to the Christian Church, or to the company of the firstfruits, who seem to be in danger of being overwhelmed in the hour of temptation which shall come upon Christendom. On every side we see evil abounding, and threatening to overwhelm the Church; the faithful remnant are like a besieged city, and there is no help for them on the earth - no protection, civil or ecclesiastical; then it is that we may expect the intervention of the Lord from heaven to deliver His saints, by catching⁴ them up into the air to meet Him, and so rescuing them from the surrounding and engulfing peril. When no hope is seen on earth, the eye is fixed on heaven; when ruin and overwhelming desolation seem inevitable, the deliverance comes from above, by the saints being translated from earthly ruin, and hidden in the Lord's pavilion.

From all this we infer the *necessity* of the translation as a means of escape from the calamities [031] which will desolate the earth, ravage the Church, and threaten to extinguish the name of Christ among men.

⁴ 1. Thes. iv. 17. The idea "caught up" is more literally in the Greek, "snatched away," - "seized hastily" - reminding one of the swoop of an eagle.

Hence, looking at the forewarnings of our Lord and of the prophets about a time of sore tribulation with which this dispensation is to end, and at His admonition to pray for an escape from the things which shall come to pass, we may justly arrive at the conclusion that it will be effected by some special act of God in transporting His firstfruits into a place of safety - perhaps to the mystical mount Zion, where the throne of the King is established for ever.

There is a beautiful thought in the Psalms in connection with our subject, and that is, "*The pavilion of the Lord.*" It occurs in two places: "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock" (Ps. xxvii. 5). "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. xxxi. 20). Both these passages are full of exquisite suggestions. In both we notice one common feature, that there is a time of trouble, an outbreak of the pride of man, a strife of tongues; and in both there is a clear reference to a place of refuge (symbolized by the most holy place of the tabernacle), and in both the idea of secrecy comes in: "In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me"; "Thou shalt keep them secretly." All this points to a time of tribulation, and to an escape in some sudden

or secret manner. Again, a “pavilion” speaks [032] of a movable place like a tent or tabernacle, which, nevertheless, as belonging to the King - an oriental king - is safe and secret; reminding us also of the thought in Ps. xci. 1, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” This is akin to what Isaiah has written (xxvi. 20), of the saints being hidden in a secret chamber until the indignation be overpast.

These two passages have another idea in common: in one, it is that of being “set up upon a rock”; in the other, the marvellous kindness shewn in a “strong [margin, fenced] city.” Now, may we not (adhering to scriptural figures) say that the city might apply to Jerusalem, and the rock to mount Zion, the fortress and stronghold of the King? Connected with the idea of danger which is common to both these figures, we may see that of escape to a refuge from the strife of men, from the malice of the enemy, “when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall” (Isa. xxv. 4). Hence, we may infer that the idea of resurrection, change, and translation is not an arbitrary intervention on the part of God, but that it is part of His fore-ordained purpose, and that in it He will put the enemy to shame, and shew Himself to be the God whose resources, power, and wisdom are unfathomable, whose loving kindness is marvellous, be-

fore whom we shall bow in adoring gratitude for evermore.

(5) Another reason for apprehending the necessity of this act of resurrection, change, and translation, is the condition into which Christendom has lapsed, calling for a divine interposition, wherein, by a mighty [033] work, God will manifest His providence as a testimony to His existence and power. The Lord has told us that His advent will come as a snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth, when Christendom will have fallen into a state of indifferentism and widespread infidelity, not to say antagonism to God and to His Christ. We see the beginning of this already; men are saying on all sides, “Where is the promise of His coming, for all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?” Men will be, as the Lord expresses it, occupied in building, in planting, in marrying; in other words, in commercial and agricultural pursuits, in social duties and pleasures; so that the thought of the Lord’s return will be alien to their minds, and will be received with scorn and unbelief. Now, it is not the Lord’s usual mode of procedure to take even His forgetful people unawares. He always gives them some sign, some warning, that they may be without excuse. No doubt, according to our Lord’s prophecies, physical and natural signs will not be wanting; but there

shall be also given spiritual and supernatural signs - signs in the spiritual heavens. If we were asked to imagine what would be the most startling sign to a slumbering Church of the coming of the Bridegroom, what could we possibly forecast? Surely nothing more wonderful or illustrative of God's power, wisdom and goodness, could take place than the raising of some of the sleepers, and the changing of a number of the living saints, and translating them both to a place of safety while the storm clouds of tribulation wax darker and darker, till they [034] burst upon a careless and unbelieving Christendom. When men have forgotten the existence of God, or, at any rate, when thousands have regarded Him as an abstraction, instead of believing in Him as the *living* God, then will come this Divine intervention, and they will be brought suddenly to confront the fact, that the Lord God Almighty (whose providence extends to the affairs of men in a very marvellous manner) has intervened by translation. The raised and changed saints have been caught away from earth to heaven.

"The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble; and let the earth be moved!"

(6) Again, we may ask, in what other way could that expression of Scripture be exemplified - that "mortality should be swallowed up of life"? This,

doubtless, has its application to the departed when raised from the dead; still, it has a more emphatic application to the change of the living without death. In this case, mortality is literally "swallowed up of life." But the context assures us that this is the primary application of that particular verse (see 2 Cor. v. 4). Having quoted this passage in our first chapter, we need only now refer to the assurance it contains of the *certainty* of the first resurrection, the change, and the translation, by which the Lord will swallow up death in victory - in resurrection - (Isa. xxv. 8), and by which "mortality shall be swallowed up of life" - in the change of the living.

We now summarise the reasons we have given for the necessity of that great act of intervention on the part of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture, which we have been considering [035];

1. The necessity of a witness to Christ as the *Life*.
2. To shew that Christ having died, there is now no necessity why *all* men should die.
3. Translation seems to be the only way of meeting the case of the elect saints who are alive at the coming of the Lord.

4. It suggests the only way of escape from the tribulation which shall overwhelm the earth.
5. It is a mighty act of God, which will be a testimony to a careless Christendom, of the existence, power, and grace of an ever-living God.
6. It will be the most complete fulfilment of the prediction, that mortality shall be swallowed up of life [036].

CHAPTER III.

The Holy Ghost the Agent in the Translation.

WE have considered in our first chapter the Scriptural doctrine of the translation of the saints, and in the second, its necessity. Our third point is one of vital importance, namely: the Divine agent in effecting this translation. Clearly this is a supernatural, not to say miraculous act, such as could not be effected by any human agency or device, nor yet by any angelic interposition, so far as we can see; hence we believe that it must and will be an act of God Himself. It is certain that we ourselves cannot effect this wonder, any more than any other of the great acts, in the accomplishment of our redemption. We cannot regenerate ourselves; we cannot sanctify ourselves; we cannot raise ourselves from the dead; we cannot change ourselves into immortality; we cannot transport ourselves into the air; we cannot glorify ourselves. Now as the Holy Ghost is the acknowledged author of several of these phases in the work of our salvation, - admittedly of the first three - why should not He be the author of them all? They all run, as it were, on the same lines; and as sanctification is due to the Spirit's indwelling, so should our change be due to the action of the same Spirit, and our glorifica-

tion to His manifestation in us, when He has fully conformed us to the image of the Son of God [037].

(1) Let us consider the Scriptural testimonies to the action of the Spirit of God, from which the reasonable inference may be drawn, that it is He who will be the agent in the resurrection, change, and translation of the saints. The first example of spiritual action is seen in the translation of Enoch, for we read - "He was not; for God took him" (Gen. v. 24). Here the result is ascribed to God, and the analogy of holy Scripture leads us to refer it to the action of the Holy Ghost.

Again, it is to be observed that in the case of Elijah, Obadiah attributes the wonderful appearance and disappearance of the prophet to the Spirit of God, when he says, "And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me" (1 Kings xviii. 12). Nor can we doubt that the prophet's subsequent translation was effected by the selfsame Spirit. Moreover, we read that those who desired to search for Elijah, said to Elisha, "Behold now, there be with thy servant fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and

cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley" (2 Kings ii. 16). A similar transporting action of the Spirit is narrated in the New Testament, after the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by St. Philip the evangelist - "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing [038]. But Philip was found at Azotus" (Acts viii. 39, 40). The supernatural action of the Spirit is seen in the visions and movements of some of the old prophets of Israel, especially in that of Ezekiel - "Then the Spirit took me up.....So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezek. iii. 12-14).

Again we read - "And He put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north" (Ezek. viii. 3). In the vision of the returning glory of the Lord to His temple, we read - "In the visions of God, brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me up upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south" (Ezek. xl. 2). "So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the

inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house” (Ezek. xliii. 5).

St. Paul alludes to his own wonderful spiritual experience and his rapture into heaven as follows - “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. . . .How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. xii. 2, 4). St. John in the visions of the apocalypse gives a similar testimony - “After [039] this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither..... And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne” (Rev. iv. 1, 2). Surely it is the Spirit that is the agent in catching up the man-child to God and to His throne (Rev. xii. 5). Thus we have several cases recorded in Scripture of an actual removal of persons while in the body to an unseen world or to other parts of this earth, and this phenomenon is attributed to the action of the Spirit of God.

(2) The above examples verify the accepted axiom of the superiority of spirit over matter. We believe that

God is a Spirit, and that the Almighty has formed the spirit in man so marvellously that it is worthy of being accounted a chief wonder of creation. “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him” (Zech. xii. 1). The nature of the man is threefold, consisting of body, soul and spirit; and, if the work of God is now principally carried on in his spirit, it is only as an earnest that it will permeate the whole man and fill him with the glory of God, which will be manifested in his whole being in the resurrection. Our spirit is now like the most holy place of the tabernacle, in which was manifested the Shechinah, the visible token of God’s presence. We believe that materialism is unscriptural and untrue; that we cannot evolve mind [040], much less spirit, by any action or function of matter; that we should accept the testimony of Scripture, that “there is a spirit in man: and [that] the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job xxxii. 8). It is in spirit that we discern the mighty forces of intelligence, volition, and action. The power of God, who is a Spirit, is seen in the creation of matter, which is a great mystery. Matter is not inherently eternal; it was created. God is uncreated; *He* is eternal. Even man shews the superiority of mind or spirit in his relations to, and power over, matter; but with man, the spirit acts through an intermediate in-

strumentality. What is the power by which we move or speak? Is it not the spirit, the autocrat, who keeps his court in his secret shrine? In all around us are seen the triumphs of spirit over matter. When we look upon a stupendous cathedral, built by man, - each stone of which men's hands have placed in its position - we see that the hand is an instrument, that matter is a secondary element, that mental power is the efficient cause, and that by the genius of spirit the temple was built. To obtain a higher view of the power of spirit, let us glance at the spiritual exercise of the divine volition. The will of God can create matter, and has done so out of nothing, and this is truly the prerogative of God, as the Creator, a special title given to Him, and to Him only, in the Old Testament. He can likewise modify or destroy it, without the intervention of any instrumentality. Let us conceive the will of God in its terrible energy, crushing a planet, or reducing a globe to ashes, and we must [041] worship Him who upholds all things by the word of His power, and doeth all things according to His own will.

As God, and God only, can *create*, so God only can raise the dead, and this marvel is wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. If the Spirit of God can raise the dead, surely He can also change the living into the Lord's likeness, and He can remove both from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. No other power in

heaven or in earth can effect this, but only the Spirit of God. Resurrection, change, removal; these are three great salient acts in which we see the power of the Holy Spirit over matter, which shall be exemplified in the Church of God, and, we trust, in our own personal experience.

(3) Let us, in the third place, consider the general *law* of the Spirit's action in reference to the change and translation.

May we venture to enquire with all reverence as to the working of the Holy Ghost in the translation of the saints? We gather that the Holy Ghost in this phenomenon does not so much act upon the saints as an external influence, but rather as an internal power acting upon them. The indwelling Spirit acts from within, from the inner centre, and the body is responsive to His action. He acts in conformity with His own nature and with the law of the life which He has imparted.

Our first reception of the Holy Ghost - the quickening Spirit - is an act of God in holy baptism, when, by His action, our spirits are regenerated by the resurrection life of Christ. This is the seed, the [042] germ of eternal life, which, implanted in our spirits, is to grow and develop, sanctifying the whole man, until

it receives its fulness in resurrection, or change and translation. The Holy Spirit having thus quickened our spirits in baptism, will likewise quicken our mortal bodies. He is the fountain from whence all the other manifestations of spiritual life and resurrection and eternal glory flow. Does not the *essence*, the *possibility even*, of our translation lie in the fact of our being partakers, even now, of Christ's life; so that translation becomes the normal and ultimately triumphant outcome of that engrafted life? "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). But at the present time, the groanings of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 26) testify to a restraint of liberty in action. The translation would therefore ensue not as something abnormal or unexpected, but as a natural result of the inner spiritual life wrought by the indwelling Spirit, by whom the great act of our bodily transformation in the complete likeness of Christ is to be accomplished in its due season.

In short, is not this the conclusion of the whole matter, that the resurrection and translation of the members of Christ are the consummation of the great mystery of "the taking of the manhood into God"? Not that the "members" will ever become deified, though truly partakers of a Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4, Greek).

These thoughts shew us that there is nothing transcendental, or mad, in the idea, of the translation as the world in its unbelief considers it to be. Let us conceive the spirit of man indwelt of the Holy [043] Ghost, and more and more filled with the same - surely it will be purified and become more powerful, more Christ-like. Why should not the Holy Spirit work outwards, and, starting from the spiritual centre of man's being, so saturate the soul with heavenly elasticity, as to assert absolute mastery over the body, so that the body be no longer either a clog, a slave, or a tyrant, but a responsive instrument for the working of the indwelling Spirit? The Holy Ghost dwelling in the secret recess, shines forth, and the result is that the body is spiritualized; it is no longer animal or psychical, but spiritual. It is the final triumph of the Holy Spirit in man, to transfigure the body into the image of Christ, and fashion it into a spiritual body: and thus we can understand the qualities of etherealism, incorruptibility, and supernatural motion communicated to it with its liberation from the existing laws of matter (1. Cor. xv. 42-49). The first result of this inworking of the Spirit is to effect a change in ourselves; and we know that we "have passed from death unto life." The throb of an immortal life tells us that we have been changed. "We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed"; and the change is that of "the corruptible putting on incorruption (the law of

the resurrection), and the mortal putting on immortality (the change of the living) in the power of the endless life of the Son of God by His indwelling Spirit, with the result that we shall be lifted up from earth to heaven. O Lord “save Thy people and lift them up for ever” (Ps. xxviii. 9).

In this world, the action of gravitation is to [044] draw all material bodies downwards to the centre of the earth; but here, in the new and spiritual creation, another power of attraction draws us upwards to the centre of the universe, even to Jesus, the incarnate Son, and to the throne of God and of the Lamb (Phil. iii. 21).

We may take an illustration from the burnt offering under the law. The Hebrew word “הָלַעַ” is used for it 268 times, but literally it means neither “burnt” nor “offering,” but “that which goes up.” In the case of the burnt offering the condition of the flesh was entirely changed. It was contrary to nature for the flesh to ascend; but after it had undergone the *change* caused by the action of *the fire* upon it, the upward tendency became the law of its being, for its essence ascended to God as a sweet savour. We get then an idea of change through the action of fire, and it brings before us as in a type that which shall come upon us when we are changed by the Holy Ghost into the spiritual and im-

mortal condition, receiving our baptism of fire, being filled with the Spirit of God, who is a consuming fire. Then will our bodies become luminous and glorified, for when full of the Spirit we shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father.

The truth we would enforce is, that translation is the result of the inworking energy (and the true meaning of energy is this: an inworking, “ενεργεια,”) of the Holy Ghost - that power which St. Paul felt working in him mightily: “For if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead [045] dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” How? “By His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. viii. 11). The Spirit is the agent, and His unbroken inhabitation is the means by which He triumphs. Then shall we receive either in resurrection or in the change, that baptism of fire through the power of the Holy Ghost which shall blossom into eternal glorification in the kingdom of God.

Is it not due to our limited apprehension of the twofold working in the natural and spiritual world, that “the change” should be generally considered as not *natural*? Yet it is not abnormal, i.e., neither contrary to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus nor to the physical laws of nature, for do not nature’s “evergreens” speak to us of *the change without dying*? We

should therefore receive and cherish the unhindered action of the Holy Ghost, and accept translation as the action of the Spirit fulfilling its legitimate results in carrying on the resurrection-life of Christ in us to its proper and normal development.

Hence, the raising of the dead, the change of the living from mortality to immortality, the rapture of both in one body into the air to meet the Lord, are all to be looked upon as due to the normal action of the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Spirit who is the Lord and giver of life. That same Spirit, even the Holy Ghost, which is in Christ and in the members of His body, effects their union with Him, until from a heavenly mystery, their union becomes an accomplished visible fact, in Christ descending and they ascending.

Though our thoughts have been principally occupied with the change to be effected in us by the Holy Ghost, yet we must not forget that all the exhibitions of glory ever manifested in man are the work of the Holy Ghost. Although in the time of Moses the Holy Ghost was not yet given, neither (strictly speaking) did He dwell in man, still the skin of Moses' face shone so brightly from his communion with God, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold his countenance, and we cannot doubt that this was

through the action of the Spirit of God. When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who had received the Spirit without measure, was transfigured on the mount, even in this body of mortal flesh like unto ours, can we doubt that it was the Holy Ghost who beamed out from Him and changed the fashion of His countenance even as He prayed? It is the same Spirit who is the author of transfiguration and of ultimate glorification whether in the Lord or in us. When the Lord ascended into heaven and reached the presence of the Father, He became the glorified Man by virtue of the indwelling Spirit. Thus glorified, He appeared to St. John in Patmos. We therefore ascribe the glory of these great acts to God the Holy Ghost. After we have been changed, we may for a season have bodies similar to that which the Lord had during the forty days intervening between His resurrection and ascension, before the latent glory was made manifest [047].

It is to be feared that the great privilege of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us is not sufficiently realised by the majority of Christians, for many do not apprehend what is the distinctive glory of the Christian dispensation. It is not the forgiveness of sins; it is not the assurance of our personal salvation; it is not the hope of everlasting life. These blessings might be attained under the former dispensation, and assuredly they are not withheld from us in this. But there is a

glory that excelleth, and that is our inhabitation by God. God is not only to be with us, but to be *in* us, to dwell in us, according to the terms of the new covenant, "I will dwell in them and walk in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16). But, wonderful as this privilege is, still it is not all, for we may advance to a climax, and that is, that this indwelling by God is not vouchsafed to us as mere individuals or as solitary units, but as members of the grand fellowship of the body of Christ; and we are not to look upon our bodies as so many separate temples of the Holy Ghost, even though we are individually, as well as collectively, the temple of the Holy Ghost, but as members of the Church, which is the household of God, the body of Christ, the one temple of the Holy Ghost. In this body the Spirit of God dwells, and manifests His gifts and His graces as in a living temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit.

There is one practical truth which is brought before us by the reflections which form the subject of this chapter, and that is - if the Holy Ghost is the author of all these glorious results in us, both [048] now and hereafter, and is so essential to our salvation, we should give heed to the Apostle's admonition in his earliest epistle - "Quench not the Spirit" (1.Thes. v. 19). It is certain that we cannot even cherish this unworldly and heavenly hope without the power of the Holy Ghost, nor can we attain to its realisation with-

out having His indwelling presence and action in our mortal bodies. By every means in our power we should seek for this mighty gift which Christ received as the reward of His sufferings, and which He received on behalf of men: we must likewise cherish and - if we may say so - develop the gift, that by Him we may be changed into the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

While we see the glory of the Christian dispensation in the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, so we can perceive what a fearful day it must be when the Spirit of God shall no longer strive with men, but, having been quenched, He shall be withdrawn from the earth. Then shall come the sorrow and tribulation which cannot be told, when man is left to himself, and, bereft of the Spirit, incurs the storm of God's wrath and righteous indignation. From this fearful experience and from this time of sorrow, Good Lord, deliver us.

Let us then ever give special honour to the Holy Ghost, our Regenerator, our Sanctifier, our Transformer, our Glorifier, to whom, with the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, One God, be praise for ever [049].

CHAPTER IV.

Scriptural Examples of Translation: Enoch and Elijah.

Is it an incredible thing to say that translation is not a mere theory, nor an abstraction, but that, by the mercy of God, it has become a *reality*, since we have two cases of translation left on record in holy Scripture for our encouragement and meditation? We believe that there are two men who have not died - only two among the thousand millions who have lived on the earth. One was translated during the Patriarchal; the other, during the Mosaic dispensation. To these two cases of translation we have briefly referred; they deserve our consideration in all their details, and should be weighed by those who are entertaining the hope of being changed into the Lord's likeness, and of being translated into the kingdom of God without seeing death.

(1) The first case is that of *Enoch*. It is recorded in the fifth chapter of Genesis with the utmost brevity. "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with

God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. v. 21-24). Twice are we here told that [050] "Enoch walked with God." On this we have a brief commentary in the epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God"⁵ (Heb. xi. 5). Enoch was the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah. He was translated at the age of three hundred and sixty-five years, which was young for an antediluvian, and he was the only representative of the first, or Patriarchal, dispensation to whom this exceptional privilege was granted.

The first point that deserves our investigation is the *character* of Enoch. If we analyse the elements of Enoch's character, we must be struck by his singular *faith*. This is the feature singled out by the inspired writer in the epistle to the Hebrews. Enoch comes second in that grand roll of the heroes of faith - Abel the proto-martyr being the first. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death." This great honour and exemption from death is ascribed to his *faith*; and, looking at the context, we infer that his faith was in the living God and in His promises; for we

⁵ "Ευαρεστew - Pleased God" is the rendering given by the Septuagint for "walked with God" in Gen. v. 24.

read - "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). We do not know whether Enoch had any idea of the way in which the reward of his faith would come; but, as "the secret of the Lord is [051] with them that fear Him" (Psa. xxv. 14; see also Amos iii. 7), we are justified in believing that Enoch may have had some premonition of his translation, that he laid hold of it by faith, and pleaded for the grace and preparedness of spirit indispensable for its attainment.

Besides Enoch's faith, we notice his *diligence*. He was one who, for three centuries, diligently sought after God. "Diligence - diligentia," from its Latin derivation, implies activity springing from love. We do a thing heartily when we *love* to do it; and so, with an earnestness flowing out of love, Enoch sought God: he sought His presence, His companionship, His guidance, because he *loved* God; and so God was not only found of Him but proved Himself to be, in Enoch's case, the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. But the Greek brings before us a latent beauty: for the verb used is not so much "to seek," as "to seek out"; the preposition "out" implying labour zeal and diligence in seeking for the precious treasure. Hence *dili-*

diligence should be a great feature in the conduct of those who seek after God.

