

and scorns a mean action. As he may err in judgment, so he may blunder in his conduct; but all men know that he never will be guilty of an unworthy artifice. It is the power of a holy life to disarm hostility and to embolden the timid and wavering and to attract the homage which men are constrained to pay to a virtue that is above their own. A man, like Baxter, lives on, and his influence will extend afar, in ever widening circles, when he has long slumbered in his grave. To such is justly awarded the meed of greatness. For surely none have a better title to the epithet great, than they whose character and words, through the Divine favor, have been potent instruments for the salvation of many souls. This we say, mindful of the severe standard of Milton: "He alone is worthy of the appellation, who either does great things, or teaches how they may be done, or describes them with a suitable majesty when they have been done: but those only are great things which tend to render life more happy, which increase the innocent enjoyments and comforts of existence, or which pave the way to a state of future bliss, more permanent and more pure."<sup>1</sup>

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## ARTICLE V.

OBSERVATIONS ON MATTHEW 24: 29—31, AND THE PARALLEL PASSAGES IN MARK AND LUKE, WITH REMARKS ON THE DOUBLE SENSE OF SCRIPTURE.

By M. Stuart, lately Prof. of Sacred Literature at Andover.

THE *literal* meaning, it is said, must be given to our Saviour's words in this passage, because the metaphorical meaning usually assigned to them would be insignificant and degrading. Let us proceed to some inquiries necessary to a right understanding of the subject to which they appertain.

(1) V. 29 (of Matt. xxiv.) says, that "*the sun shall be darkened;*" the true meaning of which is, that it will be *eclipsed*; for plainly and certainly, the expression is borrowed from an eclipse. This indeed

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<sup>1</sup> Milton's Prose Works, Philad. edit. Vol. II. p. 495.

is a thing that may happen *literally*. But is eclipse all that takes place at the day of judgment? Peter tells us (2 Pet. 3: 10), that “the heavens *shall pass away* with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” when “the day of the Lord shall come.” But there is nothing of all this in the eclipse before us. Such a fact may indeed be literally true; but taking it in this literal sense, it indicates nothing peculiar to the judgment-day. Eclipses take place every year, but the judgment-day does not occur quite so often. There is then no meaning here, at least, which is ‘infinitely superior to anything which could be comprised in a description of the fall of Jerusalem.’

(2) “*The moon shall not give her light.*” The same thing as before, only it is invested with different costume. *The moon shall be eclipsed*, is the extent of the meaning. But as this, like the preceding event, is merely an ordinary occurrence, nothing can be made out of it, which is exclusively appropriate to the general judgment.

(3) “*The stars shall fall from heaven.*” A serious difficulty there is here for the *literal* interpreter. Well do we know, indeed, that the ancient world regarded meteors as falling stars, or fragments of shattered stars; and therefore (as in our text) such meteors are called ἀστέρων, *stars*. If now we assume here such a meaning of these words as was commonly given to them by the ancients, when they attributed a literal sense to them, viz. that the fixed stars will fall on the earth, being loosened from their orbits; or (to express the idea in the words of Peter), that “the heavens shall pass away;” then comes the difficulty at which I have hinted above. The *falling*, beyond all question, is *falling to the earth*. How many millions of millions of suns, now, i. e. of fixed stars, can fall and lodge together on the surface of our little earth? One of them would in its fall crush our world to atoms. Such being the case, how are the wicked to survive this crash, who will *afterwards* wail the coming of the Son of man? for it is *after* the stars have fallen that this wailing takes place, as v. 30 assures us. How many, moreover, of the *elect* will then remain *alive*, to be ‘summoned from the four winds, and from one extremity of the heavens to the other?’ Wailing or rejoicing on this earth, after all the stars of heaven have literally fallen upon it, is a matter rather too dubious for even a *double-sense* to clear up. In simple words, a *literal* sense is plainly a downright absurdity.