Combined with this diligence or earnestness, flowing out of love, his patient continuance in well-doing is apparent, for he "walked with God three hundred years." Our lives rarely extend, as the Psalmist writes, to fourscore years; but no living man could claim to have walked with God uninterruptedly from his birth to his death for that period; therefore we can the more fully appreciate the record of this patriarch who walked with God for the space of three hundred years [052].

If, as it would appear, Enoch was converted to God at the age of sixty-five, the first portion of his life may have been like that of the generality of men; at least it cannot have been up to its subsequent standard of purity and devotion, for the Scripture distinctly states that *after* he begat Methuselah at the age of sixty-five, he walked with God three hundred years, and was translated at the age of three hundred and sixty-five years. Now, what does "walking with God" imply? May we not answer in the words of the prophet Amos? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3). It implies constant companionship and intimate intercourse. Enoch was of the same mind with God; he loved what God loved, and hated

what God hated: in a word, he was a holy man, a saint of God.⁶

In applying the expression in Hebrews xi. 6 to Enoch's character and conduct, we conclude that, as he is the person alluded to in the previous verse, he was not only a man of faith but also a man of prayer and devotion, with patient continuance in well-doing, so that "he pleased God." - "He was translated that he should not see death." *This*, we are told, was his reward, and it gives the explanation of the brief statement in the book of Genesis, that "he was not for God took him." Enoch did not die after the common lot of all men, but he was translated to paradise, it is generally supposed, without [053] the painful accessories and gloomy intervention of death. "By faith he was translated"; so that the power by which he was able to walk with God and to please God was the same by which he attained to translation.

Bearing in mind the translation of Enoch, the allusion to him in the New Testament is the more interesting from his recorded witness to the second coming

⁶ In the Palestine Targum it is written - "And Hanok worshipped [or served] in truth before the Lord. And Hanok served in the truth before the Lord: and, behold, he was not with the sojourners of the earth, for he was withdrawn, and he ascended to the firmament by the word before the Lord."

of the Lord. St. Jude writes - "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14, 15). Here we read that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, and that the subject of his prophecy was the coming of the Lord as King and Judge; and it would appear, from his denunciation of judgment to be executed upon the ungodly, that - like Noah - he must have been a preacher of righteousness in an ungodly age, while doubtless he was subjected to the scorn and persecutions of the ungodly sinners by whom he was surrounded. We know that before the flood the earth was filled with violence and iniquity. Enoch had trials and difficulties such as fall to the lot of all men. Probably special trials accompanied his special testimony and his manner of life in seeking to walk with God and to please Him in the midst of a world of ungodly sinners; for it is evident, from St. Jude's statement, that their [054] "ungodly deeds and hard speeches" against God abounded: in other words, it was an age of unrighteousness, of unbelief, of blasphemy, of swearing, of murmuring, probably embodying all the characteristics which St. Paul applies to the heathen in the

opening chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Against all this Enoch must have given his witness; and, though the account of him is so brief, yet we learn something of the testimony which he bore to the world around him, not only by his consistent and righteous manner of life, in observing all the external duties of religion, in sacrifice and in worship (which is implied in the expression "walking with God"), but also by his verbal protest. With his prophecy of the coming of the Lord with myriads of His saints to execute judgment upon all, we cannot doubt that there was at the same time a call to repentance.

It is interesting to note that this preacher - the earliest on record in the dim past - preached the coming of the Lord, and, by implication, the resurrection of the dead in the case of the ten thousands of the saints whom the Lord should bring with Him.⁷ Like Lot in Sodom, Enoch was living amongst adversaries, enemies of that God with whom he walked; and his righteous soul would be similarly [055] vexed with the

⁷ May we not think that the initial doctrine of a first resurrection is contained in the prophecy of Enoch - "Behold the Lord cometh *with* ten thousands of His saints." Whence does he get this army of holy ones if not by resurrection? And since there are men upon the earth for whose judgment these come, how can the truth of a *first* resurrection be evaded? It does not affect the argument that *we* get this only from Jude, - *they* must have known it, it must have been an accepted tradition, or whence did Jude receive it?

filthy conversation of the wicked. It is therefore improbable that Enoch would have received any different treatment in his day from that which the saints of God have at all times suffered at the hands of a scoffing and unbelieving world. St. Paul, referring to the case of Isaac and Ishmael, lays it down as an abiding experience (Gal. iv. 29), that "as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." St. Paul, in like manner, admonished the youthful Timothy - "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2.Tim. iii. 12). Our Lord speaks to the same effect: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33).

The wicked have always felt that the life of a righteous man, with higher aims and hopes than theirs, who perhaps also bears testimony against their unlawful deeds - as did Enoch, Noah, Lot - is too burdensome to be tolerated. We may here suggest this question - Was Enoch's translation an escape from the dangers which surrounded him - like the escape of the firstfruits of which we treated in our second chapter? If this were so, it was a great honour and a special mark of the divine favour; for he attained to something higher and more exceptional than the glory of a crown of martyrdom, and that was the approval

approval of God, conveyed by such an unprecedented reward, viz.: that he should escape the pains of death.

Translation was doubtless a new and unheard of thing on the earth; the Lord was doing a “new [056] thing” (Num. xvi. 30), and the tidings would probably be received by his circle of acquaintance with scorn and incredulity. Nevertheless, to the antediluvian age his disappearance was to be a testimony of future immortality, as Elijah’s was to his age, and as the risen Christ’s ascension is to ours. We thank God for Enoch’s manner of life, and for the wonderful reward that he received, which should encourage those among us who, at this period of the history of the Church and of the world, are looking and praying for a similar reward.

(2) We pass on to consider the second example of translation recorded in holy Scripture, viz.: that of the prophet Elijah. More than two thousand years had elapsed since Enoch was translated during the patriarchal dispensation, and no doubt the memory of it had practically ceased, and it had been relegated to the range of tradition or myth. The time had come when God would again vindicate Himself, and by the translation of Elijah give witness to apostate Israel, and to those living under the Mosaic dispensation, that He is ever the same God, “the living God” of Is-

rael, who only doeth wondrous things. The case of Elijah, like that of Enoch, has been left on record for our instruction and admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Before considering the actual translation of Elijah we must advert to his previous history, for we know more of Elijah’s life, with its varied experiences trials and difficulties, than we do of that of Enoch. There are many points in the history of Elijah which excite a special interest: to wit, his sudden [057] appearance, his relations with King Ahab, his prayer and sacrifice on Carmel, his slaughter of the priests of Baal, his flight from Queen Jezebel, his journey to Mount Horeb, and his denunciation of King Ahaziah. Elijah had, like Enoch and Noah, to bear witness against the prevailing wickedness with which he was surrounded; yea, he had to reprove kings for the Lord’s sake. To preserve integrity amidst the ungodly is ever a work of difficulty, and to witness in kings’ palaces is (as history testifies) a work of trial and of temptation. Elijah bore witness against the despot Ahab, especially in the matter of the spoliation and murder of Naboth; he excited the wrath of Jezebel; he reproved the whole nation of Israel, as well as Ahaziah king of Judah; and from his whole history and that of Enoch, it would seem to be more or less a law of God’s providential dealing with men that those who are to attain

to the highest rewards in His kingdom are called upon to do an exceptional work of witness, involving special trials and self-sacrifice. The persecutions which Elijah endured were many and great. Being in danger of his life, he had at last to flee into the wilderness from the revengeful pursuit of Jezebel; and, so great had been the persecutions and martyrdoms inflicted at her instigation, that he supposed all the prophets of the Lord to have been slain, and that he only was left as the one surviving and persecuted prophet of the God of Israel. In this spirit twice does he answer the Lord to the same effect. "And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken [058] Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away" (1 Kings xix. 10). Elijah's solitariness, directly after his recorded triumph over idolatry on Mount Carmel, must have been a trial to him, causing him great mental anguish and spiritual depression. Among the faithless he thought he was the only faithful one; but the Lord reproved him and told him that He had seven thousand faithful hidden saints in Israel even at that time. It seems strange indeed that after the great boldness which Elijah displayed on Carmel a moment of such depression and weakness should come over him that he requested for himself that he might die. "It is e-

enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings xix. 4). But the Lord graciously pitied the weakness of His servant; for, as in the case of Moses, He relieved him of part of his burden, and told him to seek out a successor. Moreover, the Lord at length vouchsafed to him the great reward of translation, thereby proving Himself to be the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him out. Truly God's ways are above man's ways, as the heavens are high above the earth; for, whereas Elijah asked that he might die, the Lord gave him an exemption from death, with life more abundantly, even length of days for ever and ever; and therefore, in this result, he was better than his fathers.

After a life full of trials, the day approached when Elijah was to be taken up into heaven; and we have an interesting account of his last earthly journey [059] with his servant Elisha. Elijah and Elisha were both at Gilgal, apparently not the Gilgal which Joshua reached after the passage of Jordan, and where the covenant of circumcision was renewed and the reproach of Egyptian bondage rolled away.⁸ After this

⁸ The expression in 2 Kings ii. 2, "They went down [from Gilgal] to Bethel." The Gilgal referred to by Joshua lay near the river Jordan, and from it an ascent would have to be made to Bethel of some 3700 feet, so we accept the suggestion that this Gilgal was another Gilgal, at a higher level

this they went to Bethel, with its memories of Jacob's vision, and of the anointed stone, which was none other than the house of God to the forlorn traveller. They then came to Jericho, the first city captured by Joshua in a miraculous manner as an earnest of the conquest of Canaan. After leaving Jericho they crossed the Jordan dryshod, and entered the territory of Reuben. As they were walking along together, suddenly there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder, and Elijah was caught up from the side of Elisha by a whirlwind, even by the Spirit of the Lord. The master was suddenly taken away from his servant; and Elisha, gazing up at the chariot of fire, is left an orphan. The inspired narrative is as follows: - "And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and [060] rent them in two pieces" (2. Kings ii. 11,12). It may be to this event that King Joash refers when, weeping over Elisha on his death-bed, he exclaimed, "O my father,

than Bethel, in the mountains (see Smith's Dictionary of the Bible - Article, Gilgal 2).

my father, the chariot of Israel and the horses thereof" (2 Kings xiii. 14).

There is a special interest attaching to Elisha as an eye witness of the translation of Elijah. May we not see in the mockery which he had to endure the usual experience of those who bear witness to an act of God? There was no doubt something special in the office of Elisha as servant or minister to Elijah; but there was also something of the duty of a witness in his office; at least Elijah laid stress on the necessity of Elisha seeing his translation as the condition for the reception of a double portion of the same spirit (2.Kings ii. 9,10): "And it came to pass when they had gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken away from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but, if not, it shall not be so."

That the unbelieving children of Bethel identified Elisha with Elijah's translation is evident, for they mocked the prophet, saying, "Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead." This, no doubt, may have been an act of ridicule and personal mockery at the baldness of the prophet; but more probably they were

alluding to the fact that he had lost his official head, and was without that covering. Perhaps [061] they had previously heard him taunted with the approaching rapture of his master from his head; and now, in tones of contempt and unbelief, they as good as bade him also do the same thing as his master had done, namely, to rise into the air and be carried up into heaven. This is what they probably meant by saying, "Go up, thou baldhead." It was the mockery of unbelief in the translation of Elijah into heaven, and of contempt of God's chosen witness to that great act of almighty power.

There is one peculiar feature here which merits our attention, namely, that the fact of Elijah's impending translation appears to have been known beforehand. How could this be? It can have been only by revelation from God Himself. Elijah knew it; Elisha knew it; and the sons of the prophets at Bethel and at Jericho also knew it; for they addressed Elisha in these words - "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" The emphasis in the original Hebrew is on the words "to-day" - *to-day*. "And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." Many interesting questions are suggested here, as to the schools of the prophets, their organization, studies, and the revelation they received, which we are unable to pursue.

Should we not also hope and pray that, if the Lord graciously intends (as we believe) to give this great reward to some in the Christian Church, He may vouchsafe to us some intimation of the coming fact? For surely our standing in Christ Jesus and our spiritual privileges must be far greater than those of the sons of the prophets at Bethel [062] or at Jericho, B.C., 900; and we are encouraged to cherish this hope from the words of the prophet Amos - "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). Still, we must not forget our Lord's warning - "Watch: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. xxiv. 42).

Of the details of Enoch's translation nothing is known: "He was not, for God took him"; whereas, in the case of Elijah, we read of a "chariot of fire and horses of fire," and that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." We here note the two great symbols of the Spirit, wind and fire, the same as on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was given; and, therefore, we may lawfully infer that the *Holy Ghost* was the agent whereby Elijah's body must have undergone the sudden change that enabled him to endure the parting by the chariot of fire and the rapture into the air. He could no longer be mortal; he became immortal in the twinkling of an eye; and is not

the hope that the *Holy Ghost* will quicken our bodies, whether we be dead or alive, the same hope which St. Paul over and over again sets before the Church, in his epistles? (Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 14; xv. 51-53; 2 Cor. iv. 14; 1.Thes. iv. 16-17).

It is one of those things for which there is no accounting by the ordinary processes of human reasoning that, by common consent and apparently in all ages, Christians have spoken of Elijah's rapture as by means of a fiery chariot; whereas the Scripture distinctly says that the fiery chariot "*parted*" Elijah and Elisha from each other, and that it was by a [063] *whirlwind* that Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings ii. 1-11). "And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal....And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." So it is by a "whirlwind" - the direct action and impulse of the Holy Ghost - that the future translation of the saints shall be effected. And yet there may be an aspect of the truth which includes the chariot of fire as helping in the rapture, for in the book of Canticles we read - "Or ever I was aware my soul set me among the chariots of my princely people" (Cant. vi. 12, R.V.). We can hardly re-

gard Elijah's translation (so far as our knowledge goes) as an escape - an escape from persecution and threatened death - as we believe the coming translation of the saints will be. Had it taken place shortly after the events of Carmel, when Jezebel threatened his life and sent him a message that she would kill him during the next four and twenty hours, we might have regarded it in this light; but after this the episode on mount Horeb occurred, and his translation must have been some years later, for it took place after the death of king Ahaziah, the son of Ahab.

Let us now compare the features common to the cases of Enoch and Elijah, and note some of their distinctive differences.

They both stood almost alone in the midst of an ungodly world. They both excited opposition and [064] perhaps persecution. They both received an exceptional reward. These two instances of translation or rapture at great intervals - some two thousand years elapsing from Enoch to Elijah, and nearly three thousand years from Elijah to the present date (1902 A.D.) - were both marked evidences of the interposition of God in the affairs of men, as well as of His divine care for the preservation and recompense of His saints. Their translation was, moreover, a signal witness to the generation, not to say to the dispensation, in

which Enoch and Elijah respectively lived; a reminder of the hope of immortality, of the necessity of its attainment by resurrection or change through the mighty working of the living God; in short, they were a protest on behalf of God against a forgetful and unbelieving world.

From these two cases of Enoch and Elijah, we conclude that those who shall attain to translation in these last times must be persons of godly lives, who bear witness against the prevailing evil, and who are willing to endure persecution and the loss of all things rather than deny Christ. Our Lord says in connection with the rapture of the saints, that "Who-soever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke xvii. 33). Does this indicate that those who would attain translation must be willing to count all things but loss, and to give up their own lives also (were it necessary), to attain this *prize* of their high calling?

It is interesting to behold Elijah's reappearance on the mount of the transfiguration, and to recognise him in glory with the Lord. It proves that he was alive and apparently in a glorified body. And now [065] for a moment he is seen with the Lord in glory, talking with Him, together with Moses; the latter representing those who had died and will be raised, and the former those who will be changed at the appearing of the

Lord without death. That Elijah who was translated should appear in this vision of glory is prophetic of that full beatification of which the change without death may be regarded as the precursor.

There are many Jewish traditions in connection with Elijah, and by some it is believed that he will again personally appear on earth before the advent of the Messiah; and some have imagined that he will then suffer martyrdom and himself go through the ordeal of death, forgetful of the fact that he was seen "in glory" with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration more than eight hundred years after he was caught up to heaven; but surely we cannot conceive that he would be sent down to earth again to assume a mortal body, in order to justify the unbelief of those who assert that all men must die. That this opinion has been held the following quotation will shew - "Both the Latin and Greek fathers commonly couple Enoch and Elijah as historic witnesses to a possibility of a resurrection of the body and of a true human existence in glory (Ireneus iv. 5,1; Tertullian de Resurr. Carn. 58), and the voice of early ecclesiastical tradition is almost unanimous in regarding them as the two witnesses (Rev. xi. 3) who should fall before 'the beast' and afterwards be raised to heaven before the great judgment. This belief removed a great difficulty which was supposed to attach to their translation, for

thus it was made [066] clear that they would at last discharge the common debt of a sinful humanity from which they were not exempted by their glorious removal from the earth" (Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. i., part ii., p. 940).

We can hardly instance the case of our Lord as exactly an example of translation, though it bears upon it and has its affinities therewith. Nevertheless we may cite the Lord as an example of the change, because His flesh saw no corruption; and this fact is alluded to in the first sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 27-31). And in St. Paul's first recorded sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 35-37), it is insisted on as a special mark of Christ's Messiahship and of God's intervention; for He was raised from the dead, and His change into the resurrection body is evidenced during His subsequent sojourn of forty days on earth. During this time the full glory did not burst forth from Him until He reached His Father's presence in heaven; this teaching us that a superadded glory will, after an interval, follow the previous change from mortality to immortality in the case of the saints changed without death. Before the Lord was translated, i.e., removed from earth to heaven, at His ascension, He stands on Olivet and, whilst blessing His apostles, He begins to ascend into the air till a cloud enfolds Him and His disciples see Him no

Him no more. The ascended God-Man thus passes to the right hand of God, where He now sits awaiting His return to earth, for which the Catholic Church should daily watch and pray, crying - "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." [067].

CHAPTER V.

The Search for the Translated.

OUR attention is now directed to a feature which is common to both the recorded cases of translation, and that is the search which was made for Enoch and for Elijah after their disappearance. It is remarkable that this occurs, and is narrated in each case, even though Scripture alludes with such marked brevity to that of Enoch.

In the book of Genesis we read - "And he [Enoch] was not; for God took him"; and this is explained with more detail in the epistle to the Hebrews - "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him" (Heb. xi. 5). Not found by whom? By those who had searched for him. No details of Enoch's translation and of the search made for him are given us, but human nature is more or less always the same; and, given the same circumstances, men will act in the same way, though at the interval of centuries. Surrounded as Enoch was by the ungodly, they would be unable to account for his sudden disappearance, much less for its miraculous cause. Even his relatives and his immediate friends would be slow to believe in the phenomenon, although possibly warned of it before-

forehand; and they would certainly be among those who would seek to find the missing Enoch. But their labour was lost [068], their search was vain, and they could not find him, since God had translated him.

Let us now consider the search made for the prophet Elijah, the account of which is thus given in the sacred narrative - "And they [the sons of the prophets] said unto him [Elisha], Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master; lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And, when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days but found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?" (2 Kings ii. 16-18). There are several points of interest here. It is a striking fact that the suggestion and action came from the sons of the prophets at Jericho, the city of destruction. Its foundations had again been laid, apparently a short time before in the days of Ahab, by Hiel the Beth-elite, notwithstanding the curse which Joshua had left on any one who should attempt its rebuilding (Joshua vi. 26; 1 Kings xvi. 34); and therefore it seems remarkable that there should have been a school of the prophets there, as

there, as well as at Bethel, which was the chief seat of the court and of the idolatry of Jeroboam. Possibly this prophetic school was under the supervision of Elijah. These sons of the prophets had evidently received some premonition of the event, and had set themselves to watch, probably [069] on this side (on the west side) of Jordan. They may perchance have seen some sudden brilliant transitory meteoric flash on the horizon on the other side of Jordan, and they are eager to suggest the search for Elijah. The reason they advance savours of unbelief. They do not seem to have denied that some extraordinary event had taken place, but they appear to have doubted the fact of the translation; for, in proposing a search for the missing prophet, they impute a capricious action to the Spirit of God - "lest the Spirit of the LORD should have taken up Elijah, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley." The tidings had gone abroad that something exceptional had happened; but even the sons of the prophets were slow to credit the possibility of that which their own lips had declared, and, in the strength of the flesh, they search for him who was said to have been translated from the earth. Their search was unsuccessful, as was that in the case of Enoch, for neither of the translated persons was found.

Elisha at first refuses their request, being assured of the power and faithfulness of God, of the reality of the phenomenon which he had witnessed, and therefore of the futility of their search. But they are persistent, they will take no refusal. "They urged him till he was ashamed." They (as we should say) worried him, until he felt forced to give way; and he said - Send. The men whom they sent are described as "strong men" (margin, "sons of strength"), and a band of fifty go forth to scour the valleys and the mountains. How this episode [070] brings before us the old lesson of man refusing to believe in God's acts, - even though He graciously afford foreknowledge of them - and then of man's self-will in presumptuously seeking to interfere with the action of God's Spirit.

However, the fifty men do not give up their search readily. For three days they adhere to their purpose. On the first day the search is unsuccessful, on the second day and on the third day it is also vain; they then give up their quest in despair, and report to Elisha their want of success. He gives them no sympathy, rather a gentle rebuke - "Did I not say to you, Go not?" - "You have wasted your time and energy. I assented to your going against my better judgment; I had faith in God's promises and in their fulfilment in Elijah's translation; did I not say to you, Go not?"

In considering the search made for those who had been translated, it is worthy of remark that the same spirit of unbelief was manifested in the somewhat analogous case of the resurrection of the Lord. The great acts of God throw the unbelief of man into more marked relief. Christ had told His disciples distinctly, in plain and unfigurative language, that He would rise from the dead on the third day; yet, when His resurrection occurred, not one of His followers was able to believe and accept the joyous fact. The disciples had not understood what "rising from the dead" should mean, though the Lord's prophecy of this new and great event must often have been discussed among them, as well as among the faithful women who companied with the Lord. These [071] faithful women, "who were last at His cross, and earliest at His tomb," seem to have forgotten, or not to have grasped, all His explicit statements that on the third day He would rise again from the dead, and so they came early on the first day of the week to embalm His body, and to carry out the sepulchral rites which had been hastily begun on the eve of the Sabbath. They were startled at not finding the Lord's body; but even then they did not apprehend the truth that He was risen from the dead. On the contrary, they thought that He had been taken away to some other place; that they must search for Him and find Him; and in their anguish they exclaimed - "They ha-

have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." Moreover, when Mary addressed the Lord in answer to His question, "Why weepest thou?" she did not in the least know to whom she was speaking. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him - Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John xx. 15). We notice that in the first lamentation she speaks of *them*, in the plural: now, in addressing the gardener, the person in charge of the garden, she addresses him in the singular - "If thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." It was something of the same failure to grasp or apprehend by faith what the Lord had said that led her to wish, like those who sought for Enoch and for Elijah, to institute [072] a search for the missing beloved one, who in this case had been removed not by translation but by resurrection. And we know that a greater spirit of incredulity was found in the eleven apostles, for as yet "they knew not [understood not] the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead." He had often told them so in plain words, but they had not apprehended it; hence they could not at first believe in His resurrection, and not improbably they also would have instituted a fruitless search to find His body.