(4) “*The powers of the heavens shall be shaken.*” Every reader of Hebrew knows, of course, the meaning of the often repeated צְבָאוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם, i. e. *host of heaven*. For the most part, it designates the

stars; but sometimes it means the *angels*, who were supposed by the Hebrews to be guardian Genii of the stars. In Is. 34: 4 occurs the expression in Hebrew before us; which the Septuagint, as elsewhere, translates by *αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν*. This clause — “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” — follows No. 3 above, and apparently assigns the ground or reason of the falling of the stars. There is a concussion among the heavenly bodies; and so great is it, that they fall out of the firmament down to the earth. All this is borrowed from the philosophizing or *astronomizing* of the Hebrews, in respect to the visible heavens. The firmament (כַּכְמֹלַת) was in their view an *expanse* in which the stars moved, and by which their course was rendered steady and invariable, Gen. 1: 6 seq. In the passage before us, a mighty concussion is spoken of, which loosens the stars in their socketings, and they fall — of course to the earth; here was Hebrew astronomy, and such the language derived from it and built upon it. What then is the *literal* application of all this, in the case under consideration?

Thus far, then, we have in reality only the eclipse of the sun and moon, and in point of fact (making all due allowance for Hebrew modes of thinking and expression), only a shower of meteors with great concussion or agitation. Now none of these events are in themselves specially characteristic of the “great and terrible day of the Lord.” They are things which happen every year; at least, excepting perhaps the great concussion, they do happen every year in the ordinary course of nature. And even *concussion*, during a shower of meteors, is an event by no means unfrequent, but altogether common. Still, I do not apprehend, that the speaker, in the passage before us, designs to refer to such events as taking place in the *ordinary* course of things. The object of his discourse clearly indicates, that he places them under the category of things to be regarded as *extraordinary* here, i. e. out of the due and usual course of things. It is on this ground that they are regarded as indicative of impending terrible calamities.

Verse 29, then, literally describes, as we have just seen, great changes and overturns in the world of nature, i. e. its language or costume is borrowed from such supposed changes, or it has these for a literal basis. Whether all this, however, is to be figuratively or metaphorically taken, is a question to which we shall come again in the sequel. Enough for the present, that the *literal* sense has been shown to be in two cases irrelevant as peculiar or appropriate to the last judgment-day, and the third case to be, *literally* considered, an absolute impossibility.

We pass on to verse 30, still in pursuit of the *literal* sense. (5) "Then shall appear the sign (τὸ σημεῖον) of the Son of man in heaven." Which heaven? For the word has two senses in the Bible; the one *heaven proper*, as we usually employ the word; the other, the atmosphere, or the apparent welkin. It is difficult to say which is the primary or secondary sense of the original Hebrew word שָׁמַיִם; but probably, it is that of the elevated and apparently arched firmament of the sky as seen by us. It is then in this that the *sign* of the Son of man is to appear; for in the superior heaven, i. e. the one above the firmament, he would be invisible. But what is *sign*? Many interpreters say, that it means the changes in the heavens which are described in the preceding verses. But this is out of question; for this phenomenon *follows* those catastrophes—τὸ τὸ φασήσεται κ. τ. λ. Others say, that *sign* means the destruction of Jerusalem, as before described. But the sign is in *heaven*, not on earth. Others suppose it to indicate the meteoric phenomena mentioned by Josephus.<sup>1</sup> I will not venture to assume with any great positiveness, that these things corresponded altogether with the *σημεῖον* before us; but if they be credible (Josephus most solemnly vouches for them, and appeals to eye-witnesses), then this corresponds well with the nature of the *σημεῖον*, which was to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. The objection of De Wette, viz. that 'the meteoric phenomena are already disposed of in the preceding verse,' will not apply to the present case. There the sun, moon and stars are treated of; but here are phenomena of a different kind. It seems to me, that those who believe that the verses before us relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, may find in these phenomena a sufficient indication, that the Son of man was indeed coming, to punish a hypocritical and ungodly people. If several of the things mentioned by Josephus may be accounted for on natural grounds, yet the preternatural brightness and long continuance of the so-called star and comet, as also of the illumination in the temple, and the voice from the most holy place, if real facts, cannot be solved by any aid of philosophy. Considering the nature of the occasion, it would not seem incredible that some extraordinary indications should be made of the great events about to take place. But every one must decide for himself, whether he will admit or reject the account of Josephus. But, it is time to resume our exegesis.

Many of the Christian fathers maintain that *sign* here means the *cross*, e. g. such as is said to have appeared to Constantine. Some

<sup>1</sup> Jewish War, VI. 5.

recent critics declare for the star predicted by Balaam, as related in Num. 24: 17, and which appeared to the wise men of the East at the birth of Christ. But how could the generation living seventy years after this, viz. at the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, be said to see this star? Besides, this was no token of *judgment*, but of mercy. Finally, some critics represent *the sign of the Son of man* as being merely a periphrasis, designating the Son of man himself. But to such a periphrasis the Bible is elsewhere a stranger; and what is still more, the Son of man himself is said to appear *afterwards* (*ὄψα*), i. e. in the midst of the weeping of the tribes occasioned by the *σημείον*. All these explanations are quite inapposite and unsatisfactory.

I imagine that this phraseology (peculiar to Matthew alone), is best explained by a reference to Matt. 24: 3, where the disciples are said to have asked Jesus: *Τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς ὄψης παρουσίας*, i. e. What is the *sign* of thy coming? They doubtless expected a sign, i. e. a symbol, an admonitory token or pledge, of some extraordinary nature, which was to be the forerunner of his appearance. But we can only conjecture what this was to be; for the Evangelist has not told us, nor did the disciples designate any particular sign. Not improbably, therefore, it was some *Shechinah*, i. e. some supernatural brightness or splendor, such as the Old Testament everywhere ascribes to the appearance of the Godhead, or of his commissioned *presence-angel*. Or if not this alone, then it might be this in connection with clouds and thunder and lightning, as on mount Sinai. The Son of man is coming to punish, and therefore the premonitory token of his approach must be such an one as to inspire terror. We may then, as I have already said, consider it as by no means improbable, that *sign* in this case means, in its primary sense, some *preternatural brightness* like what Ezekiel saw, or something like the thick dark clouds, ominous of lightning and tempest and hail, such as are presented to our view in Ps. 18: 11—14. The imagery (for such no doubt it is), is selected from some phenomena of this nature, and is indicative throughout of punitive justice. The sequel will help to confirm this. Possibly the suggestion of Elsner may be admitted. He supposes, that the prodigies which appeared before the destruction of Jerusalem, according to the account of Josephus, may have been the *σημεῖον* which was to appear. The Jewish historian relates what he declares to be vouched for by eye-witnesses then living, and relates it as worthy of entire credit. He says, that just before the destruction of Jerusalem, “a star appeared over the city like to a sword;

also a comet continued to be seen for a whole year; and at the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth of April, at nine of the clock at night, a light so bright shone around the altar and the temple, that it seemed to be splendid day; and this light continued until midnight. . . . Before the setting of the sun, chariots appeared in the air around the whole region, and armed bands floated in the clouds and surrounded the city. On the festal day of Pentecost, the priests, having entered the inner temple by night for the performance of their services, perceived a moving of the place, and then a sudden cry of *Let us depart hence!* What was more horrible still, a certain Jesus, son of Ananus, a rustic, four years before the war, while the city was quiet and flourishing, coming to the feast, began of a sudden, in the midst of the services, to exclaim: A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds—against Jerusalem and the temple, against the bridegroom and the bride, against this whole people!” Josephus then relates, how this same individual continued, in spite of severe stripes and imprisonment, to cry out continually: Woe! woe to Jerusalem! through seven years and five months. At last, mounting the walls and crying out in like manner, he finally added: Woe to myself! when a stone from a Roman catapult struck and killed him. De Bell. Jud. VII. c. 11. ed. Francov.

(6) “*Then shall all the tribes of the land weep*” (κόψονται, shall beat themselves, i. e. strike upon their breasts or heads, through grief). A strong expression of terror and dreadful apprehension. But who are they that exhibit these tokens of dread? *The tribes* (φυλαί), viz. of Israel; for so the word nearly always means, unless other words in the context necessarily open wide the sense of it into *nation* or *people*. Of course if the *Jewish tribes* are meant here (as I cannot doubt they are), then τῆς γῆς must be limited, as it is times almost without number, in both Testaments, to the land of Palestine. Besides, the appearance first of the sign of the Son of man, and then of the *Son of man himself*, shows that the phenomena have a *locality* attached to them. If so, i. e. if they were *local* phenomena, then how could all the tribes of the earth (τῆς γῆς in the widest sense) see these phenomena, and bewail themselves because of them? The *literal* sense therefore, in the present case, would be an impossible sense, in its present connection.