Our Lord rebuked them after His resurrection for their unbelief no less than three times. And of those who beheld the risen Lord in Galilee we read, "And some doubted." Yet, as it was necessary that they should go forth to witness to this great event, the Lord shewed Himself alive to them during forty days after His resurrection, and convinced them by many infallible proofs that it was a great reality and the very foundation-fact of His Gospel (1. Cor. xv. 13-19).

Now, if we proceed to analyse the principles which led the men of old to institute their search for the translated saints, to what must we attribute it? It seems clear that it was due to unbelief. They may have heard of what had happened; they may have had anticipations of it; nay more, they must have had forewarnings of it, as in the case of Elijah; but, when the translation became an accomplished fact, they would not credit it, and sought to evade the acknowledgment of this supernatural act by a solution of the difficulty derived from the natural. *Unbelief* was doubtless the latent and principal motive, though other motives may have been more or less intertwined therewith [073].

How inherent is the unwillingness of fallen man to believe in what he considers to be an unprecedented, an uncalled-for, or supernatural, act of inter-

vention in mundane affairs on the part of God; or to come into direct contact with the living God, if by any means he can escape from Him. It was this spirit that was in Adam after his fall. He fled from God and hid himself amongst the trees of the garden. "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraidand I hid myself" (Gen. iii. 10).

When God does His mighty works and gives testimony thereto, He makes an appeal to faith; and, if men have not this faith, they are unable to discern the workings of God. Unbelief has ever been one of the most flagrant and ineradicable sins of the human heart since the fall of man. Alas! unbelief has also been one of the pervading sins of the Christian Church; it is a spiritual sin which has eaten as a canker and caused her to forget her heavenly calling (see John iii. 18, 36). This holds good of the promise and hope of the translation of the saints. It has been foretold; it is declared plainly in the pages of the New Testament. We should therefore expect it; we should be *watching* for it; and to treat this promise of God with neglect or forgetfulness betrays an unbelief on the part of Christians which must entail loss in some forum or other.

Now, judging from the analogy of Holy Scripture, how will the news be received of the translation of a

body - of a firstfruits - of an election - within the Church of God? We believe it will meet with scorn, unbelief and persecution. To this point we shall revert later [074] on, when we consider the subject matter of the testimony of the “two witnesses,” and the treatment which they will receive (Rev. xi.).

When the Lord again intervenes miraculously (as we express it) in the history of the Church, by raising the dead, by changing the living, and translating both into His presence, or hiding them in His secret pavilion, how will these tidings be received? What will the world say when the gaps in families, in society, in every position and rank of life, are gradually realised? They will be missed. Will they be searched for and “not found”? Will their disappearance be received with incredulity, with scorn and ridicule? Will it be a nine days’ wonder? Will it soon be forgotten and ignored with the hostility of unbelief? Will a few paragraphs in the daily journals consign the mystery to oblivion in the midst of the crowding and terrific events that will then be distracting the tempest-tossed minds of men? To those who have searched for the translated firstfruits it might be said by the faithful witnesses of their rapture, “Seek not for those whom God has translated; the faithful dead are not here, they are risen; the living watchful saints are not on earth; they have been changed and taken into the clouds, having

been translated; send not forth your fifty strong men to endeavour to find them; they shall not be found; they are not cast upon some mountain or into some valley. They stand on mount Zion with the Lamb, and none can climb that bill but those to whom it is given so to do!”

It is vain for us to predict or imagine what must necessarily happen on the occurrence of such an unprecedented [075] event. The Lord Himself says that His advent will come as a snare on all those that dwell on the face of the whole earth - on the dwellers in the world, and alas! we fear, on the majority in the Church also. While the Bridegroom tarried, the ten virgins *all* slumbered and slept, even the five wise virgins, together with the five foolish who had not enough oil in their vessels with their lamps. Looking, however, at the only two cases of translation on record, we may certainly expect that a search will be made for those who will be the privileged subjects of the coming translation; for the event cannot but cause some excitement and surprise even among those who are most callous in an unbelieving world. Alas! as it has been before, so we fear it will be again, only the opposition and scorn will be accentuated with increased hostility to God’s chosen witnesses; for surely some will then be found to take up the ministry of Elisha, and to go forth at the word of God, and

at the peril of their lives, to witness to the resurrection from among the dead, to the change of the living, and to the rapture or translation of both, *as an accomplished fact*. As with a trumpet-voice they will seek to stem the ebbing faith of Christendom which has well nigh forgotten that God - the living God - is able to interpose miraculously to fulfil His word spoken to the Church at the beginning of this dispensation through His apostle St. Paul (1. Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1.Thess. iv. 15-17).

The following quotation has been taken from a sermon preached nearly fifty years ago by the Rev. William Dow (1st series, page 391).

“There is a great act of God to which all things now look forward. It is the sending again of Jesus Christ from the right hand of His Father. And that will take place as surely as did His resurrection. Men shall expect it as little as they expected His resurrection. The world shall be rolling on in its old course; as it was in the days of Noah; as it was in the days of Sodom. It shall come upon an unconscious generation. But His saints will hear His voice. They shall awake at His voice, who sleep in the dust; and they shall come with Him in the day of His appearing. And we which are alive and remain, shall be caught away. From the house-top, from the field, from the bed of

rest, His saints that are alive and look for Him shall be caught away. Friend from his friend, brother from beside his brother, workman from beside his fellow-workman. They shall be caught away; they shall be missed; and no one shall know whither they have gone. They have gone with their glorious bodies, to meet Him who is coming, with the risen ones. And then He shall come with ten thousand of His saints, to judge the world which would not have Him to reign over it, to avenge the blood of His holy ones on them that dwell on the earth, and to rule the nations with His rod. For God hath given Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Be wise therefore now; be instructed while the day of longsuffering waiteth. ‘Kiss the Son lest He be angry. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.’”

CHAPTER VI.

The Translation of the Saints, not as Individuals but in One Body.

“LET the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are *called in one body*” (Col. iii. 15).

In the exhortation which forms the introduction to the morning and evening services on the Feast of

All Saints,⁹ this remarkable sentence occurs - "We have indeed been anxious for our own personal salvation; but we have lost sight of the Body of Christ, and forgotten that it is only as one body, and not as individuals, that we can be received into glory." This statement may be startling to many, and our first point must therefore be to enquire whether it is taught in holy Scripture; after which we may deduce its necessity, reasonableness, and practical application to coming events.

In the opening words of the text heading this chapter the Apostle enjoins the saints at Colosse to let the peace of God rule in their hearts, - as individuals - but he immediately points out that it is not to be only for their own selfish or separate enjoyment, for he continues thus - "to the which *also ye* [collectively] are called in one body."

Though we do not lose sight of the fact that the Body of Christ cannot be filled with the peace of God save as it rules in the hearts of the individual members, yet for the motto of this chapter we have chosen the words - "to the which *also ye* [078] *are called in one body,*" since from these words we may legiti-

⁹ The Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church (Pitman).

mately conclude that the calling to the glory of God and to the intermediate steps for the attainment of that full glory, is also a calling in one body.

The clear and definite statement of the hope of translation made by St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, was written about the year 54 A.D., not "to the saints" as individuals (to whom he addressed several of his epistles), but "to the *Church*" at Thessalonica as a whole, and for the whole Church as one body. It speaks of those who sleep in Jesus being raised from the dead, of the living being changed, and of both being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence the very first revelation of this the Church's hope in the New Testament Scriptures, some twenty years after our Lord's ascension, clearly intimates the fact that it is not as mere units or individuals, but as a united company of saints, raised and changed, that we can hope to attain translation. This, like the resurrection from among the dead with which it is bound up, we apprehend to be the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 14).

Another scriptural illustration of the same truth may be cited. The figure of the man-child with its rapture, as described in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, appears to represent the company of the firstfruits referred to in chapters vii and xiv as being

of a definite number, viz.: 144,000. It gives us, in symbolic and prophetic language, the image not merely of a unit, but of a body consisting of members who are co-related together. Moreover, as [079] the child is born of the woman who, with her crown of twelve stars, represents the whole Church of Christ, - One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic - it clearly seems to point to a company which belongs to the Church, and yet whose birth, whose issuing forth from the Church, indicates some sort of separation or distinction while still in close relation to the whole Church.

Who can know or say what work the Lord may give the firstfruits to do in helping those who pass through the great tribulation, or in preparing the whole Church for her presentation as the bride of the Lord in glory; for the firstfruits on mount Zion (Rev. xiv.) seem foreshadowed, if not actually foretold of, in Obadiah 17 (marginal reading and R.V.) - "But upon mount Zion shall be *they that escape*, and it shall be holy"; and their work in verse 21 - "And saviours shall come up on mount Zion." May not therefore the firstfruits form a company who are elected and selected of God that they may bring a special blessing to their brethren? For this is the true scriptural doctrine of election, that a few are chosen for the blessing of the many. It is a wonderful thought, and indicates the true humanity of our Lord, that He waits for His fel-

low-workers who, according to the divine economy and because of His manhood, are necessary to Him for the carrying out of God's full purpose in man.

The Son of God was made Man for us men and for our salvation. He is perfect God and perfect Man, and "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He, and He only, is the sole container of the fulness of the Father. Now, what [080] relation has Christ to the Church, and what relation has the Church to Christ? The Father has given Christ "to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23). Here we learn that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that Christ is its Head; that there is one Head, not many heads; that there is one Body, not many bodies; that Christ, the Head, has a fulness which filleth all in all, i.e., filleth every member of the one Body, with all needful fulness. Yet no man can be a Christ in himself. No one member can contain the fulness of the Head, "but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. iv. 7).

Charity or *love*, which is the bond of perfectness, exists in its fulness only in the Head of the Body, in the Lord Jesus Christ whose love "passeth knowledge"; no one member can possess this love in its

fulness, but its fulness dwells in the Church as the Body of Christ, though it may be manifested in some members more than in others. Thus, to illustrate our meaning, it would require a goodly company of individuals, knit together in a certain spiritual relationship, to express the fulness of love which is in Christ Jesus the Head. In Christ are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet it may require a chosen band of His members, with all their varied gifts, to reflect the incomprehensible wisdom of the only wise God, as manifested by the incarnate Son.

Again, if we instance other graces or excellencies, such as patience, meekness, self-denial, long-suffering [081], we see that only in a body could this varied spiritual fulness be contained or expressed; for separate individuals could not possibly contain the infinite fulness of the incarnate Son. God, therefore, has given to His Son a Body - His Church - which is to be, when she is perfected, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. Then, when the whole Church is perfected, shall every varied particle of grace and loveliness which is in the Head find its due manifestation in the glorified members of the One Body; then, and not till then, shall the whole Body attain "*unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

It would seem as if among Christians generally the thought exists that where in Scripture the Church is spoken of as a *Body* nothing more is intended than a figure or similitude. That just as in other places she is compared, for instance, to an army, so from the compactness of her organization, from her unity of action, or from other qualities, she may be compared to the human frame and called *a body*. But the converse of this is the truth; for the Church - the Body of Christ - is, though last in manifestation, the first in intention; so that our bodies are but types or little epitomes of that wondrous reality, the Body of Christ, which was to be manifested in due time; as it is written - "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb.x.5); "In Thy book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them" (Psa. cxxxix. 16).

As the Church has been created by God to be a [082] spiritual Body, she will be dealt with *as a body*; so that for any given number of members to separate themselves from the organic Body of which they have been made integral parts, or to think of attaining to a separate condition of glory by themselves, would be to violate the law of their corporate being, seeing they are all divinely knit together into a living unity. No; viewing the Church as a whole, the members must

tarry one for another; for of the departed it is said "that they apart from us [the living] should not be made perfect" (Heb. xi. 40, R.V.). But the time must surely come when the perfect number of individual members of the Church shall be completed. The full number of the elect shall be accomplished when the Church shall be perfected and when the glory of God shall fill her and burst forth from her, even as the glory of the Lord suddenly filled the temple of Solomon when it was finished and dedicated. This is the calling of the Church, and this glorious result shall surely be attained.

But there may be *stages* in the attainment of the resurrection glory by Christ's Body mystical, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the Bride of the Lamb. We believe that each of these figures embraces the whole Church, and that the Church as a whole will attain to the first resurrection; we further believe that God does His works in nature and in grace by degrees; therefore, without presuming to dogmatize, we hazard the suggestion that the Lord will complete the work of perfecting His Church and bringing in the resurrection and His kingdom by stages, and also that these stages or epochs may be threefold [083] like so many of His works. Take, for instance, the threefold lights of heaven - sun, moon and stars; the threefold constitution of man, consisting of spirit, soul and body, of

which the three parts of the tabernacle or the temple are considered typical. The Lord may perfect His Church in three periods of time, as may be gathered from the following analogies and prophetic intimations in holy Scripture.

The three returns of the Jews from captivity under Ezra are remarkable. There is the decree of Cyrus under which the first gathering from Babylon took place, with the rebuilding of the brazen altar and the laying of the foundations of the temple. Then, sixteen years afterwards, comes the decree of Darius. Then, thirdly, the decree of Artaxerxes sixty two years later, when more of the Jews returned under Ezra; and thirteen years later the wall of the city was built and dedicated by Nehemiah. The threefold constitution of the tabernacle, of the temple of Solomon, and of the temple of Ezekiel, also point in the same direction. The holiest place, or the oracle, the holy place, and the court surrounding the temple, constitute it a threefold unity. But in the building of the temple - a type of the glorified Church - one part may well have been finished before the completion of the other parts was possible; yet that completed portion could not therefore be described otherwise than as a *part* of the temple any more than we regard the firstfruits - a part of the Church - to be the whole Church.

In studying the feasts of the Jews we notice the wave sheaf of barley at the Passover, the two loaves [084] waved before the Lord at Pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles (or ingathering) at the time of the harvest, which are also signified in the book of the Revelation. We may regard the fulfilment from different planes of observation. Thus, taking the largest horizon completing the feast of weeks, Christ Himself would be the Paschal sheaf of barley; the Christian Church from Pentecost, comprising Jews and Gentiles in bodies of mortality, would be the two Pentecostal wave loaves baken with leaven; while the great ingathering of the nations would be set forth by the feast of ingathering or tabernacles. St. Paul seems to hint at this threefold order when he writes - "But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming; then [afterwards] cometh the end" (1. Cor. xv. 23, 24). But the same truths may hold good on another plane, and be applied, as it were, on a smaller scale to the threefold work which the Lord will do in perfecting His Church at the close of this dispensation; for is it not more or less acknowledged that the experiences of the Church, of Christ's mystical body, reproduce those of Christ Himself. In this view the firstfruits would be set forth by the Paschal wave sheaf of barley; those gathered under the two witnesses would be typified and represented by the two loaves of wheat, firstfruits

at Pentecost; while the great multitude completing the whole Church would be typified by the feast of ingathering or of tabernacles, thus following the analogy and prophetic intimations of holy Scripture.

Now, as regards the three stages by which the Lord [085] may perfect His Church at the end of this dispensation, they may take place as follows: The first work would seem to be that of gathering the firstfruits; the second would be that done under the two witnesses (Rev. xi); and the third would be the gathering of the great multitude, chiefly of the departed, including those who have gone through the persecution of Antichrist. And these three companies will, we believe, form the one perfected Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, glorified, and forming with its Divine Head the Christ of God.

The first step, therefore, in the onward purpose of God, connected with the Lord's return, is *resurrection*. This takes place before any are changed; and we ought to be looking for a resurrection of some of the departed saints before our change can take place: wherefore, we should not be startled if authentic witness were given to us that it had already commenced, when the Lord's time for the first resurrection has arrived.

We believe that resurrection change and translation may be progressive, and have their application to each of the three companies, viz.: (1) the firstfruits, (2) those gathered by the two witnesses, and (3) those who have suffered under Antichrist, each stage ending in resurrection and translation, and the whole completing the first resurrection (Rev. xx. 5, 6).

No doubt difficulties can be propounded which nothing but the reality can solve; but we suggest the above forecast as agreeable to Holy Scripture and as based thereon, though from dogmatizing we abstain. However, these stages seem outlined in the book of the Revelation. Thus, in the seventh chapter we read of the sealing of one hundred and forty four thousand, and [086] of those who come out of the great tribulation - which may include those gathered under the two witnesses. Clearly we have here at least two companies, which recalls the figures of Zion and Jerusalem so often mentioned by the prophets of old. We are also reminded of the expression in the Song of Solomon, "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" (i.e., in the Bride of the true Solomon, the Bride, the Lamb's wife). "As it were, the company of two armies" (the raised and the living and changed saints caught up as one):

Till, in Thy light transfigured,
Thy ransomed shall be seen,
Thy two immortal armies,
In linen white and clean.

In chapter xiv. we have the firstfruits on mount Zion; secondly, a great preaching of the Gospel, the fall of Babylon and the persecution of the saints on the earth; and thirdly, a reaping of the harvest of the earth by the Son of Man with a sharp sickle; finally, as indicating judgment and vengeance, the cutting off the clusters of the vine of the earth with a sharp sickle and the casting them into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

In chapter xii. we have the birth of the man-child, immediately followed by the first flight of the woman (or Church) into the wilderness for a space of time, which agrees with the period of the prophesying of the two witnesses (one thousand two hundred and sixty days, a time, times and half a time, or forty two months); and then her second flight into the wilderness with the two wings of a great eagle; which periods may agree with the gathering and rapture of [087] the firstfruits, the work of the two witnesses, and the gathering of the great multitude (typified as it were by the outer court of the temple) from the great tribulation, or dire persecutions of Antichrist. Thus the

Church as a whole becomes, as St. James expresses it, “a kind of firstfruits of His [God’s] creatures” (James i. 18).

But if the Church as a whole neglect her calling; if she refuse to go on unto perfection; if she let slip the hope set before her and prepare not to meet her Lord, will not the Lord then be justified in separating a company, known by the name of “the firstfruits,” to whom He can award that prize which properly is the dower and calling of the whole Church? Surely this may be so, without severing the unity of the body; and we believe that this is set before us in the figure of the man-child, born of the woman crowned with a crown of twelve stars (Rev. xii. 1-5).

This company then will be perfected first; but in its perfecting it would be treated as a *unity*: this is the point we are now considering. The members of it, therefore, would attain to the resurrection, to the change and to the translation, not as individuals, but as corporate members of the one Body. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. iv. 4).

This fact is set forth in Scripture under various figures. Those who enjoy this earnest of coming glory are called “firstfruits,” as distinguished from the “har-

vest.” They stand on a special place of privilege and security called “mount Zion”; they are a definite and given number; they sing a special song; they stand before the Lamb; they follow Him whithersoever [088] He goeth (Rev. xiv. 1-5 CF.; Rev. vii.; Lev. xxiii. 10; 1Cor. xv. 20).

Without discussing curious questions as to the precise meaning of “mount Zion” where this elect company will be, or in what precise condition they will be, let us consider this special point, viz.: their attainment to a certain prior measure of salvation, or of glory, as a body and not as individuals. No doubt some earnest persons have often felt discouraged when they have looked around and, perhaps involuntarily, formed a judgment as to the general unpreparedness for the change and translation existing at present in the Church taken as a whole; and they have wondered how the Lord will ever be able to translate a company of firstfruits, though they would not impugn the majesty of His grace and power and faithfulness. When we think of ourselves and feel our utter unworthiness and the difficulty of our being prepared even as individuals, and kept up to the standard for sudden change and translation; when we know that a company of many individuals has to be made ready, we are inclined to faint and to cry out - “O Lord, is it possible? Can this blessed result ever be attained? It

is only by Thy power and grace that it can come to pass.” With men, indeed, it is impossible; yet, our faith adds, “But not with God, for with God all things are possible.” We certainly can never attain to it by any efforts of our own; nor by our own merits or righteousness. It must be the triumph of free grace, of Divine power and love, through the merits of our Redeemer; but it must likewise be the triumph of obedience, of following the Lord fully, and thus attaining to perfect likeness to Christ [089].

If these thoughts have passed through our minds, and if we have felt perplexed or disheartened at hearing that it is not singly as individuals, but only as a body, that we can enter into the coming glory, let us examine this statement, and see whether it is not rather one full of comfort and hope. For, as no one member of the Body can contain the fulness of the Head, but can only attain to his own share of Christ’s fulness, and thus reach his own individual measure of perfection, so even this measure is obtainable only because the *whole body* is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the *effectual working in the measure of every part* (Eph. iv. 16). We might as well conceive of a hand or a finger subsisting by itself apart from our body as that Christians could enter separately into

that coming glory which has been promised to the whole Church as one Body in Christ.

Hence, since no member can even in any one single point reach perfection, he needs other members of the Body to manifest with him that one grace, whether faith, love, patience, or self-sacrifice, which may form the total perfection of the particular grace in the eye of the Father. There are various graces which are seen in various individuals, even as there are many and varied flowers in a garden; but it is the whole that forms the perfect beauty of the garden of the Lord, as in Eden. The Bridegroom goes down into His garden to gather spices (Can. vi. 2), but they are not all of one sort; for their loveliness, as well as their utility for incense or for an anointing oil, lies in the variety of their fragrance being fitly [090] blended. We do not mean to imply that we are to rely on our deficiencies being supplied or supplemented, by the virtue of others, or that we should not seek after individual perfection; but still the aggregate, the full measure of faith, for example, which should be found in one hundred members, could not be found in one member only; and the fulness of the Head in that particular would thus be witnessed to by the Body. The same argument would apply to other gifts and graces. So that, while we deplore our shortcomings in every way, God may yet see in a body that fulness which He

could not find in individuals - however advanced and holy - and which He could righteously reward by their translation as one body. Thus the Lord might see in His firstfruits, mystically numbered as one hundred and forty four thousand, that measure of grace and suffering, viewing them as a company which He could approve and reward with the great prize of translation. This is possible only from the Church being the Body of Christ. We are an organic, spiritual, living unity; we are members one of another; and so this beneficial and all-surpassing result flows from the Church being one in Christ, and part of that new creation of God of which He is the beginning.

We are by an act of God co-related to one another, and we mutually act and re-act one on another. "If one member suffer," writes St. Paul, "all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1.Cor. xii. 26). But if the Church had no corporate organic relationships as a living, mystical and spiritual body, the view [091] of the truth which we have been considering would be untenable; for the above statements would not hold good of ten thousand unconnected saints, however excellent they might be individually; nor are they applicable to the saints of the Patriarchal, or of the Mosaic dispensation, who had no corporate spiritual relationship to each other. It is a blessed view of truth

which proceeds from the great central mystery of the Incarnation, viz.: *that the Church is the Body of Christ*. We may have need to guard this doctrine practically, so as not to let it be an excuse for idleness; on the contrary, out of love for all the members and in view of the common fellowship, we should, like St. Paul, be the more zealous to press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in one body. Still our separate responsibility remains, and undoubtedly we shall be rewarded individually according to our works.

Does not the truth that we have been considering bring before us *the graciousness of the Lord's dealing with us*? In the beloved Son the Father has been well pleased; but to the standard of the beloved Son no solitary human being can attain; yet it pleased the Father to knit His elect together in a spiritual body, and to see in *the body* that perfection, that measure of grace and suffering in the aggregate, which shall justify Him in giving the members such a reward of eternal salvation as no one of them could attain unto by himself.

In the resurrection and in the kingdom we shall all be like Christ and shall reflect His image and glory in our body, soul and spirit; but no one created [092] being in heaven or earth can contain the fulness that

is in the Man Christ Jesus whose Person is that of the eternal Son of God.

If, therefore, we rightly apprehend the truth under review, we are constrained to magnify the Lord for His wisdom grace and tenderness in beholding us as one with His dear Son and likewise with one another through the Son; and we believe that Christ will deal with His Church as a Body according to the law of her being which He Himself has ordained. He will regard her as a unity; and, while He gathers into one the scattered grains of faith and love that are in her individual members, will He not add thereto from the treasure-house of His own heart such riches of love, such varied graces, that the requisite measure may be filled to overflowing? And thus He will be able to present her faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

We cannot but be struck with the thought that, while one person only was translated in the Patriarchal dispensation and one in the Mosaic, the Lord has given us the promise of shewing His power on a grander scale; and that in this dispensation He will translate not an individual but a multitude of the servants of God, and first of all that company the number of whom is given in holy Scripture as twelve times twelve thousand, sealed with the Father's name in

their foreheads (Rev. vii. 1-8; xiv. 1-5) as the initial step in the fulfilment of His purpose to manifest His fulness and glory in His Body the Church.

Praise the Lord for He is good, yea He is great, and His mercy endureth for ever! [093].

CHAPTER VII.

The Translation: The Subject of the Testimony of the Two Witnesses.

WE have reason to believe that the translation, with all that it embraces, is the subject of the testimony of the two witnesses who are brought before us in the eleventh chapter of the book of the Revelation; and this subject we will now consider.

(1) Let us notice the *name*; they are called "witnesses." The Greek word for witness is "martyr," which means one who gives testimony to a given fact. Then the word attained a secondary meaning which, as is sometimes the case, assumes precedence of the primary meaning of the word, and becomes the current one. Thus "martyr" means one who gives his witness faithfully even unto death: from whence we get our word martyr, which now in its primary sense means one who has sealed his witness with his blood; so that this idea of confession unto death rather obscures the original idea of witness pure and simple. A faithful witness is one who testifies to something true, or important to the welfare of others, which he attests for their faith and acceptance. Christ calls Himself the "faithful and true witness"; and these qualities of

faithfulness and truth are the two great essentials in all witness that merits the name of witness for God.

(2) We notice the *number* of them. There are two witnesses. To explain this we must revert to the law of Moses in which wisdom and justice were [094] combined. This duality or plurality was a principle in the law, where the production of two (or three) witnesses was held to be necessary for the protection of the accused in charges involving life or death. One witness was not sufficient. Thus in Numbers xxxv. 30 it is written - "The murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die"; so also in Deut. xvii. 6 - "At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people." Two points arrest our attention - the number and the responsibility of the witnesses; for, if the witnesses were false, their guilt would be aggravated by conspiracy and malice pre-pense. A witness should be a witness to the *truth*; and, as it is harder to suborn two men than one man, so was the number *two* designed to be a guarantee for arriving at the truth, and the character of a false witness was held in universal abhorrence; so that in the

case of the innocent Naboth, and of the spotless Saviour of mankind, their condemnation through false witnesses has ever been regarded as crimes of the deepest dye. False witness was forbidden by the ninth commandment. The wisdom of the law in this matter is sanctioned and applied to dealings in the Church by the Master Himself (see Matt. xviii. 15-16). So again in John viii. 17 - "It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men [095] is true." This quotation by our Lord of the written law in the Old Testament Scriptures would be remembered by His disciples when He subsequently said to them "the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me, and ye also shall bear witness" (John xv. 26, 27). Timothy is instructed to act according to the same rule. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before [under] two or three witnesses" (1.Tim. v. 19). Again, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Cor. xiii. 1). Thus we see that a great principle of duality is connected with the subject of witness-bearing. God has given to it this twofoldness; so that, according to the mind of God, it is not to be a simple or single thing, but a complex or double thing.

There are many examples of this duality in practice which can be adduced from holy Scripture. For example, Caleb and Joshua were the only two per-

sons who alone, of the twelve spies and out of the thousands of Israel, bare witness to God's faithfulness and mercy in spite of all opposition, and who crossed the Jordan into the promised land. Moses and Elijah were the witnesses of our Lord's transfiguration, representing the law and prophets; the former the giver of the law, the latter its restorer.

Again, the two tables of the law were a witness for God, and were put into the ark which is called the ark of the testimony and over which were the two overshadowing cherubim, silent witnesses of the shekinah glory. To Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars which stood at the entrance of Solomon's temple [096], we may advert as pregnant types of God's coming two witnesses. In the book of the prophet Zechariah and also in Rev. xi. we read of two olive trees and two candlesticks in connection with the two witnesses; and in the return of Israel we see the governor Zerubbabel, helped by the high-priest Joshua, and encouraged by the ministry of the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

(3) It is certain that the work of the witnesses which we are considering is a direct witness for God, for they are described as "*My* two witnesses." Not only is their office one of witness, with the duality which as we have seen is a principle of true witness duly

prominent, but also they have a special mission from God who has chosen them to do a special work. May we venture to ask - Will the just God require of men that which He has not given to them in the first instance? (see Matt. xxv. 13-40). Has He ever brought judgments on mankind without first sending them warning? Therefore, if He is about to give a witness which shall leave men without excuse, must it not be twofold? Will not God have His *two witnesses* according to His own unchangeable law? God is truth, and His witnesses can witness only to truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. These two witnesses are *bound* to witness to what is *true*. As they are God's witnesses they are to give that light which is akin to truth, and therefore they are set forth by the two olive trees which supply the seven-lamped candlestick with golden oil, and these are declared to be the anointed ones (sons of oil) that stand before the Lord of the whole earth (Zech. iv) [097].

(4) We may now ask the natural and simple question - *Who are the two witnesses?*

Prophetic commentators have offered many suggestions and interpretations. Mr. Elliott gives a list of many godly witnesses for the truth of Christ's Gospel in the Western Church and also in the Eastern Church from the year 600 A. D., and he pursues the

same line of enquiry through medieval history; while several other commentators have indicated the Waldenses and Albigenses as answering to the character of the two witnesses - these faithful followers of Christ having suffered cruel persecution from the Roman Church - and they interpret their resurrection and ascension as having taken place at the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Although we think these interpretations both unsatisfactory and incorrect, it is sufficient to say that, whatever historical *applications* these portions of Scripture may have had in times past, we are assured that they have a future fulfilment. In some form or other they represent a special ministry of testimony of warning and of preparation, with supernatural action in the Christian Church in connection with the close of this dispensation, which the Lord will send forth to the Church Catholic before His manifested Apocalypse and the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. May we not also regard these two witnesses as having a special relation to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to whom God gave all this revelation, and of whom we learn that "the testimony [or witness] of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10).

(5) Let us now consider the substance of their [098] witness, the kind of testimony they have to

bear, justifying their title of “My two witnesses” (Rev. xi. 3, 4).

They bear witness to the living God, to His mighty acts and to what He is doing for those who are left on earth, for they call upon men to consider the operation of His hands. Will not the great events of the resurrection and change without death of the firstfruits, and their rapture to God and His throne, which not only *may* but *will* surely happen, be enough to justify such a witness?

Having regard to the fearful horrors taking place either just before or during the time of the great tribulation when “these two prophets” (as they are called in Rev. xi. 10) probably bear witness, should we not humbly adore GOD for His goodness in furnishing them with such a marvellous subject of testimony as that of the resurrection and translation of the firstfruits?

In these days of religious tolerance or indifference (whichever may be the true designation) Christians can live in freedom from any severe form of persecution. To believers in such a time as the present the knowledge of the personal resurrection of Christ coupled with that of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ is sufficient comfort to sustain their faith and

feed their hope; but, during the fiery trials that await the great multitude who are not of the one hundred and forty four thousand, the faith of those who endure the terrors of those days will need the additional aid and consolation to be given them through the testimony of the two witnesses that thousands of their fellow Christians, numbering [099] among them, it may be, some whom they have known intimately, have already gone before into a condition free from all power of evil or tendency to fall, having been raised from the dead, or changed without death, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. What testimony can we conceive as more helpful at such a crisis?

They must, as stated above, bear witness to some act of God, moreover an act of God of *recent occurrence*, probably unknown to many and yet of the greatest importance to the whole Church of Christ and, indeed, to the whole human race. As this will be a witness to be delivered to thousands who are still upon the earth, it cannot be to the final and general resurrection; therefore it must be to what St. Paul calls “resurrection from among the dead.” The tidings go forth that God has begun to raise the dead. They testify this to the Church at large - to all those who are left on earth because they were not ready for the award of the prize of translation at the Lord’s first epiphany. The Christian dispensation began with a

great witness to resurrection, and it will end with a like witness: at the beginning it was to the resurrection of Christ, or Christ personal, and at the end it will be to that of those members of His Body who are accounted worthy to be the first to obtain this great prize.

We know that Elisha accompanied Elijah on his last journey, and that Elijah's promise to Elisha of a double portion of his spirit was conditional on the latter seeing his translation. As Elisha had for a time to company with Elijah that he might be a [100] witness of his translation, so will this also, we apprehend, be one of the subject matters to which the two witnesses will testify. They will go forth to tell out the wonders of the living God. They will go into the heart of the great city and cry that God hath visited His people; that the hopes of many who waited for the first resurrection have begun to be fulfilled; that some have been raised from the dead; that some of the living have been changed, and that both have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

But, further, let us ask whether these two prophets have not another subject of testimony which they must likewise proclaim as God's witnesses. We are told that "they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (Rev.

xi. 3). Of what will they prophesy? In the book of the Revelation which the Lord Jesus gave to His Church through His apostle John, we read of terrible judgments pronounced upon Christendom and upon the earth. Hence these stupendous coming events - as well as the past ones - must form part of their witness from God to Christendom, and perhaps also to the world at large. These two witnesses being "clothed in sackcloth" - the wearing of which, as we learn from the Scriptures, was a token of deep grief and also of deep humiliation for sin - denotes that their prophecy will consist of warnings of the awful judgments looming over mankind and to be presently poured out on the earth, and that the prophets will deliver these warnings in sorrow of heart and with a call upon all men to repent [101].

We are further told that they will be given supernatural power over the elements of God's creation, and will "torment them that dwell upon the earth" during a period of one thousand two hundred and threescore days, which we apprehend to be that of the *rise* of the Antichristian power which is to triumph in their martyrdom.

Let us try to realise what might happen in real life as the result of this witness. Suppose that this day God raised some of the "firstfruits," whether it

might be ten or a hundred or a thousand, and that He gave to some persons infallible proofs of the reality of the wonder, and that they were bidden go forth and bear witness in the city of London or throughout Christendom to this great fact and to fearful judgments about to fall on the inhabitants of the earth, how it would startle us! Would not the world say - "The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad!" (Hosea ix. 7). But the messengers cry - "This is our witness: God is the living God; He has indeed begun to act and to shew His power. According to His eternal purpose and counsel, according to His ancient promise, He has begun to raise the dead. It is an earnest of the coming of His kingdom; it is the prelude to great tribulation and heavy judgments. Repent ye and believe the Gospel." But though this is a mighty wonder, still their testimony would not stop here. They go on to testify to a cognate wonder. We cannot say a greater wonder, though after our human ideas we might be inclined to institute a gradation; but this cannot be true of God "who only doeth wondrous [102] things." But the testimony goes forth that a number of persons have disappeared, that they have been caught up into the air - perhaps to heaven - and have been changed into the immortal condition without death. Perhaps the witness of this extraordinary and incredible occurrence - as the world will designate it - will be still more difficult to receive than the

first. Men have heard of resurrection from the dead; but, despite the express teaching of the apostle Paul, the doctrine of the change without death is to millions practically unknown, or is regarded as an unheard-of idea, a fable, an unprecedented and inconceivable event. Still, when witnessed to as a *fact*, and when shewn to be perfectly credible from the testimony of holy Scripture, it will startle the professing Church and, shaking her to her foundations, will convict her of her unbelief in the promises and word of God.

Some striking and rather sensational tracts on this subject have been written by some of our evangelical brethren in which the idea is worked out. In a small tract called "He's coming to-morrow," written by the late well-known authoress, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, she sketches the effect that would be produced on different classes of persons in the world and in the Church if the certain revelation were received that the Lord would appear *to-morrow*; she pictures how it would take all the world by surprise, disarrange every plan, disorganize every function of society; and then she proceeds to pourtray the curious perplexities that would ensue from a business point of view in the disappearance of this [103] influential person from the head of his firm, or in that of a chief cashier of a large bank.

If we tax our imagination, what could we conceive as more worthy of so great a witness as this miraculous intervention of the living God on which we have dwelt, which the prophetic Scriptures assure us *will* take place? To witness at the end of this dispensation - as at the beginning - to resurrection, to stir up and awaken slumbering Christendom to its privileges and responsibilities, to warn men before of the judgments and tribulation which will precede the revealing of the Lord, the setting up of His kingdom on earth, and the destruction of His enemies (2 Thess. i. 7-10) - all these may well be deemed sufficient reasons for this act of God in sending forth His two witnesses to those upon whom the end of this Christian dispensation has come. An analogy exists between this work of witness and that which was given to the resurrection of Christ, as shewn by St. Peter when he said - "Him God hath raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us [the apostles], who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead" (Acts x. 40-41). It was to this great fact that the apostles were sent to testify, together with the truth that flowed from it, viz.: the future resurrection and judgment of all men. The bearing of that witness in the midst of the enmity, scorn and indifference of Greece and Rome, brought upon these poor ignorant Galilean fishermen sufferings and persecutions which, in the

case of almost every one of them, appears [104] to have terminated in their martyrdom. This is the main proposition and great argument in Paley's "Evidences of Christianity," which he states as follows: "That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct."

The witness to Christ's resurrection as the greatest of all miracles and the foundation of the Christian faith had to be borne to the Jews and to the world at large. All men could not come into contact with Christ personally. The account of His resurrection as an actual historic fact must come to them as a testimony to faith, and to this end chosen and accredited witnesses were necessary. We know that all the apostles were specially chosen as witnesses to this great act by the Lord Himself who said - "And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke xxiv. 48). St. Matthias was chosen to be a witness with them of Christ's resurrection (Acts i. 22); and St. Peter says that they - the apostles - were "chosen witnesses" to the same great cardinal fact (Acts x. 39-41).

The like witness occurs with reference to all Christ's great acts, especially those which foreshadow His coming glory. Thus to His transfiguration three of the apostles were witnesses; while to His resurrection there is the witness of the whole band of His apostles [105], besides the two angelic witnesses whom the women saw sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, and who said to them - "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke xxiv. 1-6). To the Lord's ascension there is the twofold witness of the apostles and of the two angels - the "two men" who "stood by them in white apparel" (Acts i. 10). In considering the resurrection, change and translation of the twofold company of the firstfruits, we have shewn that such a testimony must be borne to these events as shall vindicate the truth of God and condemn the unbelieving world.

(6) In considering the subsequent treatment and the persecution which the two prophets endure because of their testimony, it will be readily understood that the witness which they have to bear is a difficult one, a hard task to flesh and blood, and involving the highest qualities of courage, faith and self-sacrifice. Their witness will be unacceptable to the world in general. Hence there need be no cause for surprise if, as in the case of previous testimonies for God, their testimony should provoke antagonism, mockery and

cruel persecution, even unto death, as the Apocalyptic vision indicates.

Our Lord described the reception which Jerusalem gave to her prophets when He exclaimed - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" (Luke xiii. 34). What then will be the reception given in Christendom to the testimony borne by those two prophets, God's own witnesses? Holy Scripture leaves us in no [106] doubt as to the sufferings and persecutions which they will be called upon to endure. Turning to the eleventh chapter of the book of the Revelation we read - "When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev. xi. 7-9). Their witness will meet with the usual fate, viz.: *rejection*, ending in a violent death as in the case of so many other prophets. Thus we see that, though they have exercised a mighty power and wrought many miracles, their testimony appears to end in failure and disaster. There is an affinity between the testimony of these two witnesses and that of Elijah and Moses; like Elijah they will employ fire to devour their enemies, and like him they will have po-

power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; like Moses they will have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to smite with plagues.

After the two witnesses are slain, the beast from the abyss and the false prophet will seem to carry all before them; and, for a time times and half a time, for one thousand two hundred and sixty days or for forty two months, will tread down the outer court of God's sanctuary. "But after three days and a half the Spirit of Life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them [107] - Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (Rev. xi. 11, 12). Their witness receives the seal of the Lord by the triumphal act of God in their resurrection and in their ascension, or rather translation, into heaven.

"These are the true sayings of God." These great events, we believe, are at the door, and may form the second stage in the first resurrection [108].

CHAPTER VIII.

Testimonies to the Hope of Translation during the Christian Dispensation.

IN the records of the Christian Church during the past nineteen centuries there are but few known testimonies to the hope of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus upon which we have been dwelling. In considering this subject we are confronted with two phases which seem contradictory. We have the persuasion that God has always had His witnesses for His truth, albeit they may have been few and hidden. At the same time, looking down the history of the Church, we are filled with sorrow and humiliation when we see how - speaking generally - these important revealed truths have been forgotten by those who have been baptized into this hope of their calling.

Our thoughts naturally turn in the first instance to the apostolic age, when living apostles guided the Church's destinies, when the hope burned most brightly, and when these truths formed the great topics of consolation to the primitive Church under her sorrows and persecutions. We have previously alluded to the passage in 1.Thess. iv. 14-17, so that it is only necessary to say that the priority of the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the change of those who are alive and remain, and their joint translation to meet [109] the Lord in the air, are stated with literal dis-

tinctness. St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, when treating of the resurrection, brings before them the same hope, saying - "We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed" (1. Cor. xv. 51).

During the first century of the Christian era this hope continued to burn brightly. Most of the apostles refer to the Lord's return, and St. John in the Apocalypse writes clearly on the subject of the first resurrection, while the whole book rings with the truth of the coming of the Lord. Passing from the apostolic age we enter upon the second century, and here we find historic and hallowed names of many early fathers, doctors, martyrs and confessors. The apostolic age was succeeded by that of bishops and councils, when the decline of these hopes began, which ere long culminated in their extinction. Speaking generally, the early Church from Hermas to Origen were all believers in the first resurrection and in Christ's personal reign on the earth for one thousand years. Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp the "angel of the Church in Smyrna" (Rev. ii. 8), Irenaeus the pupil of Polycarp, Justin Martyr (in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew held at Ephesus); all these witnessed to the premillennial advent, to the first resurrection and to the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth. To these we may add Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and

Cyprian. Many are the brilliant names of bishops, saints and martyrs which adorn the Church's annals in the second century, and we believe that, without exception, they all expected the premillennial advent of the Lord [110].

In the third and fourth centuries the same testimony to Christ's premillennial advent exists, though with some marked exceptions to which we shall refer. During this period we meet with the names of Lactantius, of Gregory of Nyssa, and of the Nicene Fathers; all these cling to the faith of the first resurrection, though we can hardly discern traces of the doctrines of the change and of the translation. We cannot cite Eusebius, Cyril, Ambrose, Chrysostom and Hilary as upholders of these truths, though they were not professedly hostile. Jerome was an avowed opposer and a scoffer at the doctrine, and it fell gradually into disrepute, until at last it dwindled away about the close of the fourth century. Over the grave of Bishop Alexander, who lived about A.D. 375 and is buried at Tipasa near Algiers, the witness is still to be read in the crumbling mosaics which cover his grave that he died expecting the first resurrection (see Appendix iii). And the council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) gave some witness to the truth, concluding the enlarged Nicene Creed with that sentence which for centuries the Church has gone on repeating as a formula - "I look

for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. - Amen." Yet had the hope even then ceased to be a living hope, and this was the case down to the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

In reviewing the history of these truths we see that they were held by the Church during the presence of apostles and more or less throughout the period during which the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit existed in the Church; that [111] gradually, as the Church fell away from her heavenly standing, they began to be neglected; that by degrees they became matters of controversy and speculation; that ultimately they passed into the catalogue of heresies, and became generally forgotten until their revival in these last days. Even in early times, while the hope of the Lord's return and of the first resurrection survived, the thought of the concurrent change of the living into immortality without death, and of the joint translation or rapture of the saints, soon disappeared both as a practical hope and even as an abstract doctrine, so that it is difficult to find any testimony whatever to these early hopes. It needs the manifested presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church and the exercise of all the heavenly ministries of Christ - especially those of apostles and prophets - to keep the true hope living and practical. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to bring to the memory of the Church

what Christ Himself taught or what was revealed to the apostles; and without His manifested presence Christians are overcome by the world, its sins, its cares and its pleasures, so that they let slip the full revelation which they have received and the things specially pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Thus, in studying the early history of the Church, we associate the failure of these heavenly hopes connected with the Lord's return and the establishment of His kingdom with the gradual extinction of prophecy and the quenching of the gifts of the Spirit. The gift of prophecy, it is supposed, lingered on in the Church till about A.D. 320, after which it [112] was neither exercised nor desired. In the meantime less and less stress was laid in the councils of the Church on the one hope which was the central point of apostolic doctrine. We are not aware of any council in which this formed the prominent subject, while orthodoxy, heresy, controversy and the temporal position of the Church assumed a larger horizon in the lapse of ages. Before long, the idea of the millennial kingdom of Christ having become branded as heresy, these heavenly hopes gradually died out, and if men cared for religion they were swallowed up with the one thought of their personal salvation, and became indifferent to the grand purpose of God in the perfecting of His Church and in the deliverance of the groaning

creation. Then the Church began to be afflicted with heresy and schism, and the era of the second, third and fourth centuries is generally reckoned as the age of heresies. For this we may assign the following reasons:—

1. The removal by death of living apostles, who not only were the accredited messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel, but were also appointed by Him to be the wise master-builders of His Church, and the chief ordinance for rule therein:
2. The quenching of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the gradual cessation of the voice of prophecy:
3. The disappearance of those apostolic men who had companied with the apostles and knew their doctrine - like the elders who outlived Joshua, during whose time Israel served the Lord, but afterwards began to lapse into idolatry:
4. The cooling of first love, which was the charge against the Church in Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4) [113]:
5. The power of the world and the establishment of the Church as a worldly institution, which came about when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the recognised religion of the Roman Empire, A.D. 320:

6. The rule of bishops aided by Church councils, which was not God's ordained way for guiding the Church nor for preserving her from heresy and schism.