(7) The premonitory sign has thrown all the inhabitants of the land into consternation; how much more so, when in the sequel they see “*the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, with a host and much glory.*” Matthew says: On the clouds, ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν; Mark

says: ἐν νεφέλαις, *in clouds*; Luke: ἐν νεφελῇ, lit. *in a cloud*. There is no difference between them, however, even of the least importance. Like Jehovah (Ps. 18: 11. Is. 19: 1), the Son of man rides on a cloud, and is surrounded by it. He comes accompanied by a δύναμις of attendants, i. e. with a *powerful host* of angels. That δύναμις is often employed in this sense, is quite plain. That such an attendance is a familiar idea in the Gospels, may be seen in v. 31, τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ, also in Matt. 13: 41. 16: 27. 25: 31.—*Much glory* means great splendor, such as we may well suppose would belong to the great Leader and his accompanying forces or angels, on such an occasion.

Having now come to the close of v. 30, let us stop for a moment in order to make a few inquiries. How, after the *literal* shaking out and falling of the stars, by which this world would be crushed to atoms and ground finer than powder—how comes it that there are tribes still left to wail? How, that there are any left to see the approaching Son of man? Questions that need no answer; and which cannot receive one which favors the *literal* scheme. All, all has and must have a modified, and, in regard to some particulars, a *tropical*, sense, or else it has no sense. We advance to v. 31.

(8) “*He shall send his angels with the loud sound of a trumpet.*” The angels are always at his bidding, “swift to do his will.” But the *trumpet*? A *literal* one? And the *time*? Is it at the general judgment? Then how can the *literal* sound of a trumpet reach the ears of the unnumbered dead, who have slept in dust for thousands of years? The bare idea, if literally taken, is of course a manifest absurdity.

(9) “*And they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the extremities of the heavens unto their extremities.* From the *four winds* means, from every direction. Four points constituted the whole *compass* of the Hebrews. But what, *literally*, are “the extremities of the heavens?” Do the elect live there, so as to be summoned from those places? or have they died, and then been buried there? The *extremities of the heavens*, if literally taken, would be we hardly know where. The *fixed stars* are a part of the Hebrew heavens; and can our text mean from their extremities? Surely not. The phrase merely means, from one extremity of the earth to the opposite one, wherever the elect may be found; at least it means so, in case a *universal* gathering is meant here. I suppose Mark has explained it by saying: “From the extremity of the land, to the extremity of heaven.” But is this *gathering together* to be interpreted as *literal*? Or does it mean, the affording to them an asylum or

place of refuge from the evils which would overtake the wicked, like the promise that the Messiah should “gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom?” Is. 40: 11. If a literal gathering is intended, one which is for the general judgment, then must a *resurrection* first take place. But not a word of this in our text or context. Besides, the gathering for the general judgment, according to Matt. 25: 31, will be of *all nations*, i. e. of all both good and bad. So in John 5: 28, 29. Rev. 20: 12, which make this certain. Both are to be judged. Yet not a word about the wicked in the present case, nor of any separation of the righteous from the wicked. For what purpose then are the righteous, i. e. the *elect*, assembled? The Evangelist expressly designates none, but leaves the purpose to be deduced from the context. But where, in the context, is there intimation made of a general judgment, or even of the end of the natural world? I can find none. And would the account of such a matter be thus left, with less than half of it told, if it is really begun in vs. 29—31, and these have respect to the final judgment?

The result then of an examination of the *literal* sense here, with respect to a general judgment, presents us with not only the greatest improbabilities, but with downright and numerous *impossibilities*. If the language applies at all to a general judgment, it must be in the way of *trope* or *metaphor*. It is plainly possible, in this way, to give the passage such an interpretation as to make it, so far as the figurative expressions merely are concerned, consistent with the preparatory events of the general judgment, or the preparatory measures for entering upon it. But is there anything in all this description, which may not apply to *civil, political and natural changes and commotions*? This is the next great and very important question. I apprehend it may be satisfactorily answered; and I now proceed to undertake the task.

It has been alleged, that the language in Matthew is such, that it can never be reconciled with the idea, that the destruction of Jerusalem is principally or solely the object to which it refers.

But what, now, if we repeatedly find the same language employed elsewhere in the Bible, in reference to great changes and catastrophes of a civil and social nature? What, if it is applied merely to the devastations of locusts, as well as to the destruction of cities and nations? If such be the case, then the whole assumption that the language in the prophecy before us is infinitely too bold and strong to indicate any terrestrial occurrences, is nothing more than assumption. *Facts*, in the usage of the sacred writers, disprove this assumption and the assertion implied in it.