Besides these general considerations, two causes in particular may be cited as having tended to quench the Church's early bridal hopes, and these are the influence of two great men who have been held to be doctors in the Eastern and Western Church respectively, namely: Origen and Augustine. Their influence was against what is known as premillenarianism, i.e., the coming of Christ before the millennium. Most of the fathers of the first three centuries taught this doctrine; but Origen, who was the first antimillenarian of any note, began to question its correctness. He was born about 186 A.D. and died about 253 A.D. He was given to allegorizing and spiritualizing interpretations of Scripture, and, with his fanciful applications, fell into the error of ignoring its plain letter; thus he explained away all that pertained to the first resurrection and to the coming kingdom of Christ on earth. But Augustine, bishop of Hippo about A.D. 390, more than any other man crushed the truth. He rejected the opinions of the Chiliasts and, with hyper-spirituality, considered the older belief in regard to the millennial kingdom as too material and too carnal.

Now, as to the method of interpretation which makes the first resurrection to be spiritual, and to relate to the [114] regeneration of Christian souls, it will be appropriate to quote from Dean Alford on Rev. xx. He says - "I cannot consent to distort the words from their plain sense and chronological plan in the prophecy on account of any considerations of difficulty or any sort of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the apostles, and the whole Church for three hundred years, understood them in the plain literal sense. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, when certain dead rose at the first, *'and the rest of the dead'* only at the end of a specified period after that first, if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to be a spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave, then there is an end to all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which, I suppose, none will be hardy enough to maintain; but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which, in common with the whole primitive Church and many of the best

modern expositors, I do maintain and receive as an article of faith and hope."¹⁰

The popular but erroneous view, which originated with St. Augustine about the beginning of the fifth century, has within the past thirty or forty years been revived by Bishop Wordsworth. This view is that the thousand years is a form of speech to cover [115] the whole period from the ascension to the second advent which is to be the time for the final judgment and the end of the world; consequently, that we are now in the millennium, and that it does not cover any period in the future during which Christ will reign with His saints on the earth, for they are reigning with Him now; that the 'first resurrection' is the spiritual resurrection of souls in becoming regenerate, not the bodily resurrection of departed saints. Such a method of interpretation is purely arbitrary, and does not spring from a careful study of the structure of the book.¹¹

We now enter upon a period of history which reaches from the time of Constantine the Great to the reformation of the sixteenth century. The second, third and fourth centuries were the age of heresies, and the succeeding period of four centuries has been named

¹⁰ Dean Alford. Gk. Text. Notes on Rev. xx. 4.6.

¹¹ "The Parousia," page 9. James Pott & Co., New York.

named the age of schisms; indeed the Church could no longer be looked upon as *one*, being broken in the eighth century (729 A.D.) at least into two great branches - the Eastern and the Western.

Let us look first at the Eastern branch or, as it is called, the Greek Church. This branch has long prided herself on her orthodoxy, and from time to time has produced earnest-minded men who have left precious truth on record. For many centuries this Church has been stagnant and Laodicean in character, though of late she has aroused herself to persecute the Stundists who are inoffensive Bible-reading Christians, only craving more spiritual light than they can receive from the so-called "Orthodox [116] Church." We know of no testimony in this branch of the Church to the resurrection, change or translation of the saints, though it would be presumptuous perhaps to say that none such exists.

Let us turn to the Western branch known as the Roman or Papal Church. These truths have been comparatively unwitnessed to in the Roman Church, for she regards them as unpalatable, and we believe we are correct in saying that she has branded them with the stamp of heresy. One of the great spiritual sins of the Roman Church has been that of forestalling the kingdom of God and arrogating to her head the position of Christ's vicegerent on earth; hence she has never favoured the doctrine of the second coming of Christ - before the general judgment - to set up His kingdom on earth, and therefore the hope of the change and of the translation is practically ignored.

The papacy in fact adopted St. Augustine's notion that the kingdom of God was already established on the earth and identified that kingdom with the Roman Church. This being so, why should they look for the return of the Lord only to upset their plans and anticipations? Why should they, who were settling down on their lees on the earth, hope for a kingdom of a thousand years duration, or for the first resurrection, or for a change into immortality without death, or for a translation from the earth into the heavens, all apparently dreamy visions, unpractical and very far off? Thus the papacy has always viewed these doctrines not merely with apathy but with hostility, and they have been denied and [117] denounced by popes and councils, so that it is a matter of little wonder that the ten centuries of papal ascendancy rarely afford witnesses to the ancient hope of the coming kingdom of Christ. We thank God that the truth has survived, though as it were with a dark background. Yet we must frankly acknowledge that it is not possible for us to ascertain how many quiet, hidden believers there may have been who, known only to God in their day and generation, have cherished the hope, helped by the study of the holy Scriptures. Yet while the Church of Rome has produced many great and world-known saints and scholars, such as the Venerable Bede, Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventura, Luther (*praestantissimus*

vir), Francis of Assisi, Elizabeth of Hungary, Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Savanarola, Bellarmine, Charles Borromeo, St. Theresa, Vincent de Paul, Francis de Sales, Madame Guyon, Fenelon, and many others, we believe that in all their writings, doctrinal and devotional, little can be found about the hope of the resurrection and of the coming kingdom; and nothing at all concerning the change without death or the translation of the raised and changed saints to meet the returning Lord in the air.

We come now to the epoch of the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. During this spiritual throe the human mind became greatly emancipated; and, the Word of God having been exhumed from the neglect of centuries and freely circulated, a recognition of these grand practical truths might now be expected. It was an age of excited feeling and controversy [118] not only with Rome but also among the various sections of the protestant churches. But we do not find in the formularies of the reformed churches any clear recognition¹² of the special hope we are considering. Of course certain accepted truths are imbedded in the creeds such as the return of the Lord to judge the world and the general resurrection

¹² There is an exception in the beautiful prayer before the concluding collect at the burial of the dead in the book of Common Prayer.

at the last day; but, as there is a total ignoring of the *first* resurrection, of the change or of the translation, it appears that these truths were practically overlooked. It is quite possible that in the works of the reformers stray allusions to the second coming of the Lord may be found; but, speaking generally, throughout their works and those of the puritans, *the hope of it* seems to have no existence. In the writings of Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, Latimer, Ridley, Bullinger, we must confess that we can find little allusion to the coming of Christ, or to His kingdom on earth, to be ushered in by the first resurrection, and none at all to the change and translation of the saints.

It is remarkable that in the great intellectual and spiritual convulsion which took place at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century these truths were not brought to the Church's memory or restored to their due prominence by any of the reformers, either in their liturgies, confessions, or writings. They appear to have tacitly adopted the later patristic view. In the seventeenth century, however, various eminent names could be given of those who believed in the millennial kingdom [119], such as Mede, Usher, Milton, Baxter, Bunyan; but in none of them can we find any trumpet-tongued testimony to the change and to the translation as the prelude thereto. George Lorentz Seidenbecher, who died about 1664, was pastor at

Unterneubrunn in Saxony. He wrote on the reign of Christ and the wonderful circumstances connected with it. As he also preached on this subject he was condemned as a heretic by the consistory of the University of Jena, and deprived of his office. He was told that the seventeenth article of the Augsburg confession was against this doctrine. "Chiliasmus Sanctus, qui est Sabbationes populo Dei relictus" was a book that he wrote in 1660, and it was condemned as heretical. "The expectation of the millennial kingdom, which seldom exists in well-informed minds, and which generally produces extravagant opinions, was embraced and propagated by *George Lawrence Seidenbecher*, a preacher in the Saxon district of Eichsfeld; and for this he was deprived of his office." ¹³

Jacob Janbeu, another German pastor, also preached on the thousand years' reign, and the Lutherans deprived him of his office. There were others during that period - laymen as well as pastors in the Lutheran Church - who were persecuted and deprived of their professions and even property for holding these views. Breckling who lived at the same period as Seidenbecher, was twice imprisoned and deprived of

¹³ Mosheim - edited by Henry Soames, M.A. Book IV. Century XVII. § 2, part 2, page 346.

of his property [120] in Germany for witnessing to the truth of the pre-millennial advent. We observe, however, that while they preached the coming of the Lord and His kingdom - which was deemed heretical and in several cases led to deprivation - they made no reference to the change of the living or to the translation of the saints; these truths apparently having been forgotten since the days of the apostle Paul. During the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there arose many who gave increased attention to the study of the prophetic Scriptures, and a school of writers on prophecy was formed of such men as Sir Isaac Newton, 1642, Bishop Sherlock, 1678, Bishop Newton, 1704, Bishop Lowth, 1710, Bishop Horsley, 1733, James Macknight, 1721, Robert Fleming, and others, amongst whom these truths were in a way revived; but we find little emphasis laid on the full doctrine which St. Paul gave to the Thessalonians and Corinthians as a chief ground of hope and comfort.

We come next to an example which is more to the point than anything which we have been able to adduce. It is the case of Mr. John Asgill. He lived at the end of the seventeenth century, and published a book with the following title - "An argument proving that, according to the covenant of eternal life revealed in the Scriptures, man may be translated from hence into that eternal life without passing through death,

altho' the human nature of Christ Himself could not be thus translated till He had passed through death." He thus witnessed to the hope of the change and of the translation, and for writing this book he was expelled first from [121] the Irish House of Commons, A.D. 1703, and later from the English House of Commons, A.D. 1707, while his book was burned by the common hangman! More details of this unique and curious case are given in Appendix I. There may be other testimonies like that of John Asgill hidden in the archives of the Church if only we knew where to find them.

When we view the protestant evangelical revival at the close of the eighteenth century, initiated by Wesley and Whitfield and carried on by many well-known and revered men such as Romaine, Fletcher, Venn, Toplady and Hall, we mourn to find so little testimony in their prose writings or hymns to the distinctive hope of the translation, though Wesley was a firm believer in premillennarianism, as is proved by many of his hymns. But at the close of the eighteenth century there was an interesting testimony to the coming and kingdom of Christ from the pen of a Jesuit, Emanuel Lacunza - known by the Jewish name of Ben Ezra - who was born at St. Iago, in Chili, in South America, on the 13th July, 1731. He was the son of noble though not rich parents who gave him a

good education. They sent him to the College of the Jesuits, of which society he became a member in 1747. The iron discipline and other troubles of a Jesuit's life soon tired him, and he left the college to dedicate himself to geography and astronomy, at which, however, he made no great progress for want of instruments. On the expulsion of his Order, Lacunza came to Europe, residing at Imola in Italy, where he lived in retirement, and on the 17th June, 1801 [122], he was found dead by the river side, where he was in the habit of walking daily. His only work was "La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Majestad" or "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty." (For a quotation from his work see Appendix II.) No doubt Ben Ezra was a truly pious man and studied the word of God with a single mind, and the result was - as generally happens in such cases - that the Lord led him into larger views of truth than he himself could otherwise have conceived. But even he makes little allusion to the translation of the living.

We pass on now to recent times. The eighteenth century closed with one of the greatest religious, social and political convulsions that the world has ever seen, namely, the great French Revolution, one period of which goes under the significant appellation of the "reign of terror." This shook Europe, its kingdoms and its institutions, to their bases. For if men, especially

Christian men, throw off God, they will be left to themselves and will speedily display themselves as half beasts and half devils. If man sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind. It would be foreign to our purpose to trace the causes which led up to this great cataclysm. The vice, self-indulgence and atheism of the Court, of the nobles and of the leading thinkers in France, combined with the poverty and ignorance of the masses, no doubt helped to bring it about; but, from one point of view, spiritual good came out of it; for men were so appalled by the horrors enacted that the minds of many Godfearing persons [123] were turned to the study of the prophetic Scriptures, and a great impetus was given to modern missionary effort and to the formation of biblical and evangelical societies. A time of searching the Scriptures and of evangelical preaching succeeded the lethargic, dry, moral essays of the eighteenth century, and more attention was given to such truths as the kingdom of God, the spread of the Gospel, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the second coming of the Lord and the impending close of the dispensation.

It was some years after this, in the year 1826, that a clerical and lay gathering assembled at Albury, in Surrey, to study the prophetic Scriptures, during which a great increase of light was received, causing the teaching of the apostles on many of these forgot-

ten truths to be laid hold of once more after the lapse of many centuries. The hopes then revived have, we thank God, been cherished by an increasing number of persons in different parts of the Church Catholic ever since. To adopt Latimer's dying saying, it may be said that "a candle has been lighted in England which, by the grace of God, shall never be put out," i.e., until it merge in the noonday splendour of the Sun of Righteousness who, we trust, shall soon arise with healing in His wings.

During the nineteenth century there have been some well-known writers on the subject of prophecy, such as Irving, Faber, Elliott, Frere, Bickersteth, Birks, Bonar, Cumming, while tractates on all these special truths are now frequent and have familiarised many with these forgotten hopes. For, in saying that the hope of translation has been almost quenched [124] in the Church Catholic, we do not deny that a few, like the Lord's seven thousand (1 Kings xix. 18), still pray for its accomplishment; but, speaking generally, and looking at the three great sections into which the Christian Church is unhappily divided, neither the Greek nor the Roman Church holds to the truth of this hope, whilst in Protestant Churches - episcopal and non-episcopal - it is rarely preached.

“The most commonly-received view of the second advent, *i.e.*, of the Parousia, is that it occurs at the close of human history, introducing a final judgment upon all men and a general and simultaneous resurrection of all mankind. This view is common to the Roman Catholic Church and to the greater part of the members of the Anglican communion, as well as to other protestants who have not cast aside all belief of a personal coming of Christ.”¹⁴ Many also entertain the thought that the world will gradually improve and be converted before the Lord’s coming, and so they put off the coming of the Lord to an indefinite period. We believe that this view is erroneous, that the parable of the leaven (Matt xiii) is generally misapplied, and that the prophecies of our Lord and of the Apocalypse as to the manifestation of Antichrist - the beast with the false prophet and the dragon (Rev. xvi. 13, 14) - all point to the very reverse; for our Lord said that “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. xxiv. 12), and He also put the question - “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke xviii. 8) [125].

In the Church of England service for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, the epistle taken from 1.Peter iii stops abruptly, not merely in the middle of a verse,

¹⁴ Parousia, page 4.

but actually in the middle of a sentence. The fifteenth verse reads thus - “But sanctify the Lord GOD in your hearts” (here the epistle in the Anglican Church ends, omitting the remainder of the sentence): “and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” This defect is inherited from Rome, from which communion the Epistles and Gospels were taken over - with few exceptions - in the time of Edward VI. The forgetfulness of this hope so clearly set before us in God’s Word is a spiritual sin on the part of the Church, and as such should be confessed. Men think little of *spiritual* sin, however much they may condemn gross sins which affect society and injure their interests; and yet spiritual sin may be more grievous and deadly in the sight of God than bodily sin. The Church is heavenly in her nature and destiny; therefore spiritual sin not only wounds her in all her members, but likewise delays the Lord in carrying out the full purpose of His salvation. Hence it is an injury to the whole intelligent creation; and a neglect of these great hopes must be a sin of no ordinary magnitude, for it is like trampling upon the grace of God; it is doing despite to His Holy Spirit and making God a liar if we believe not His promises and make no effort to further their accomplishment.

To the reasons already given for the forgetfulness of these hopes may be added the incorrect popular teaching and belief on the condition of the saints [126] after death. It has been currently held for centuries, and is indeed now held by millions of sincere and earnest-minded protestant Christians, that the soul of a believer at his death goes straight to glory, *i.e.*, enters into the very presence of God in the highest heaven, and is glorified with Christ forthwith. This tenet, we believe, is unscriptural in theory and false in fact. On this supposition resurrection is unnecessary and may be ignored, and still more does the *first* resurrection lapse out of memory and hope. It is the special office of the Holy Ghost to remind the Church of forgotten truths, and we believe that in these last days He *has* brought them to the remembrance of many believers who were prepared to rejoice in the promise and to love the hope of the Lord's appearing; but where the voice of the Comforter is silenced there is no audible reminder of these truths and hopes.

But, whilst in some quarters partial emphasis may have been laid on the first resurrection, little attention has been given to the change and translation, or rapture, of the saints to meet the Lord. During the nineteenth century, however, more earnest thought has been bestowed on these truths than since the apostolic age; and, though the mass of Christians are

still ignorant of or indifferent to them, yet a witness has been borne to them in some of the communions of the Church Catholic such as has never been borne since that period, and this seems to be a prelude to the approaching end of this present dispensation. Many things afford evidence that this dispensation will end, as the two previous ones have done, in failure, apostasy [127], tribulation and judgment; in short, the minds of many students of the prophetic Scriptures are persuaded that we are rapidly approaching the manifestation of the personal Antichrist and the time of sorrow which our Lord foretold, the like of which has not been since the beginning of the world.

What then should be our attitude towards God? Confession of our unfaithfulness in that we have let slip from our minds the things which God has revealed, and that nearly all professing Christians have lost the love of the appearing of the Lord Jesus, of which the hope of the change and translation forms an indispensable part.

We thank God that at last there is a revival of the hope of the coming of the Lord and of the other entwined promises on which we have dwelt, for the fulfilment of which at the eventide of this age we earnestly cry - "Hasten, O God, the time when Thou

shalt send from Thy right hand Him whom Thou wilt send.” [128].

CHAPTER IX.

The Duty of Watching and Waiting for the Attainment of Translation.

WE have quoted St. Paul as the first and great teacher concerning the truth of the change and the translation, and we may refer to him again for instruction as to our conduct and practice relative to these great hopes. In Phil. iii. 13-14 we read of his efforts in pressing towards a great prize which was nothing less than the first resurrection. He counted all things but loss for Christ, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection *from the dead* (R.V.). He was sure to attain to the general resurrection, but this was not the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. But the first resurrection was, as the original Greek implies; for it runs - "If that by any means I might attain unto the resurrection out from among the dead" (Phil. iii. 11). And his aim was to forget those things which were behind, and to reach forward unto these things which were before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Here is an example of the earnest wrestler, as seen in the Isthmian games, who was contending for the Panathenaic prize.

St. Paul was the clearest expounder of this hope and doctrine. In visiting Salonica it is mournful to note the condition of the Greek Churches existing [129] there now under the depressing moral atmosphere caused by the lethargic Turk. But the fact that the truth we are considering was first committed to this ancient Church gave an interest to the Churches and to the ruins of the place; though it is a melancholy memory to recall the troubles that have taken place, the persecutions that have been suffered, the generations that have passed away, since these glorious words of inspiration were addressed to that Church. Alas! we greatly fear that now there is not in all that city of some one hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants, one single soul who expects the change or the translation. It has been forgotten for centuries there as elsewhere, though, thank God, the original hope has come down to us enshrined in holy Scripture; and in the grand truth of that hope we have a source of consolation which is given to the suffering Church in all her afflictions even by the Lord Himself. Alas! how has man in his perversity ignored the Lord's commands and despised His comfort, choosing his own way, hewing out cisterns that can hold no water, kindling fires with sparks, of his own kindling, even strange fires - not from the altar of God - in the light of which he may finally be left to walk, to his own sorrow and loss (Isa. l. 11).

Turning from what St. Paul said on this subject, let us consider those words of our Master which have their bearing on our present subject. The Lord urgently enjoins on us to watch and pray. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that [130] shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36). Here the Lord gave His apostles a definite command, and through them to the whole Catholic Church, *to watch*; and He enforces this by many parables, and endorses it with many promises. This command has been disregarded by the Church, for she has long been sunk in worldliness and indifference, forgetful of her Lord's return, forgetful also of the need of watchfulness and preparedness for the same. Even though there is a cry for the Lord's return more than there has been for eighteen centuries, still, considering the millions of professing Christians, what a faint cry it is, whilst the number of those who look for the change without death or for the translation to meet the returning Lord is, alas, infinitesimal. This is a sweeping statement to which in one sense there may be no exception, for "while the bridegroom tarried, they *all* [every one of the ten virgins] slumbered and slept"; nevertheless some had oil in their lamps, and in heart and spirit were watchers. To *watch* is a difficult thing, as the Lord implies when in answering Peter's question - "Speakest Thou this par-

able unto us or even to all?" He replies - "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household? Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." The reward He promises surpasses our imagination. To watch implies that we do not slumber; that we do not close our eyes or fix them on the ground; that we are on the alert; that we look up before us, beyond us, around [131] us, above us. It was the attitude of the faithful Israelite when he ate his Passover with his shoes on his feet and his staff in his hand, ready to leave Egypt at a moment's notice. Watchfulness is a virtue essential to the soldier. It was death for a Roman soldier to sleep at his post, and the same law applies now to those on picket duty in the face of the enemy. The outpost picket must keep his armour on and his senses awake; and we can have no better figure of what is meant by watching than that of the sentinel on duty, or of the man at the helm on board ship, or of those who keep the city watch against fire during the hours of the night, as in certain Swiss villages, when the scorching "Foehn" wind blows, which would speedily fan a tiny spark into a raging conflagration, consuming the châteaux and all the other wooden buildings.