Let us look at them. Is. xiii. and xiv. obviously and confessedly have respect to the invasion and destruction of Babylon. In describing this "day of the Lord" (a phrase always indicating punishment, condemnation, and the like), the prophet says: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." Is. 13: 9, 10. Here v. 10 contains the very same imagery which is employed in *Matt.* 24: 29. The mode of expression in *Isaiah*, respecting the stars and constellations, is somewhat different from that in *Matthew*, but the fundamental idea is the same, viz. the extinction of light. In regard to the sun and moon, the passages in both are nearly identical. All this, be it remembered, as introductory merely to the capture and destruction of Babylon; an event of less significance to a Hebrew, than the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Is. xxiv. the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem are predicted. In vs. 19, 20, 23, we find the following declarations: "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, it shall be removed like a cottage. . . . Then the sun and moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion," etc. Here are events which, if literally understood, are no less astonishing than those described in *Matt.* 24: 29. 'The earth is *dissolved*—it is *removed* like a cottage. The sun and moon are ashamed;' implying that they will bide their faces, or suffer eclipse, as in *Matthew*. All this too, with reference to the ancient desolation of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon.

In *Ezek.* xxxii. is a description of the fall of Egypt. Vs. 7, 8, speak as follows: "When I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness on thy land." This, be it noted, has respect only to the invasion of Egypt by *Nebuchadnezzar*.

In *Joel* 2: 30, 31, it is said: "I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." In *Acts* 2: 16—20, Peter is represented as quoting this passage with some of its preceding context,

and applying the whole to the occurrences then taking place, and about to take place, in Palestine, viz. the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, and the great changes of things in Palestine, which were soon to follow. In other words, we have again, in the verse just quoted, another declaration of the judgments of God on Jerusalem. The language did not seem inapposite to the apostle, as having respect to terrestrial occurrences; why then should we decline to apply it in the same way?

In Joel iii. judgments are announced against the heathen, who at some future day would come up against Jerusalem. Their excision is described as being accompanied by some wonderful phenomena. V. 14 says: "The sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withhold their shining." The specific destruction here aimed at is not pointed out in a definite way; but that the whole is a *terrestrial* matter, is quite plain from the context.

Again, in Joel ii. is a vivid description of wasting and desolation by locusts. When these come to devour, the prophet says (v. 10), that "the earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and moon shall be dark; and the stars shall withdraw their shining." Here then, merely in regard to the ravages of locusts, are the very same images presented in *Matt. 24: 29*. If the fall of Jerusalem is an event so infinitely below the meaning of *Matt. 24: 29*, what shall be said of merely a famine and ravages occasioned by locusts? Are they more dignified, more lamentably significant? This will hardly be said. Consequently, even great natural evils, and merely such, may have such language applied to them, and it is applied to them, by the prophets. If so, then surely it may be applied to the final destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

Other passages of like tenor might be cited. Speaking of the sore chastisement of Israel, Amos says: "I [the Lord God] will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in a clear day." The like imagery is found in many other places. All this goes now to illustrate and establish the principle, that the Hebrews regarded changes in the celestial physical world, as accompanying and indicative of great changes in the natural or political one. Eclipses inspired them with dread and horror; meteors were still more the objects of fear, as coming nearer to them. Hence these things became a common fund of imagery for vivid, and specially for poetic, description of what was dreadful. Different writers drew from the same fund, and applied what they drew to different catastrophes and overturns. Now Babylon, then Egypt, then the rebel-

nous Jews, and anon the devastations of the locusts, and the like, are all objects to which the same or the like language is applied. When poetically or figuratively employed, the amount of such descriptions is substantially this, viz. that what such changes in the heavenly bodies would be to the luminaries of the sky, the impending changes and catastrophes political and natural will be to the objects respectively concerned with those changes. Or, to express the idea in a different way; changes as great and fatal to this city or that, to this nation or that, are taking place, or are about to take place, as would be brought about among the heavenly luminaries by the concussions and eclipses which are brought to view.

It is easy now to see, how such a generic source of imagery is applicable to a great variety of catastrophes. But these must all have respect to *important* objects. In other words, the changes must be of great magnitude and of serious consequence. Otherwise the application of such language would savor of the swelling or bombastic in style. And so we always find the language in question applied. The destruction of capital cities, the wasting of nations, or the terrible famine and pestilence which follow in the train of ravages by a boundless host of locusts, are such events as are connected with the use of the descriptive language in question.

Thus far then it is clear as the light, that such imagery as we have in Matt. 24: 29, may be and is actually applied to events and occurrences like that of the destruction of Jerusalem. In most cases where it is employed, the subject-matter is even less grave and important than the final desolation of the holy city. Thus far then, there seems not to be any ground for the conclusion, that the imagery is infinitely above the supposed subject-matter of it, viz. the destruction of Jerusalem. Indeed, there can be no room for doubt, that all events, that the imagery in Matt. 24: 29, is employed in the same way as in the Hebrew prophets, and for the same purpose. The whole thing lies before us. It is little more, as it is presented by Matthew, than a transcript of the like Old Testament descriptions.

Let us now advance to the next verse, v. 30. Here a new turn is given to the description, and a new personage introduced, of whom the Old Testament speaks seldom, and indeed contains little or nothing, in regard to the particulars of his appearance to punish his enemies. Often does it speak of him, indeed, as a rewarder, a vindicator of his people, and an avenger in respect to the enemies of the church. But the *modus* of being or doing all this, is not a subject of Old Testament instruction or declaration. Of course, a good part of

v. 30 stands on its own particular basis, without special analogies in the ancient Scriptures. Still, we have already seen, that a literal exegesis of this would involve some great absurdities and impossibilities. Some *matter of fact*, some *substance*, lies of course at the bottom of the expressions; for there can be no significant imagery, where there is nothing substantial or real to which it applies. But *costums* does not constitute *person*. There may be a variety of the first, where the last remains the same.

There is not, indeed, in v. 30, much which might not be supposed literally to take place, were it not that the preceding context, if in like manner literally construed, leaves no room, for example, for the existence at that time of any tribes in the land who shall mourn. The whole earth has already been crushed to atoms. The *sign* of the coming of the Son of man might be a visible one (for aught we know it was so); but it could not be seen by all the world in its *locality*; and this locality is a necessary incident of it, if it is visible to the eye. It must be limited to comparatively narrow bounds. The *sign* (whatever it may be) is a reality; the weeping is a reality; but the local visibility in the one case, and therefore the extent of the weeping in the other, do neither of them comport with the occurrences of the general judgment.

Next, the Son of man is seen, *coming in the clouds of heaven*. This is specially relied on as altogether inapplicable to the destruction of Jerusalem. We are told that 'no such event took place; and that therefore the Saviour could not have designed to apply it to anything but his final coming.' Yet the cogency of this meaning must depend entirely on the fact, whether Christ meant to be *literally* or *figuratively* understood.

The Bible elsewhere speaks in the like way, without leaving us any room to suppose that the *coming* in this manner was a visible one. The language of the Bible respecting the *coming* of God or of Christ, is sufficiently frequent and intelligible to enable us rightly to understand it. In Scripture language, God *comes*, whenever he proceeds to do or execute any purpose of his will in respect to men. When Babel was built, "the Lord *came down* to see the city and the tower," Gen. 11: 5. Again, he said: "Let us *go down* and confound their language," v. 7. When Sodom and Gomorrah had provoked his righteous anger, he said: "I will *go down* now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it," Gen. 18: 21. When Israel was oppressed by the Egyptians, God said to Moses: "I am *come down* to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,"

Ex. 3: 8. The Lord said to Moses, respecting the Egyptians: "About midnight *will I go out* into the midst of Egypt, and all the first born shall die," Ex. 11: 5. The Lord *came down* upon mount Sinai, Ex. 19: 18, 20. Again, in writing the Law a second time "he *came down*" on the same mountain, Ex. 24: 5. When Miriam and Aaron murmured against Moses, "the Lord *came down* in the pillar of a cloud," Num. 12: 5. In Num. 22: 9 it is said: "And God *came* to Balaam and said." So "the Lord *came* from Sinai," Deut. 33: 2. Again: "Lord, when thou *wentest out* from Seir, when thou *didst march out* of the field of Edom," Judg. 5: 4. So Hab. 8: 3, "God *came* from Teman." Ps. 68: 7, "O God! when thou *wentest forth* before thy people, when thou *didst march* through the wilderness." Is. 64: 1, 3, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest *come down!* . . . Thou *didst come down.*"