There is one remarkable feature about the translation of the saints, on which emphasis should be

laid, and which further enforces the duty and necessity of watchfulness, viz.: its *suddenness*. It will, from one aspect, come unawares and without any special warning. We say "from one aspect," for though the Lord has not only warned us concerning it in His holy Word, and has also given us warnings in living men, from time to time, yet He tells us distinctly that His appearing will be sudden, and that it will come "as a snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Is this not true? Who are preparing themselves to meet the Bridegroom? Who are longing for the Lord's return? Who are looking out for the first resurrection, for the change, for the [132] rapture? Men are immersed now, as they have ever been, in their worldly pursuits - not necessarily sinful, perhaps even necessary and lawful; but they are liable to be too much absorbed by them, and to forget the revelation of the Lord. They build, they plant, they marry wives, they are full of the cares and pleasures of this life, and so that day will come upon them unawares. How great is the importance of watching that we may be ready for this great event! In what way our readiness will be tested we cannot say; but, as a magnet piercing through a mountain of sawdust would instantly gather out all the hidden steel particles, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. His coming, which He Himself compares to a flash of lightning, will have its effect on the honest and good

hearts who are abiding in the attitude of prayer, faith, hope, love, purity, and who love His appearing (Greek, Epiphaneia - evpifa,neia – 2.Tim. iv. 8).¹⁵

The second command is to *pray*. “Pray always.” Woe unto us if we pray not to our Father who seeth in secret! Where would the Church be if she were voiceless? Where would each one of us be without prayer? We are to pray *always*; the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise [133] should ascend like the daily burnt offering from the brazen altar, and like the incense from the golden altar. Pray always, at all times, in every place, under all circumstances; for prayer, as the poet has it, is “the Christian’s vital breath.”

In the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke’s Gospel, the Lord warns His disciples and speaks of the sudden rapture of the faithful watchers when He says - ”I

¹⁵ The three words used in the Greek with reference to the Lord’s coming have no doubt their shades of meaning, though it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them. Apocalypse seems to take in the general idea of unveiling (revelation in the Latin); epiphany, a sudden shining forth in glory; and parousia, a general presence which shall be the glory of the next dispensation. St. Paul in 2 Thess. 2, unites two of the above ideas when he speaks of the Lord destroying the man of sin, by the epiphany of His parousia (the brightness of His coming, A.V.; the manifestation of His coming - or presence, R.V.).

tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” In this same connection we may note our Lord’s saying (Luke xvii. 33) - “Whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” What does the connection with the preceding and following verses imply - alluding as they do to change and translation? Does it imply that when the rapture is about to take place it will seem as though in order to attain it we should be willing, if necessary, to incur the loss of our bodily lives in some way or other? We may note here that the parable of the importunate widow which occurs in the next chapter is connected with what has gone before, though by the artificial arrangement of chapters it seems to be separated by the previous context. The Lord speaks this parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow with one object - to *stir up men to prayer*. This parable, to enforce the command “that men ought always to pray and not to faint,” refers to the translation or rapture, to the escaping [134] those things which are coming upon the earth, and to standing before the Son of Man. The saints, like the importunate widow, must keep crying - “Avenge me of mine adversary,” even of death the last enemy! We must give the Lord “no rest” (Isa. lxii. 7) until He give

us the desire of our hearts. Such injunctions condemn our half-hearted prayers; for how many of us forget to ask daily for this great prize?

There is a law of God that we should ask if we would receive. We are to believe the promise, we are to claim the promise, and we are to plead for its fulfilment (see Ezek. xxxvi. 37). God said to Solomon - "Ask what I shall give thee," placing no restrictions on his requests; so with ourselves. He can do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20). In Psalm xxi we read of the king's request. "He asked *life* of Thee, and Thou gavest it him: even length of days for ever and ever." Why should not the Church, why should not we as individuals ask for the change into immortality without death, for preparedness to meet the Lord when He returns, and to be translated, like the Man-child, to the throne of God? The Lord has set before us these hopes: they are not begotten of our own imaginations; therefore let us obey the command and plead for their fulfilment. After the silence of centuries the cry again rises from the earth for the Lord to come and set us free, and to change us into His likeness without death. The presumption that the time - "the set time" - is at hand is well founded [135].

"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" (Psa. lxxxix. 48). Although no one can or ought to say - "I shall not die; I will not die," yet each of us should cherish the hope that we may not die, and accordingly should watch and pray; for unless we do so, how can we expect its attainment? It is a sober hope founded on revelation and the Word of God. By no efforts of our own can we attain to it; only by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit of God. And while we speak of watching and praying individually for the fulfilment of this hope, we must not forget that a wider application must be given to our Lord's words, and that they are addressed to the whole Church which is His Body. It is the Church as a whole, the chosen Bride of the Lamb, who should watch and pray for the attainment of this hope and for her Lord's return.

With the Lord's command to watch and pray, He gives two reasons to enforce the necessity for so doing. We are to watch that we may "*escape*." Escape what? "All these things that shall come to pass" (Luke xxi. 36), the things that are coming on the earth. The context mentions that these things include wars, commotions, earthquakes, famines, fearful sights, persecutions, imprisonment, betrayal, treachery, hatred, great distress, the sword, distress of nations

with perplexity, paralyzing fear, the shaking of the powers of heaven - in the literal and in the spiritual acceptance - a terrible catalogue of woe which may be summed up in the brief words of the Apocalypse [136] (Rev. iii. 10; vii. 14) - "The hour of temptation, which shall try them that dwell upon the earth; the great tribulation" ("the tribulation the great," Gk.). Our Lord calls these "the days of vengeance" (Luke xxi. 22), applying them in the first instance to the fall of Jerusalem and to the end of the legal dispensation; and next to the conclusion of the Christian dispensation. He further speaks of this period as being a time of trouble such as was not from the beginning of the world - no, nor ever shall be.

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape these things." - "My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler." There is a fowler, and he lays a snare. Who is this? Who can it be but Antichrist - Antichrist dreaded by the early Christians, and forgotten by us upon whom the ends of the age are come. It will be no small grace to escape the delusions, the tyranny, the persecutions and cruelties of Antichrist, the beast, the wild beast who will imperil the eternal salvation of millions. "He will make war with the saints, and overcome them" (Rev. xiii. 7). Fearful words which imply an abyss of suffering! It is lawful to desire that we

may escape this ordeal, and we thank God that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who endured such cruel sufferings at the hands of wicked men, has encouraged us to hope that we may escape it, if we watch and pray always, and so inherit the blessing promised to the Church in Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 10).

But further, the Lord bids us watch and pray [137], not only that we may be accounted worthy to escape these dangers and that tribulation, but that we may "stand before the Son of Man." Light is cast upon this saying by the vision of the Apocalypse recorded in chapter xiv. There we learn what standing before the Son of Man means. We see there the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, who are in a privileged place and position, who were redeemed from the earth, who sing as it were a new song before the throne, and who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Now these have been "accounted worthy," for we further read their characteristics. They are not defiled with women¹⁶, for they are virgins; in their mouth is found no guile, for they are without fault before the

¹⁶ "Not defiled with women." As the term "woman" is applied to the Church, the word "women" here would mean ecclesiastical systems. "They are virgins," that is, they are not held in the bonds of sectarianism; the firstfruits are unsectarian.

fore the throne of God. By the power and grace of God they are presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). This is the blessedness to which we hope to attain with the saints in all generations who have been elected to this glory, if by watchfulness and prayer we should be accounted worthy to join this holy band of firstfruits. We must even individually aim at the highest standard of excellence, and seek to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must seek to discharge our duty to God and man, in faith, obedience, love and righteousness. Owe no man anything but to love one another. No debts must bind us with [138] iron chains to earth and prevent our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We must so walk that we can be *righteously* translated and that no one shall suffer loss in any way by our removal.

There is no doubt that the attainment of the reward and glory which we are considering must be regarded as the great prize of our Christian calling according to God's purpose before the foundation of the world. We see it dimly indicated by the prophet Isaiah (chapter lxiv). When after prophetically giving voice to the Church's longing - "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down," he goes on to say (verse 4) - "Since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither

hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." St. Paul casts light upon this when he writes as follows to the Church in Corinth - "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But *God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit*" (1. Cor. ii. 7, 9, 10). Then at the end of this same epistle (chapter xv) the Apostle tells the Church plainly what is the mystery that "*God ordained before the world unto our glory*"; he clearly explains the things revealed unto him by the Spirit, which "*God hath prepared for them that love Him,*" and of which, until then, mortal man had no knowledge [139].

There is one practical point on which we might touch. How much of the Church is to be translated at first? Will the Church as a whole escape the great tribulation? Or is it only those who are alluded to as "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb"? (Rev. xiv. 4). This question is often argued in religious journals, and the opinion generally expressed is that the whole Church will be translated in the first instance, and will escape the great tribulation with which the dispensation closes under the persecution of Antichrist.

We are led to a different conclusion. We believe that those who attain to what we might term the first stage in the first resurrection, are those who are really *firstfruits*, first ripe, gathered from the departed and from the living, and that under the two witnesses, another great company may be formed and carried up into heaven (Rev. xi. 3-12). Taking the figure of the tabernacle, if the first band should constitute the inner room - the holy of holies, - the second band would constitute the holy place, and the two would form one tabernacle, the living temple of God. But neither the tabernacle nor the temple were perfect without the court, which we infer would be formed anti-typically of those who come out of the great tribulation, and wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14.). These also are alluded to in this same chapter (Rev. xiv. 9-16). Thus, as we have already said, while the watchful saints or virgins attain to the first or early rapture, and while the second band suffer more under the increasing tyranny and persecution of the [140] beast, or Antichrist, the majority of the professing Church of Christ will have to go through the great tribulation and become the "great multitude which no man can number"; the three companies ultimately forming one glorious threefold temple. Thus the firstfruits would be like ears of corn picked by the hand of the husbandman out of the field, while the harvest is ripened under an

exceptional storm (1 Sam. xii. 16-18) and cut down with the sickle. Thank God there are still the gleanings of the harvest, for His mercy endureth for ever (Lev. xxiii. 22). Many may not accept this exposition, but so far as our light goes it seems to us to be consonant with the general tenor of holy Scripture.

Having directed attention to a special point of the Christian faith and calling, let us not pass over what St. Jude calls the "common salvation," or the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. We thank God for the foundation mystery of our faith, viz.: the Incarnation, whereby the Lord took our flesh, kept it holy and spotless, offered up Himself and the flesh which He had assumed as a sacrifice to God for the sins of the whole world; for "He made by the one oblation of Himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."¹⁷ Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from our sins; so that there is no reason why any one should despair who trusts in His sacrifice and pleads the blood of sprinkling. The heavenly choirs for ever sing - "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood [141]. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Christ died for our sins; and that He rose again is the simplest

¹⁷ Prayer of Consecration - Book of Common Prayer.

proof that His sacrifice was sufficient and was accepted by the Father, so that none who come unto God by Him shall be cast out, for "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). We thank God that it is written - "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." We also thank God for the gift of the Holy Ghost who applies the work of Christ to our consciences and to our spirits; who sanctifies us, and enables us to believe and to grasp God's great salvation; and who will keep us steadfast unto the end, if we are obedient and faithful; who at length will glorify us and make us like the Lord in His kingdom and glory.

Then shall we praise our God and Saviour, even the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, saying - "I will extol Thee, O Lord; for Thou hast lifted me up" (Psa. xxx. 1). "Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever" (Psa. xxviii. 9). The raised dead and the changed living shall together praise Him in the beauty of incorruptible life, saying - "The Lord bringeth low, and lifeth up." - "O Lord, Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of my head." - "O Lord, Thou hast brought up our soul from the grave: Thou hast kept us alive, that we should not go down to the pit. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever" (Psa. xxx. 12).

To Him who only doeth wondrous things, be praise for ever! "Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psa. lxxxv. 7) [142].

Blessed Lord, should'st Thou appear
Ere the morning light we see,
Grant that we may be of those
Caught away to be with Thee.

Safe in Thy pavilion hid
While the night of horror reigns,
We shall know the rest which yet
In Thy love for us remains.

CHAPTER X.

A Testimony to Faith and Hope.

OUR eighth chapter seemed to lead up to a peculiar conclusion, viz.: that it was only when living apostles were in the Church, and when prophecy was a reality in the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that the hope of the change without death and of the sudden translation to meet the Lord in the air was cherished by the Church. Of late years this hope has been quickened in the heart of the Church; and we may ask, since this spiritual phenomenon has recently taken place after the intermission of centuries, whether there be any possible explanation of this unique spiritual fact. Our answer is that the Lord has again given apostles to His Church, and that the voice of prophecy is once more heard in the assembly of His saints. Living apostles have been with us from 1835 to 1901, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost have been in manifestation and exercise for well nigh three quarters of a century.

We ought in the outset to define what an apostle is, and we cannot do better than quote the Catechism found in "The Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church":

What is the meaning of the word "apostle"? - Apostle is one 'sent forth.' How are apostles distinguished from all other ministers? - Apostles are neither of men nor by man; but by Jesus Christ [144] and God the Father, sent forth immediately and directly (by the Lord the Head of His Church). How are all other ministers set in the Church? - They are set in the Church by our Lord Jesus Christ, not immediately, but through ordination by apostles or by those whom they have delegated for that purpose.

The essential element in the office of apostles is that they are sent forth directly from the Lord Himself without the intervention of any human instrumentality. This feature distinguishes and separates apostles from all other ministers in the Christian Church. Apostleship is the chief among the four ministries which the Lord received as gifts for men at His ascension, viz.: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; these being given for a certain purpose: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12, 13).

In these last days the presence of apostles was indicated to the Church,¹⁸ they being called to the exercise of their office by the word of the Holy Ghost through men speaking in supernatural power as at Antioch, when “the Holy Ghost said - Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts xiii. 1, 2); and we can imagine no other [145] reasonable or practical way in which their call could be made known during the Lord’s personal absence from His Church on earth, looking to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, to the law of the Church’s organization and to her present position in the world. In whatever way the Lord might call and ordain apostles, whether by vision to the men personally, by a direct voice from heaven or by the word of the Holy Ghost through men, it must ever remain an appeal to faith and be received on the testimony of others who are believed to be godly and intelligent witnesses. We have the evidence of the men who were used in prophecy that they were moved by another power than their own spirits or will to utter the prophetic call; we have the evidence of the apostles themselves that in their spirits they were conscious of the call even before it was uttered, and that they accepted the weighty responsibilities of the apos-

¹⁸ From Rev. ii. 2 may be learned the duty of the Church to *try* those who say they are apostles. This indicates the nature of the claim, viz.: to superhuman ordination (Gal i.1).

tolic office and ministry simply in faith that they had received a true call from the Lord; and we rejoice in the subjective evidence of the grace given to them, even grace and apostleship, just as James, Cephas and John recognised it in the case of St. Paul, as we learn from his own statement - when they “perceived the grace that was given unto him, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship (Gal. ii. 9). Their doctrine and the revival of the special apostolic truths which the first apostles preached and which had been forgotten during well nigh eighteen centuries, the Churches they have planted and organized, which are their living epistles, and the grace ministered to others from the Lord [146] through the laying on of their hands - all these are signs of apostleship. The Lord’s message to the baptized need not necessarily be accompanied with miracles - necessary at the beginning of the dispensation - for it is not addressed to the heathen or to the Jews but to a spiritual people who should be able to discern the grace vouchsafed by Him to His apostolic messengers as well as the inherent truth of the message of restoration and of the call to repentance which they bear. Nor is it necessary that apostles should have seen the Lord *personally* in these last days; for their testimony is not so much to Christ’s resurrection, which the Church believes in already, as to those truths which have long lain buried in the dust of ages.

What is it then to which apostles have witnessed in these last days? To the second coming of the Lord, to the first resurrection, to the change without death, to the imminent translation of the firstfruits, to the kingdom of Christ on earth as a sure hope and reality. The last apostles have taken up the work where the first apostles left it, and have gone on with the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the Body of Christ.

Every reader of the New Testament must be struck with the great differences between the Church of the primitive age and the Church as we now see it. Then it was enriched with the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost sent by the glorified Lord to strengthen and comfort His people during His absence; now these are in great part lost, and men justify the loss of them on the ground that they [147] belonged only to the infancy of the Church and would be out of place in this time of maturity. Then it had apostles by whom the Lord was able to rule and bless His whole flock, and prophets through whom the Holy Ghost gave continual light and guidance; now, pastors alone are left - save here and there an evangelist irregularly raised up - to do the full work of the Christian ministry. Then it was filled with joy by the hope of the Lord's speedy return to raise the dead and change the living saints, and to establish His kingdom in the

earth; now this hope has well nigh died out, and Christians are looking for death as their inevitable fate and for the conversion of the world without the Lord's personal presence.

Now which of these two conditions of the Church must be the more pleasing to God? That which He Himself established, or that which has come in through the strifes and divisions of many generations? Is it not plain that the Church, when still undivided, filled with the gifts of the Spirit, having all the ministries which Christ gave on His ascension,¹⁹ and rejoicing in the hope of His speedy return, was in a condition to receive more of His grace for the perfecting of the saints, and thus to serve Him more effectually in the proclamation of the Gospel, than the same Church as it now is, broken into many fragments, ruled by rival leaders, distracted by conflicting doctrines, destitute of spiritual gifts, with no ministry but the pastoral, and neither looking for nor desiring the advent of the Lord?[148].

As the Lord left His Church, so He should find it. His children must be made ready for His coming; and if this can be accomplished only by the ministries and

¹⁹ These are fully described, as well as their allotted work, in Eph. iv.11-13; 1 Cor. xii. 28.

ordinances He set at the first, He must restore them ere His purpose can be fulfilled. He must send again the “master builders” (1 Cor. iii. 10), and “they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isa. lxi. 4). This work He has been doing; for the day is drawing near when He will return to take the rule of the earth into His own hand and to fill it with His salvation; therefore His Church must be prepared that she “may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

We cannot give all the reasons which lead us to believe that God has given again apostles to His Church; an event which many sober and orthodox writers admit is quite within the bounds of possibility, not to say probability. We may here quote the following passage from the last work of one who is known in the Churches for his piety and scholarship, and which is the more weighty in the present connection because he himself does not accept the present mission of apostles here spoken of as a fact and witnessed to as a work of God. He says - “But, after the first century, apostles altogether disappeared, and the Churches were deprived of their greatest strength. This, as we have already seen, ought not to have been the case; and the only probable reason by which we can attempt to explain it is that the very early apos-

tasy from the faith and [149] introduction of the institutions and commandments of men into the Churches caused the Lord Jesus to withhold His most precious gifts, even as He did not many mighty works in His own country because of their unbelief! It is, however, quite possible that He may once more send apostles for the guidance of His people amid the difficulties, perplexities and dangers of these last days. Let us therefore keep well in mind the Scriptural tests which have been given to us; for by rigorously applying them - should the need arise - we should quickly discern whether those who claim to be the apostles of Jesus Christ are to be followed, or to be repudiated and avoided as ministers of Satan.”²⁰

It is more than seventy years since the speedy return of the Lord Jesus Christ began to be proclaimed with great power in various countries and in many parts of the Church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, and thousands of Christians have rejoiced in this revived hope. Soon afterwards the presence of the Holy Ghost was manifested as at the beginning, and the first utterance in spiritual power after the lapse of centuries was to the return of the Lord - “Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” This was

²⁰ “The Church, the Churches, and the Ministries.” By G. H. Pember. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1901.

a remarkable utterance to fall on the ears of a slumbering Church, yet it only echoes the very last words of the sacred Canon. Soon after this utterance came another to the effect - "Where is the Body?" that is, where is the Church as an organized spiritual body with its [150] memberships, its ministries, its joints and bands, knit together to do the will of its Head and to shew forth the glory of its Divine Creator. A third early utterance was the prayer in manifest spiritual power - "Send us apostles," the meaning of which neither those who spake nor those who heard were able to comprehend in the slightest degree.

Many persons of acknowledged piety, sobriety and soundness of mind, faithful members of the episcopal and presbyterian bodies and of other sections of the Church, were supernaturally moved in prophecy to declare the purpose of God in His Church. This is a matter of fact which may be verified by any who desire to know the truth. In due course the Lord designated by the voice of the Holy Ghost those whom He would have to serve Him as *apostles*, and they betook themselves to their work in the power of His Spirit. Under them the office of *prophet* was brought again into exercise²¹ in the Church (1 Cor. xii. 28). *Evangel-*

²¹ A *prophet* in the Christian Church is not merely a person who speaks in prophecy, he is an ordained minister, whether of the episcopate or of the presbytery, as is an e-

ists were sent forth to warn the Church and the nations of the impending judgments, and to testify to the coming of the Lord and the outpouring of the Spirit to prepare His way. The *pastoral* ministry in its threefold form of bishop, priest, and deacon, also found its true place in teaching and shepherding the flock. The fourfold ministry was thus seen once more in its divinely appointed order, fulfilling its work for the [151]

edifying of the Body of Christ. But these messengers of the Lord, whom He sent forth for the blessing of the whole Church, were rejected by her throughout her various sections, and many of her members who rejoiced in the Lord's returning grace unto His Church were expelled from their places. They could not be left unshepherded; hence the apostles were constrained to form them into distinct congregations,²² in which by the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost they set in order the worship and the administration of the sacraments, gathering together the

evangelist or a *pastor*. Those who have served under the apostles have, for the most part, been ordained by them or by their delegates, some by bishops deriving from the first apostles.

²² No charge or schism can lie against congregations gathered under apostolic authority. The true Catholicity of the entire work hinges upon the truth of the giving again of apostles to the Church Catholic.

many precious gems of truth scattered in all parts of the Church.

As the fruit of their labours, churches have been gathered in many countries of Europe and in North America and Australia, in which the apostles and their ministers have taught the doctrine of Christ, have imparted, cherished and directed the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and have instructed the people in all the ways of godliness in preparation for the kingdom of the Lord. These churches, which recognise no other name than that which belongs to the whole Church - One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic - are distinguished from other bodies of Christians in the following particulars:—

1. In having recognised those ministries which Christ gave to His Church at the first.
2. In giving room for the exercise of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost.
3. In having received from the apostles a Liturgy [152] and other Divine Offices of unrivalled beauty and Catholic comprehensiveness, in accordance with which they are enabled to seek the Lord after the due order (1 Chron. xv. 13).

4. In bringing up to God, as an act of worship, their tithes and offerings; the one as His reserved portion of the earth's increase, the other as the expression of their thankfulness and liberality.
5. In recognising all the baptized as constituting the One Church, and in seeking to uphold and strengthen all that remains of Divine truth and order in its several divisions.
6. In praying continually for the Lord's coming and for the resurrection of them that sleep in Him, and that those who are alive and remain at His coming may not die but be changed (1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18).