These are only a few of the abounding specimens of the like mode of expression, in the Old Testament. But they are enough. In a few cases, and only a few, there is some visibility of the *σημεία* or *tokens* of God's coming; e. g. cases like the development on mount Sinai, where all Israel saw the clouds and the lightning, and heard the thunder. But inasmuch as God is a *spirit*, and by his very nature is himself invisible to mortal eyes, it is contrary to all sound principles of exegesis to interpret the examples or declarations of his coming in general, as having respect to *όρατά*, i. e. to *things* visible to the natural eye, unless the context obliges us to believe, that the *σημεία* of his presence were visible. What said he to Moses, when the latter requested that he would show him his glory? He said: "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live," Ex. 33: 20. Paul calls him "the King *invisible*," 1 Tim. 1: 17. He says of him: "Whom no man hath seen, or can see and live," 1 Tim. 6: 16. John says: "No man hath seen God," 1 John 4: 12, 20. Of course, all those passages which speak of him as *seen*, are not to be *literally* interpreted; but they refer either to some symbol by which God manifested himself, or to a mental apperception of his presence. Even so when God is said to *come*. When men accomplish anything by their own efforts, they must first approach the object of action, and be present so that they may act; for they cannot act where they are not. The like now is said, in an anthropopathic way, of God himself. He is spoken of *more humano*. But we are never to suppose an actual and *visible* coming, except by symbols. God is always and everywhere present, and cannot *come* or *go*, in the literal sense. Of course, we are not at liberty to give such passages a *literal* interpretation.

Enough for the Old Testament usage; let us now come to the New. Further inquiries respecting the *coming* in general of the divine Being, are unnecessary. The only question now is, whether there be any other than a *visible coming* of Christ spoken of in the New Testament. If there be plain and indubitable cases of such a nature (and it seems plain that there are), then it does by no means become a matter of necessity, that the *coming* of Christ in Matt. 24: 30 should be interpreted in its literal sense, and thus be referred to the general judgment.

Christ said to his disciples: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will *come again*, and receive you to myself," John 14: 3. Did he come then in *propria persona* and visibly, when each of his disciples died, and take them to himself in this way? Again: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will *come to you*," v. 18. In v. 23 is a still stronger expression: "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will *come to him*, and make our *abode with him*." And was this a literal, bodily, visible coming? Again: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will *come in to him*, and will sup with him," Rev. 3: 20. And is this literal? In John 21: 22 is a very significant passage. "And Jesus said: If I will that he tarry until I *come*, what is that to thee?" John's fellow disciples spread abroad a report from this, that the Saviour had said to him, that he should not die. But John himself remarks, that "Jesus did not say, 'He shall not die,' but, 'If I will that he tarry till I *come*, what is that to thee?'" v. 23. In other words, John understood Jesus not as promising exemption from death, but only that he should live until his *coming*. And when, now, was that to be? If his coming meant the general judgment, then John would not have to die at all; for saints then alive were not to die, but to be immediately "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," doubtless with an appropriate metamorphosis. The *coming* in question, then, *after* which John was to die and not before, must have been some coming during that generation. And what else could it be referred to, except to his coming to punish the unbelieving Jews?

In Matt. 16: 28 is an instructive passage: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Mark says, in the parallel passage (9: 1): "Till they see the kingdom of God come with power;" and Luke says: "Till they see the kingdom of God," 9: 27. The *coming of the Son of man* in Matthew is not therefore a *visible coming*, but a coming through the power and efficacy of gospel-truth.

At the close of the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25: 13), Christ says to his disciples: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man *cometh*." If now this exhortation was addressed to the disciples as having respect to practical duty, and was uttered for the reason assigned, then it follows, that the *coming* of Christ here must be some other coming than the final one to general judgment. If not, then Christ, as it would seem, was himself mistaken, and also led his disciples into error. How could he speak of their living on the watch and in constant expectation of his coming, when that coming was to take place some thousands of years at least, and perhaps thousands of ages, after they were all dead? There is no other alternative here. Either the Saviour was mistaken, and led his disciples into error, or else the *coming* in question was different from the final one. A pious fraud, for the sake of making his disciples watchful, is inadmissible, and utterly incompatible with the character of him "who knew no guile." I understand this passage, therefore, as I do the declaration of Christ to his apostles (John 14: 3), that "he is going away to prepare a place for them, but will *come again*, and receive them unto himself." He *comes* to each of his disciples, when he removes them to another world and to another service in his heavenly presence.