They also hold firmly the common faith of the Church as set forth in the three great Creeds, commonly called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creed, and they "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). They believe that God's terrible judgments are about to fall upon the Church for her unfaithfulness and upon the nations for their rebellion; nevertheless that God is preparing a refuge from the storm; that there is to be a *firstfruits* sealed with the seal of the living God by the ministry of His apostles before the winds of His indignation are let loose (Rev. vii. i1-3; xiv. 1-4); and that there is to be a *harvest*, an innumerable multitude who "come out of

the great tribulation” from which, had they been wise [153] in time, they might have escaped (Rev. vii. 9-14; xiv. 14-16). God sent forth His apostles to make known this work of deliverance and to revive the blessed hope that gladdened the hearts of the early saints. Then surely every Christian should be filled with joy, for no such joyful tidings have been heard since the first century.

This work is no invention of men; it is the fruit of a supernatural interposition of God in behalf of His people. It has not been carried on in the wisdom of men. Those engaged in it have followed what they recognised to be the voice of God. He spake, and they believed; He commanded, and they obeyed. No novelty has been introduced, no new doctrine taught, no new ordinances established. The Church must have at the end, as at the beginning, everything necessary to her complete development and perfection. A work of restoration was needed through a living witness that God’s purpose and way in His Church are unchanged. It is His gracious answer to the cry of many who mourned over the desolations of Zion, that He would “restore unto her the joy of His salvation, and uphold her by His free Spirit” (Ps. li. 12, etc.).

In every part of Christendom have been found those to whom the news of this work of restoration is

“as cold water to a thirsty soul.” They rejoice together in the manifested presence of the Head in the members of His Body. They have learned to love all who bear His Name; and, as a company gathered together from the various sections of the divided Church, they desire and hope and pray for [154] the return of their departed brethren in resurrection life (the first resurrection); also that they themselves may be changed into the likeness of the Lord without death, and with the risen saints be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The revived apostolate, acting in unison, delivered a testimony²³ to the chief crowned heads of Europe and to the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops of Christendom in 1836-1837, declaring that the Lord had begun to rebuild His Church as a prelude to His speedy return. It is an unrivalled *resumé* of Catholic doctrine.

It is impossible for us to give an exhaustive review of the various features of this revival of apostolic work. We briefly summarise some of them in the following signs which should be weighed and prayed over by those who are spiritual and are waiting on the Lord for further light and direct guidance.

²³ This weighty document was translated into several languages; the copy delivered at the Vatican was of course in Latin.

It is an answer to prayer. In England and Scotland and South Germany, about 1826, special prayer was made for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost; and in 1828 spiritual manifestations began in Bavaria; and in 1830 in Scotland and England. Such prayer was according to God's command, and was made through His grace (Luke xi. 9-13); and the resulting spiritual manifestations were chiefly in words of prophecy, i.e., words spoken *under supernatural power*. The burden of them was the speedy coming of the Lord; the unprepared condition of the Church; the Lord's purpose to manifest the Church as His Body, knit together by apostles, prophets, evangelists and [155] pastors. This fourfold ministry was utterly foreign to the minds of those who so prayed for the Spirit and of those who so prophesied (Matt. xxv. 1-13; 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv. 16).

The restoration of the ministry of apostles in living men. This began in 1832 and, twelve having been directly called by the Holy Ghost, they were, like Barnabas and Saul (Acts xiii. 1-3), "separated" for their work as apostles in 1835. Thus this ministry has been in action in the Church²⁴ for upwards of

²⁴ It may be observed that, unlike their brethren of the Jewish apostolate, the apostles to the Gentiles, beginning with Barnabas and Paul, have been men of education and culture.

sixty years, and it is the chief forerunning sign heralding the Lord's return (Eph. iv. 11; Gal. i. 1; ii. 7, 8; John xx. 21-23).

The restoration of the ministry of prophets. These receive ordination through apostles, apart from whom they cannot safely stand. They are together the Urim and Thummin, through whom Christ reveals by the Holy Ghost *the mind and will of the Father* to the Church for her enlightenment and guidance. Apostles can effect little or nothing without prophets; and prophets cannot minister to edification without apostles. These ministries are mutually necessary the one to the other; and the revival not of one only but of both at the same time is a mark of the truth of this spiritual work of God, their restoration being for the recovery and blessing of the whole Catholic Church (Eph. ii. 20; iii. 1-5; 2 Peter iii. 2; 1 Cor. xii. 28; John xvi. 13-15).

The revival of the fourfold ministry as set forth [156] in Eph. iv. 11-13, as indispensable for the perfecting and building up of the Church as one body.

*The restoration of the full office of angel.*²⁵ The chief pastor leads in intercession and rules in the particular Church as the personal representative of the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. i. 20; ii. 1).

The outward call to the priesthood or episcopate through the Holy Ghost, by the word of prophecy, as in the beginning (1 Tim. i. 18; iv. 14; Heb. v. 4, 5). This is not to be confounded with *ordination*.

The bringing out of the spiritual and permanent work of *deacons*, who are stewards of the temporalities of the Church, counsellors in worldly difficulties, and representatives of the flock (1 Tim. iii. 8-13). This office in these respects was quite set aside during the middle ages; it was superseded by an all-prevailing priestcraft.

The due action of the office of deaconess for the comforting and blessing of women, especially the aged or lonely ones (Rom. xvi. 1, Greek).

²⁵ The episcopate is one, and the angels of the Churches and the bishops of Christendom are pastors of the Catholic episcopate; but the present position of the latter is in some respects abnormal.

Prophecy through ministers and through the laity, as in the beginning of the Christian dispensation (Acts xii. 1, 2; xix. 6; xxi. 9; 1. Cor. xiv. 31).

Utterance in tongues, as recorded in Acts x. 46; xix. 6. It was this which, before the restoration of the ministry of apostleship, excited general ridicule in London in 1831 (1 Cor. xiv. 2, 14, 21; Isaiah xxviii. 9-12).

The manifestation of other spiritual gifts, in accordance [157] with what we read in the Acts of the Apostles and in St. Paul's epistles (1 Cor. xii; xiv).

The gift of healing. Many cases of healing have occurred, some of which have been clearly miraculous. Evil spirits have been cast out and the secrets of the heart made manifest (1 Cor. xii. 7-11; xiv. 25).

Catholic truth, "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*"; the whole "faith once delivered to the saints" is firmly held and fully taught (Jude 3).

Unity. The unity of the Church is insisted on as a fundamental truth, and this work is a practical effort for its recovery in God's way (Eph. iv. 4, 5).

Catholicity. In spirit the work embraces Christendom, and aims at the blessing of the whole Catholic Church (1 Cor. i. 10; Col. i. 3-6).

There has been a call to repentance, having special reference to the spiritual sins committed against the special grace of the Christian dispensation, now drawing to its close. Noah was sent at the end of the Patriarchal dispensation and John the Baptist at the end of the Jewish dispensation to preach repentance and righteousness and to announce coming judgment, while shewing a way of escape for the penitent; so likewise at the end of this Christian dispensation has the Lord sent forth His twelvefold apostolate to preach repentance and recall the Church to her true standing; to revive the forgotten hope of her calling and to announce impending judgments and the way of escape (Matt. iii. 1-6; Mark i. 1-5; Mal. iv; 2 Peter ii. 5).

The Gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus preached (Matt. iv. 23; xxiv. 14; Luke viii. 1), which is [158] higher than the Gospel of individual salvation, though including it, is proclaimed by the evangelists (Isa. lii. 7).

The reminding Christian men of their standing in baptism, as sons of God, by adoption and regenera-

tion; of the special connection of baptism with *resurrection* (1 Peter iii. 21); of the distinctive glory of this dispensation, viz.: *God dwelling in man* (John xiv. 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16-18), and of man's consequent solemn responsibilities (Rom. vi; Col. ii. 11-13).

The truth of the Incarnation is made the basis of doctrine and duty. The truth is held that Christ partook of the common flesh and blood of all men (Heb. ii. 14; iv. 15; Rom. viii. 3); but it is a slander to say that sin, original or actual, is thus imputed to His human nature. He who was born of the Virgin, *of her substance*, was God, the Eternal Son, a DIVINE PERSON in human nature. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and purified the nature which He assumed in the very act of taking it.²⁶ He was born "that holy thing" (Luke i. 35), and He ever kept His human nature holy. He sanctified Himself through the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Ghost (John xvii. 19; Heb. ix. 14).

The instant coming of the Lord, as our one hope and incentive to duty and watchfulness. This is firmly believed as it is set forth in the apostolic epistles (1 Thess., etc.).

²⁶ It was He who was immaculately conceived, not the Blessed Virgin Mary His mother.

The unfolding of the mystery of the firstfruits, with the awakened hope and effort to be accounted worthy of this honour for the blessing of all (Lev. xxiii. 10-11; Rev. xiv. 1-5) [159].

The preparation of a people for change and translation to meet the Lord in the air without tasting death. This is the special mission of apostles restored to the Church.

One sign of true apostleship being the desire to *present the Church in one body* as a chaste Virgin to Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2); as a Bride who has been made ready, having “gone on unto perfection” (Rev. xix. 7; Heb. vi. 1-3).

The word of warning concerning Antichrist, very familiar to the early Church but which has slipped out of the Church’s memory, is proclaimed in our ears before the dispensation closes, that we may not be taken unawares (2 Thess. ii; 1 John ii. 18, 22, 27; Rev. xiv. 9, 10).

The mystery of the cherubim has been unfolded by the Holy Ghost and declared to be the chief type of the fourfold ministry of the Church; thus it has as practical a bearing on the life of the baptized as any

other revelation of holy Scripture (Ezek. i. 5-10; Eph. iv. 11, 12; Rev. iv. 6-11).

The Apostles’ Liturgy is a treasury of Catholic rites, embodying the beauties of the Greek, Roman and Anglican Liturgies, but surpassing them all because set in order through the light cast by the Holy Spirit on the hitherto hidden interpretation of the tabernacle of Moses, the rites and sacrifices of which foreshadowed the principles of Christian worship (2 Peter iii. 2; Eph. ii. 18-22). Of these things St. Paul said he could not then speak particularly (Heb. ix. 5); yet were they the Divine key to the Church’s worship. Apostles have come neither [160] to destroy nor to innovate; but to gather up, develop, and set the King’s seal on all that is good and true in Christendom.

The rite of the anointing the sick has been revived according to Scriptural teaching (James v. 14), and time promised answer is often experienced.

The payment of tithes, apart from voluntary offerings and firstfruits (Prov. iii. 9) is inculcated not only as a duty to God as our King, but also as a Christian privilege and as a safeguard from covetousness (Heb. vii. 4-9; 1 Cor. xvi. 2).

The revival of the true HOPE of the Church as a Bride waiting for her Lord, as well as of *faith* and of *charity*, is one of the most striking spiritual characteristics of this work (Rom. viii. 24; xv. 13).

The marvellous Scriptural character of the work. This all admit; the main difficulty of many is the question of *authority*. We cannot find one point of Church organization or discipline in the New Testament which the work does not reproduce; none can be found at variance with holy Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 14,15; Isa. viii. 20; Rev. xxii. i8, 19).

The Scriptural test given in 1.John iv. 1-3 defines how we may "*know the Spirit of God.*" In this work of the Lord every utterance in supernatural spiritual power in all parts of the world has testified that *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*; the Spirit of God has glorified Him and taken of the things of Christ to shew them unto His people, as our Lord promised that He should do (John xvi. 13, 14).

As contemporary with John Asgill, we may refer to the wonderful utterances of a Mrs. Jane Lead in 1703 [161], which amount to a prophetic foreshadowing of this work; some of these are quoted in Appendix IV.

The question is often asked - if this work be the sign of God's visitation of His Church in these last days, why do so few accept it? why has it hitherto been rejected by the baptized and their rulers? We ask, in reply, whether any special message from God to His covenant people has ever met with general acceptance. The old world disbelieved Noah the preacher of righteousness, and was drowned; the Jews, with their rulers, were unmoved by the Forerunner's witness to Christ, and, having rejected Christ Himself, they were scattered. So is it with Christendom at the end of this age; the Lord's special message has thus far fallen upon deaf ears, so that the majority do not care even to enquire into it, or to apply our Lord's own test to His apostles and prophets - Ye shall know them by their fruits (Matt. vii. 15-18). For the things of the Spirit of God must be spiritually discerned (1.Cor. ii.14), and spiritual discernment is necessarily foreign to the present fleshly condition of the sects of the baptized, who are satisfied to come far short of possessing those perfect ordinances and that full spiritual endowment which characterized the undivided Church of apostolic times. Hence such terms as delusion, and even imposture, have been applied to a work which bears upon the face of it every mark of a divine origin, as we have been endeavouring to shew in the foregoing pages; though we have dwelt chiefly upon one feature of it, viz.: its wit-

ness to the near coming of the Lord, the first resurrection, the change of the living saints [162], and the translation of the raised and changed to meet their returning Lord and Head.

Alas! we have all come short and failed in the Lord's hands; so that we are constrained to humble ourselves before the Lord and to look to His mercy and faithfulness to lift us out of the dust and to fulfil our hope. Apostles have again been removed; but, since our trust is not in them but in the living God who raiseth the dead, we are looking and waiting for the resurrection; for, as we believe that none but apostles can do apostles' work, so do we believe that the apostles will be raised from the dead to finish their work and to present the Church as a chaste Virgin to Christ, and therefore for the first resurrection we daily pray.

Is this testimony true? Then surely every Christian should be filled with joy, for no such joyful tidings have been heard since the first century. We declare that God has indeed visited His people, and has sent to them His apostles to make ready the way of the Lord. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Let every one who reads these pages ask the Divine help that he may prove according to the measure of his inner discernment whether

these things are so, and let him sigh for the resurrection and change into immortality and for the deliverance of the groaning creation, crying - Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Oh, make our feet like hinds' feet, that we may walk upon Thy high places, even on mount Zion.

Let Thy salvation, O God, set me up on high (Psa. lxxix. 29) [163].

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Lord of the bounteous harvest,
Thou sendest forth again,
With gracious showers of blessing,
The latter rain.

The summer tide hath ended;
The seed hath taken root;
And now Thy soul desireth
The first ripe fruit.

Now through the field thou treadest,
O merciful High Priest!

The first ripe ears to gather,
Bless Thou the feast!

So shall Thy twofold witness
Be gathered from the field,
And all the golden harvest
Its treasures yield.

And soon shall He that soweth
And He that reapeth come
To bring Thy sheaves together
Rejoicing home.

E.W.E.

APPENDIX I.

It is remarkable how many truths lie on the surface of Holy Scripture, and yet, though they may be called open secrets, they are secrets still; for it needs the grace and illumination of the Holy Ghost to lay hold of them by a living faith and to turn them into principles of action. This holds good of the revealed truths on which we have dwelt in this treatise.

A remarkable testimony was given to the Christian hope of translation without seeing death, about the year 1703, by one, John Asgill, to whom we have alluded. Before quoting from Mr. Asgill's treatise, it may be desirable to subjoin some of the notices the author has met with in the catalogues of booksellers.

“Asgill's argument proving that, according to the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, man may be translated from hence into that eternal life, without passing through death, although the human nature of Christ Himself could not be thus translated till He had passed through death.”

“For writing this book, Asgill was expelled from the House of Commons, and committed to the Fleet, where he died after thirty years' imprisonment, at the age of nearly one hundred years.”

“The pamphlet was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman; and, for writing it, the author was expelled from both the Irish and the English Houses of Parliament.”

“This tract is scarce, but it may be seen in the British Museum and in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Mr. Asgill was expelled the House of Commons in Ireland, 1703, and the House of Commons in England in 1707. It is to the latter expulsion that reference is made in the ‘Defence,’ [165] N. & Q., vol. vi., pp. 3, 300. Consult ‘Biographia Britannica,’ S.V.

“‘Asgill’s (John) Collection of Tracts.’ Theological, Political, and those relating to the Hanoverian succession, 1715:”

“Including the extraordinary pamphlet, in which Asgill wildly asserted that man may be translated from hence into Eternal Life without passing through death; which tract was, both in England and Ireland, ordered to be burnt by the common hangman, as a profane and blasphemous libel; the author himself being successively expelled from the Irish, and from the English House of Commons.”

Books written by John Asgill, Esq.: - “An Argument concerning Translation;” price 12d. “Mr. Asgill’s

Defence on his Expulsion from the House of Commons;” 12d.

We here append the vote of the House of Commons in the Kingdom of Ireland, with reference to Mr. Asgill’s expulsion; Lunae ii die Octobris, 1703: -

“RESOLVED, Nemine Contradicente, that it appears to this House, That John Asgill, Esqre., a member of this House, is the author of a book, entituled: An Argument proving that, according to the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, man may be translated from hence into that Eternal Life without passing through death, altho’ the human nature of Christ Himself could not be thus translated till He had passed through death.”

“RESOLVED, Nemine Contradicente, That John Asgill, Esqre., a member of this House, be expelled this House, and be for ever hereafter incapable of being chosen, returned, or sitting a member in any succeeding Parliament in this Kingdom.”

The “Biographia Britannica” is to be found in the Reading Room of the British Museum, shelf 2027 q, and vol. vi. “Notes and Queries” in the same place, shelf 2092 b.

We also find an account of John Asgill and his books in "The Doctor," part ii., by Southey, p. 446; see shelf 2044 c Reading Room, British Museum. Southey suggests that his expulsion from Parliament and his subsequent imprisonment was due to his insolvency, and not to his religious eccentricities [166].

From these notices we collate the following brief biographical sketch of Mr. Asgill's life retaining some of the old quaint expressions found in the above references.

Asgill was born in the middle of the seventeenth century, and bred to the law, in Lincolns Inn Fields, under Mr. Eyre. In 1698, he published a treatise with this title, "Several assertions proved, in order to create another species of money than Gold and Silver;" and also an "Essay on a Registry for Titles of Lands," Both subjects suggest that he was, in his ideas, in advance of his age. The whole strength of his mind was devoted to his profession, so that he acquired a habit of looking at everything from a legal point of view. He searched the Old and New Testaments to find "something more than was considered his share." As the result of these studies, he published, in 1700, "An argument proving that according to the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, man may be translated from hence into that Eternal Life without

passing through death, although the human nature of Christ Himself could not thus be translated till He had passed through death." Many a book has originated in the misfortunes of its author. Asgill's harmless heresy began in a confinement to which he was reduced in consequence of an unsuccessful speculation. He had engaged in the speculation in the hope of increasing his fortune, instead of which he incurred so great a loss, that he was compelled to keep his chambers in the Temple for some years. Then he began to study "the book of Law and Gospel," commonly called the Bible. He desired that his pamphlet should not be published until after he had left Middlesex; but the book was published in Ireland, with a rumour that he had gone mad. He was told his practice was ruined, but it proved the contrary, as people crowded to the Courts to see him and hear him speak. He gained enough in two years to purchase Lord Kenmare's estate, and to procure a seat in the Irish House of Commons.

This purchase made him enemies, for, as he was on his way to Dublin, he heard that his book had been burnt by order of the House. He proceeded, however, to Dublin, and took the oath and his seat; and the book having been condemned and executed without the author being heard [167] in its defence, nothing more was necessary than to prove him the

author and expel him forthwith, and this was done in the course of four days. He returned to England and obtained a seat for Bramber, apparently with the object of securing himself from his creditors. He represented this borough for two years; but, in the first parliament after the Union, some Scotch members took exception to a man being allowed his liberty under privilege, and, instead of attempting straightforward means, they took the easier course of appointing a committee to examine his book. It was reported to be profane; but although he was allowed to make his defence, he was expelled from the House. The remainder of his life was passed within the walls of the King's Bench Prison, where he died in 1738, at an advanced age. "He nearly attained the age of one hundred." – From "The Doctor," by Southey, part ii., p. 446.

From the "Biographia Britannica." - "He (Asgill) received his seat in the Irish House of Parliament in consequence of his position when he purchased Lord Kenmare's estate. He was in Munster at the time, and set out for Dublin, but learned on the way that his book had been examined and pronounced blasphemous. He was expelled in 1703, and returned to England in 1705. 'But in an interval of privilege in 1707, being taken in execution at the suit of Mr. Holland, he was committed to the Fleet.' When the House met,

Mr. Asgill applied, and the Sergeant-at-Arms was sent to demand him, and on the 17th of December he took his seat in the House. Between his application and his discharge, complaint was made of his book; a committee was appointed to examine it, and it was pronounced blasphemous."

Extracts from the Preface to Mr. Asgill's Tracts. – "To them that knew not the reason, it looked like a whim for the man in the Gospel to walk about the streets with his bed upon his back on the sabbath day, while the rest of the people were at their devotions.

"And perhaps it may seem more odd in me to bolt out an argument in Divinity (as a bone of contention) into the world at a time when the rest of mankind are so deeply engaged in secular affairs."

"And as that seeming whimsical man said to them that [168] reproved him, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. So say I to them that affront me: He that revealed this unto me, the same bade me tell it abroad, as a watchword to be given out from one to another (every man to his fellow) as fast as he receives it: Let him that heareth say come!"

“And having thus delivered my part of the message, I look upon myself as having no more to do with it afterwards than you have.”

“But hereby I shall know whether this doctrine be mine or no.”

“If it be mine, it will sink and fall and die; but if it be His - I think 'tis - it will kindle itself like a fire-brand from one to another till it hath set the world in arms against death. And having thus lost the decision of the truth of its success, I begin to feel myself more easy under it.”

“And as the four leprous men said to one another in the gate of Samaria: If we sit here, we are sure to die with famine, and if we go into the camp of the Syrians, we can but die by the sword; so I have said to myself: If I submit to death, I am sure to die; and, if I oppose it, I can but be killed and die.”

“And, should I be baffled in this essay, I can lose nothing by it, but that little credit with the world which I value not in comparison with this attempt.”

“And as those four desperate men, venturing themselves upon this resolution, did thereupon find that they had been before more afraid than hurt:

“So, in making this sally against death, methinks I have discovered it to be rather a bugbear than an enemy.”

“So, if my news be true in itself, why should it fare the worse for being told by the greatest of sinners?”

“And perhaps this qualifies me to be the messenger lest one more holy should seem to be honoured with it for his own personal sanctity.”

“I remember a sudden retort once given me by a lady (to whom I excused this my emulation by the example of Enoch) - But you are not so good as he was; for Enoch walked with God. And this might have puzzled me had not Paul (in his list of worthys) counted upon the translation [169] of Enoch as done by faith. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. Why then, if I have as good a faith for this purpose as he had, I am in this point (quoad hoc) as good a man as he was, tho' I fall short of him in all his other qualities.”

“Nor is it to be expected that any assembly of Divines should be employed in such a business as this.”

“And thus the Jewish priests excommunicated a layman for teaching their religion. Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? and they cast him out.”

“But He that had opened his eyes took him in. And such an exchange I should reckon no great misfortune. But is it not a shame that this Enoch in the beginning of time, so long before the receipt of the promise, should attain to that faith in Christ, which we that have seen Him crucified before our eyes think a sin to offer at?”

“But having been tempted to commit this sin (like a true mother-child of my grandparent Eve), I would tempt my friends to do so too.”

“And all I ask of them is this - Having abstracted the study of seven years’ recluse into less than two hours’ reading, I only desire the perusal of it at a time of leisure, when men and women design to be serious and think most of themselves.”

“And then I flatter myself that they will find it not the most unpleasant hour that ever they spent in their life.”

“For this I know, that nothing is more pleasant to us than news; and what I have said, was never said by man before. And this I know, that (notwithstanding the defections of our natures) nothing is more pleasant to man than truth, and what I have said is true.”

“And a truth that all the gainsayers shall not be able to resist.”

“Tho’ it be in contradiction to the most received truth in the world, *That all men must die.*”

Extracts from the pamphlet itself : -

“I defy the logicians to deny my argument, of which this is the abstract:-

“That the law delivered to Adam before the fall is the original cause of death in the world. That this law is taken [170] away by the death of Christ. That therefore the legal power of death is gone. And I am so far from thinking this Covenant of Eternal Life to be an allusion to the forms of title amongst men that I rather adore it, as a precedent for them all, from which our imperfect forms are taken; believing with the great Apostle that the things on earth are but the

patterns of things in the heavens, where the original are kept.”

“But why then doth death remain in the world? Why, because man knows not the way of life. ‘The way of life they have not known.’ Or (as I said at the beginning) that death maintains its dominion over us by our fear of it; having no other right to remain with us; but because our faith is not yet come to us. ‘When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith upon the earth?’ Man is a beast of burden that knows not his own strength in the virtue of the death and the power of the resurrection of Christ; which ignorance does not proceed from want of revelation of the truth but from our neglect to study and inaptitude to believe it.”

“The motto of the religion of the world is, as I have said, *Mors janua vitae* - death is the gate of life. Now I say, if we do by this mean the death of Christ, then we are in the right. But if by this we mean our own death, then we are in the wrong. The death of Christ was necessary for Him and us both, because the Covenant of Life would not take effect but by His death, which in the Covenant hath two capacities.”

“Now I say this, that as Christ did thus change His state upon earth, without change of His person or place, so man may do too, with this difference, that

the Christ passed this change by His own death and resurrection, yet we can’t do it by our own death and resurrection, but must do it by passing through the death and resurrection of Christ in that legal form prescribed by the Covenant of Eternal Life; because His death, and not ours, is made the seal of that Covenant.”

“And yet far be it from me to say that man may not attain to Eternal Life though he should die; for the text runs double - ‘I am the resurrection and the life: he that [171] liveth and believeth on Me, shall never die; and though he were dead, he shall live.’ But this I say, by this very text, there is a nearer way of entering into Life Eternal than by the way of death and resurrection. Whatever circumstances a man is under at the time of his death, God is bound upon His fidelity to make good this text to him, according to which part he builds his faith upon. If he be dead, then there is a necessity for resurrection; but if he be alive, there is no occasion for death or resurrection either.”

“We must all be changed, but we need not all die in order to be changed, for ‘tis not death that works the change, but the death and resurrection of Christ, which we may pass through without death. Paul was of this religion that we may be changed without

death. 'We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.' And yet, though he had delivered this to be his faith in general, he did not attain to such a particular knowledge of the way and manner of it so as to prevent his own death. And his confession tells us the reason of his failure. That he had not yet attained to the resurrection of the dead, but was pressing after it."

"Though God hath formed this covenant of Eternal Life against death, man still maintains a Covenant with it. They have made an agreement with death and hell."

"And, tho' now I am single, yet I believe that this translation by faith without death will be general before the general change (Paul speaks of) shall come."

"And that then, and not before, shall be the resurrection of the just (which is called the first resurrection)."

"And after that the dead so arisen, with the living then alive, shall have learnt this faith (which shall qualify them to be caught up together in the air), then shall the general resurrection of the dead be."

"But when that is done, I know no business I have with the dead, and therefore do as much depend that I shall not go hence by returning to the dust, which is the sentence of that law from which I claim a discharge, but that I shall make my exit by way of translation, which I claim as a dignity belonging to that degree in the science of eternal life, of which I profess myself a graduate, according to the true intent and meaning of the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures." [172].

Of course, Mr. Asgill's book provoked many satirical and antagonistic replies. The poet, Matthew Prior, in his ode to the memory of George Villiers, refers to him as follows:

And modern Asgill, whose capricious
thought
Is yet with stores of wilder notions fraught,
Too soon convinced, shall yield that fleeting
breath
Which played so idly with the darts of death.

Another writer calls his pamphlet "An enquiry at the case of Mr. Asgill's general translation, shewing that 'tis not a nearer way to heaven than the grave," London, 1704, and the following is his conclusion, page 47:

“Upon the whole matter, if I may give my opinion, since it is plain that Eternal Life is the Port, I regard not the passage - be it by death, 'tis the way the God of Nature directed, 'tis what Nature points at and tends to.

“Let those that think there is a nearer way seek for it; for my part, tho' 'tis true they may at last find the beaten road of death blindfold, yet they may lose a great deal of time in the search, and fall into the old road when they do not think of it. I am sure I have no time to spare; if there be another way, I trust God will reveal it; and, till He does, I am content to go the way of my fathers only; but because, for ought I see, the sting and victory being gone, death and the grave have as direct a tendency to that change which I am sure must be wrought as a fiery chariot.

“I am sure I am not fit to be in heaven in these clothes; and therefore so I am but changed and brought thither, Ad Te quacunqve vocas Dulcissime Jesu! But for translation directly, the Scripture says nothing of the matter, nor the nature of the thing does not require it.”

Another tract is thus entitled: “An enquiry into the case of Mr. Asgill's general translation, shewing that 'tis not a nearer way to heaven than the grave

“(by the author of the “True-born Englishman“). 2 Thess. ii.2.: “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions.” London: Printed and sold by J. Nutt, near Stationers' Hall, 1704.

On the other hand, Mr. Asgill's treatise elicited some replies which were favourable to his views. Thus we have; “A vindication of Mr. Asgill's book: 'Thro' the manifesting how man may arrive at perfection, and that the [173] same things that were transacted in the beginning of the world will be transacted before the end thereof, for translation and transfiguration of souls and bodies.”

In connection with Asgill, there was a pamphlet printed in 1705 called, “A letter to a friend, in vindication of Mr. Asgill's book concerning walking with God as did Enoch, and for translation of the body and soul, as was both Enoch and Elias, by a person of honour.” London: Printed and sold by Anne Baldwin, in Warwick Lane, 1705.

The author's finish is in the following words: “I do verily believe that some men will be fitted for translation and transfiguration before the day of judgment. For before that time there will be most miraculous things transacted in doing miracles for the conversion of the Jews, and for the bringing all nations into one

religion as must be effected before the end of the world. Even so come Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen.”

In the edition of Mr. Asgill’s works, 1715, there is another pamphlet, the title of which is, “Mr. Asgill’s defence upon his expulsion from the House of Commons of Great Britain in 1707, with an introduction and postscript.” London: Printed and sold by A. Baldwin, in Warwick Lane, 1712.

On page six of this introduction, Mr. Asgill writes: “I am now in the fifth year of my expulsion from the House of Commons of Great Britain as author of the treatise, to which I then made, the sequel, my defence; to which defence I was admitted with all the freedom and patience and silence and attention that I could then desire, which I mention as my recognition of the justice and candour of that house.”

The defence commences page 37, and consists of some thirty pages of which the following is the commencement.

THE DEFENCE.

“In an interval of privilege in 1707, being under an arrest, I removed myself by *Habeas Corpus* to the Fleet.

“In the session following, upon application to the House, I was by their order demanded out of custody (by their Sergeant-at-Arms with the Mace) on Tuesday, 16th December, 1707.

“And took my place in the House on the morrow [174].

“Butt between my application and discharge there was an accusation brought into the House against me, as author of a treatise (published several years before), entitled, ‘An Argument, proving that according to the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, etc.’ (see appendix, page 164). And a committee being appointed to examine it, the chairman had reported several paragraphs therein (afterwards resolved profane and blasphemous, highly reflecting upon the Christian religion).

“Thursday, 18th December, 1707, was appointed for hearing my defence.

“For which I attended in my place.

“When the report was read, and the chairman moving for me to withdraw; to prevent his motion being seconded and put to the questions I stood up and made my defence to the purport following.” Asgill’s Tracts, page 37 (1715).

We think it seems clear that Mr. Asgill from his study of the Bible was led to discern what we believe to be a cardinal truth and hope of the Gospel. But we think that he did not hold the truth in its complete fulness, nor in its relation to other truths. He was looking for an individual translation, on which he expressed himself somewhat strongly; but he did not attain to it, for he did not understand that the change or translation now expected is not to be that of solitary individuals but of a corporate body.

Nevertheless, we thank God for Mr. Asgill’s witness to the forgotten truth of translation, and we feel sure that some seed he scattered has germinated and brought forth fruit, and that “his labour has not been in vain in the Lord.”

May the Church awake to the power of this hope and plead it before God that we may soon attain to it, and have our perfect consummation of bliss both in body and soul in eternal glory in the kingdom of God [175].

APPENDIX II.

The following is the quotation from “Ben-Ezra,” to which we have alluded in our text, page 26.

Extract from “The coming of the Messiah in glory and majesty,” by Juan Josafat, “Ben-Ezra”; translated by Rev. Ed. Irving, vol. i, chap. vi., page 101: -

“Christ comes from heaven to earth in the glory of His Father with His angels: at the first sound of His voice forthwith arise those who hear it; that, of all His saints, the dead in Christ shall rise first. These, being arisen, shall immediately ascend through the air, to receive the Lord and enjoy His bodily presence: together with them shall likewise arise, or be caught up, the living saints who are upon the earth. These living saints who have not passed through death, shall in a moment die, there, in the air, before arriving in the presence of the Lord; or, according to the opinion of others, they may perhaps die and revive in a moment, before being caught up.

“While the risen saints are ascending through the air, and in the brief instant that succeeds the death and resurrection of the living who accompany them, all of them being now far distant from the earth, there

shall come down upon it that great and universal deluge of fire.”

We believe the learned father is wholly incorrect in his representation of the changed saints having suddenly and momentarily to taste of death before their change into immortality, as we endeavoured to show in chap. 1. When we wrote that passage we were unaware that this idea had been broached by “Ben-Ezra,” but we hold it to be unscriptural and unreasonable [176].

APPENDIX III.

A short time ago (in 1899) the author was travelling in Algeria and visited the old Roman city of Tipasa, and among many interesting things he noted the following, as recorded in his diary:—

“About the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, the Christian Church flourished in N. Africa, and, in the time of Augustine, a synod of 300 or 400 bishops could be convened. These churches have been swept away, and we may say that, before A. D. 1830, N. Africa was Mohammedan from the Nile to the Straits of Gibraltar.

“A few weeks ago, I stood amid the ruins of an old Roman city overlooking the sea. On the east side, the ancient Roman cemetery had been, and there were hundreds of empty coffins, or sarcophagi, indenting the ground for nearly a rood; and at the other or western end of this city was the Christian cemetery, also full of empty stone tombs lying thickly together. Here there is an ancient ruined Christian church, called the Basilica of Bishop Alexander, in which there is a mosaic of black and white stones, dating from the end of the fourth century, i.e., about A.D. 390, and now, alas! in danger of perishing.

“In this mosaic are these words which are still legible, expressing the hope of that bishop: -

“Corpus in pace quiescit resurrectionem expectans futuram de mortuis primam”; which may be rendered: - ‘His body rests in peace, awaiting a future *first* resurrection from the dead.’

“I hailed this as a blessed testimony to the hope of the first resurrection before the year 400 A.D., and a confirmation of our faith and hope [177].

“Although the hope of the first resurrection is comparatively rarely preached even in England and is

unknown to millions of professing Christians, it is no new doctrine.

“We thank God for this testimony in that neglected corner of the earth, and we have made efforts that this uncared-for yet precious relic of Christian antiquity may not perish.”

The following letter has been received from the Governor-General of Algiers; but, though the subject has been brought before the Government at Paris through one of the French deputies, the author fears that no steps have been taken, and that this precious relic will eventually perish: -

“ALGER, le 12 Juin, 1899.

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAIS.

MONSIEUR,

Vous avez bien voulu m’adresser une lettre relative a la basilique de St. Salsa, a celle de l’Evêque Alexandre, a Tipaza, ainsi qu’aux mosaïques chrétiennes que vous y avez vues et aux mesures qu’il conviendrait, selon vous, de prendre en vue de la conservation de ces monuments historiques.

“J’ai l’honneur de vous accuser réception et de vous remercier de votre intéressante communication.

“Veuillez agréer Monsieur, l’assurance de ma considération très distinguée.

“Le Gouverneur Général,

“Le Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement,

“M. LAUNAY.”

APPENDIX IV.

We have alluded to Jane Lead in our text and may here give a brief sketch of her life:—

She was born in 1623, and even as a girl she seemed to be the subject of spiritual revelations. After the death of her husband she lived in seclusion in London, where she gave herself up to the cultivation of mysticism and prophetic visions. She seems to have been a godly and spiritual woman, and some of her visions of the future in connection with the Church of Christ are most remarkable in their bearing upon the Church’s true hope. She seems to have had a revelation of what the Church ought to be in order to attain to the coming glory. God gave her the spiritual insight to discern that the Church needed preparation and purification for the Lord’s return, and that there was an exceptional and bridal glory to be attained; but, though she speaks much of the glory of the Lord, and of the “Virgin or Philadelphian” Church, there is hardly any allusion to the change or to the rapture of the firstfruits.

Among her various and numerous writings is one entitled, “The Wars of David,” written in 1697, and reprinted in 1816; and from it we quote certain remarkable prophetic anticipations (which she terms

propositions), relative to a revival in the Christian Church for preparation and purification before the Lord's second advent at the close of this dispensation.-

“Proposition 11. - There shall be an authoritative decision given forth immediately from Christ, to the putting an end to all controversies concerning the Church.

“Proposition 12. - This decision will be by the actual sealing of the members of this Church with the name of God. This new name will distinguish them from the seven thousand names of Babylon [179].

“Proposition 13. - The election and preparation of this Church is to be after a hidden and secret manner.

“Proposition 24. - Until there be such a church made ready upon the earth - so holy, so catholic, and so anointed - and that is adorned as a bride to meet her bridegroom, Christ will not personally descend and solemnize this marriage and present the same to His Father.

“Proposition 25. - But when the hidden Church shall be made ready Then He will no longer delay

His coming in person. There is not this day (1697) visible upon the earth any holy, catholic, anointed, and bridal church. All the churches and professions being found light when weighed in the balance, therefore they are rejected by the Supreme Judge.

“Proposition 27. - Which rejection and condemnation will be for this end that out of them a new and glorious Church may rise up in whom there shall be no fault found, like as He findeth none with the Philadelphian Church.

“Proposition 29. - Rev. iii. Though this Philadelphian Church is not known in visibility, yet it may be hid at this present time, as in the womb of the morning.

“Proposition 30. - Notwithstanding it will be brought into visibility within a short period.

“Proposition 31. - Then it will go on and multiply.....not only to the number of the first-born, which is one hundred and forty-four thousand, but also to the remnant of the seed against which the Dragon shall make war.

“Proposition 36. - Christ, before His own personal and distinct appearance, will first appear and repre-

sent Himself in some chosen vessel or vessels anointed to be leaders unto the rest, and to bring them into the promised land - the new creation state.

“Proposition 37. - Moses, Joshua, and Aaron may be considered as types of some upon whom the same spirit may come - yet to rest on a greater proportion, whereby they shall make way for the ransomed of the Lord to return to Mount Zion.

Proposition 45. - Wherefore it is required on our part to suffer the spirit of burning to do upon us the refining work till all be pure and clean, and we thereby [180] arrive to this fixed body from whence the wonders are to flow out.

“Proposition 46. - This body will bear the sealing character of the Philadelphian Church. Upon this body will be the fixation of the Urim and Thummim.

“Proposition 53. - There must be a manifestation of the Spirit wherewith to edify and raise up this church suitable to the resurrection of Christ. This manifestation must be in the absoluteness of power, as well as in the beauty of holiness, so bringing down heaven upon earth, and representing here the new Jerusalem state.” [181].

APPENDIX V. COLLECTS FROM ANCIENT LITURGIES, AND FROM “THE LITURGY AND OTHER DIVINE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH.”

“We beseech Thee, Almighty God, let our souls enjoy this their desire, to be enkindled by Thy Spirit; that being filled, as lamps, by the Divine gift, we may shine like blazing lights before the presence of Thy Son Christ at His coming; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Gelasian Liturgy.

“We beseech Thee, O Lord our God, let us all rejoice with upright hearts, being gathered together in the unity of the faith; that at the coming of Thy Son our Saviour, we may go forth undefiled to meet Him in the company of His saints; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Gelasian.

“O Christ our God, who wilt come to judge the world in the manhood which Thou hast assumed, we pray Thee to sanctify us wholly, that in the day of Thy coming our whole spirit, soul, and body may so revive to a fresh life in Thee, that we may live and reign with Thee for ever.” - Mozarabic Liturgy.

“Hear us, O merciful God, and grant our minds to be lifted up, whither our Redeemer hath ascended; that at the second coming of the Mediator we may receive from Thy manifested bounty what we now venture to hope for as a promised gift; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Leonine.

“O Lord, who has borne our weak flesh to be glorified with Thee in heavenly places, take away the foulness of our sins, and restore to us the dignity of our first estate; that by believing in Thee, we may be able thither to ascend, whither we now believe Thee to have really ascended.” – Mozarabic [182].

PRAYERS FROM “THE LITURGY AND OTHER DIVINE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH.”

“O Almighty God, Who hast builded Thy Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; grant that, being illuminated through the words of Thy prophets, and joined together in unity of Spirit through the doctrine, precepts, and ministry of Thine apostles, we may grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, and may be builded together for Thy habitation through the Spirit; for the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. - Amen,”

“O Almighty God, Who abhorrest the deeds of unrighteousness, and the words from lying lips; Grant unto Thy people, we humbly beseech Thee, such purity of heart, that of Thy mercy they may ever be defended from false apostles and deceitful workers, and may also be enabled joyfully to obey Thee in those whom Thou choolest and sendest forth unto the blessing of Thy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. - Amen.”

“O Lord Jesu Christ, Who art the Resurrection and the Life, we acknowledge Thy goodness in gathering and sealing Thy firstfruits, and in warning us through Thy prophets of the nearness of the day of Thine appearing. Hasten that day, that we may see Thee as Thou art, and be changed into Thy likeness. Bring back Thine apostles and all those our brethren who have rejoiced with us in Thy returning grace unto Thy Church and have fallen asleep, and all who sleep in Thee. Restore to them their bodies raised in glory and immortality; and vouchsafe to us who are alive and remain to be sanctified wholly; and may our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto Thy coming. We pray that the time may speedily come when we, and all Thy saints in all generations who have been elected to this glory, may stand with the Lamb upon Mount Zion, a holy firstfruits redeemed from among men, without fault

before the throne of God: and unto Thee, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. - Amen.” [183].

“O Almighty God, Who hast sent down the Holy Ghost upon Thine elect, endowing them with His manifold gifts, and knitting them together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Thy Son; Grant unto us grace to use all those Thy gifts always to Thine honour and glory, and to abound in faith, hope and charity, waiting for Thy Son from heaven; that, when He shall appear, we with all Thy saints may be found of Him in peace, and by Him may be presented before Thy glorious presence with exceeding joy, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, O Father, in the unity of the same Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. - Amen.”

“Hasten, O God, the time when Thou shalt send from Thy right hand, Him whom Thou wilt send; at whose appearing the saints departed shall be raised, and we which are alive shall be caught up to meet Him, and so shall ever be with Him. Under the veil of earthly things we have now communion with Him; but with unveiled face we shall then behold Him, rejoicing in His glory, made like unto Him in His glory; and by Him we, with all Thy Church, holy and un-

spotted, shall be presented with exceeding joy before the presence of Thy glory. Hear us, O heavenly Father, for His sake, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One living and true God, be glory for ever and ever. - Amen.”

“We come unto Thee, O Lord our God, to plead before Thee for the fulfilment of Thy gracious promises. We do not presume to come trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great goodness; we ask, not for our sakes, but for Thy Holy Name’s sake, for the accomplishment of the things Thou hast spoken of old. We pray Thee now to accomplish Thine ancient promise, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. We pray Thee to give David, Thine anointed, to rule in Thy holy city for ever. We pray Thee to send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens have received and do hold until the times of the restitution of all things. We pray Thee, that we, Thy Church and people upon earth, may not see death, but be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so be [184] ever with Him; that we may not be unclothed, but clothed upon with light and immortality, receiving spiritual bodies. We pray that Jesus Christ, Who is the only King of kings and Lord of lords, may now take unto Himself His kingdom, and set up His throne upon the earth. - Amen.”

“O Most Merciful Father, Who hast so wonderfully constituted Thy Church, that the whole body doth participate in the honour and strength, or in the suffering and weakness, of every member; grant, we beseech Thee, that through the partaking of these holy mysteries, Thy whole Church may receive increase of life, renewed health, and abundant energy of Thy Holy Spirit; to the glory of Thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, O Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. - Amen.“

“We pray Thee to look down in mercy upon Thy desolate heritage, upon Thy scattered and divided people; heal the schisms of the Churches, put away all heresies from among them; bring back all who have wandered; cleanse Thy sanctuary from all defilement of superstition, will-worship and infidelity; and grant unto Thy Church unity and peace.“

“We bless Thee for the sure hope of the speedy appearing and kingdom of Thy Son, Who shall come again in the brightness of Thy Majesty and gather unto Himself His saints, both living and departed, and reign with them in the glory of the resurrection in the age to come. - Amen.“

“O Almighty God, grant that those necessary works wherein we are engaged, whether in the affairs of Thy Church or of this world, may not prevail to hinder us, but that at the appearing and advent of Thy Son we may hasten with joy to meet Him; for the merits of the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, O Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. - Amen.“

“Lord, hear our prayer, and let our cry come unto Thee.“

“O God, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us.“

Laus Deo.

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