In the very chapter before us, in the first portion of it, which nearly all interpreters refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, it is said: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and *then shall the end come*," v. 14. Yet the Apocalypse teaches us, that after the spread of the Gospel among all nations, a thousand years at least are to follow, before the general judgment comes. The literal *end of the world*, then, that is of the earth in general, is not the subject of mention or allusion here; for the end here mentioned is one which is speedily to follow the general diffusion of the Gospel among the gentiles. This took place before the destruction of the Jewish capital and commonwealth. Paul says, that the messengers of gospel-truth had caused "their sound to go forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," Rom. 10: 18. Again he says of the Gospel, that it is come to the Colossians, and "into all the world," Col. 1: 5, 6; and again, that it was "preached to every creature under heaven," v. 23. There is no difficulty, therefore, in the expression in Matt. 24: 14, viz. "preached in all the world." This was done, in the sense intended by the sacred writers, before the *end* here spoken of came; and then, soon afterwards, this end did come. If it were different

from the *end* which the disciples had in view, in their question (v. 3) about "the end of the world," it matters not. (It has not yet been duly shown that it is different.) They might, while as yet uninstructed on this point, have erroneous views about the matter; but we cannot ascribe such mistakes to the Saviour.

There are then *comings* of Christ spoken of in the New Testament, at the death of each believer; a coming in order to commune with each (*sup with him*, Rev. 3: 20); a coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. 24: 27. This last text, viz. "So shall the *coming* of the Son of man be," belongs to that part of the chapter which has respect to the destruction of Jerusalem; for it is conceded that the transition to a description of the judgment-day, is made at v. 29. Here then, at all events, is a coming which is not visible and literal. And such is the case with every one of the passages already quoted. A personal visible coming cannot be supposed in any one of these cases; certainly not if we give heed to the words of Peter in Acts 8: 21. He says: "Jesus Christ . . . *whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things*," i. e. until "the new heavens and the new earth are created." Other passages might easily be adduced. But enough for our present purpose are already before us.

Plainly then there are *comings* of Christ, which are not *visible* to the fleshly eye. This is quite certain. God is often spoken of, also, as coming, where there is no visible appearance, no literal coming. Therefore when Manoah said to his wife: "We shall surely die because we have *seen* God" (Judg. 13: 22); when Isaiah said: "Mine eyes have *seen* the King, the Lord of hosts" (Is. 6: 5); when it is said that Moses and the seventy elders of Israel "*saw* the God of Israel" (Ex. 24: 9, 10); we cannot suppose that the *invisible* God himself was actually seen with the bodily eye, or in a literal sense. Some *symbol* of God might, perhaps, have been so seen, in these cases; but a strong mental apperception of his immediate presence, would be sufficient to warrant the expression of *seeing* him, according to Hebrew usage. Who does not know that *internal seeing* is everywhere spoken of in the Scriptures?

It is manifest, then, that we are under no necessity of regarding the *coming* of Christ as visible to the bodily eye; in other words, we are not at all warranted in the assertion, that these descriptions *must be* literally understood. His coming, and the seeing or perception of him as coming, by witnessing the effects which followed the chastisements inflicted by him, may be asserted as in Matt. 24: 30, without



any design to make the impression that it is literally and optically visible.

If this is so, then his *coming in the clouds visibly* cannot be proved from the passage before us. The question is, whether this costume, designed to convey an impression of his regal majesty and exaltation, is to be literally or figuratively understood. In the case of the theophany at Sinai, we are told (Ex. 19: 16), that "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount." Here then there was, no doubt, a *visibility* of these objects, which was perceived by the natural eyes of the Israelitish camp. God had before said to Moses (v. 9): "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud." So also, when Moses went a second time into the mount, "the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there," Ex. 34: 5. In this last case, it seems quite probable, that there was a visible cloud in the sight of the camp, and for the sake of the people. Not improbably it was the same in a similar case (Num. 11: 25), where it is said: "The Lord came down in a cloud." This was in order to speak to Moses and the seventy elders, in the presence of the people, and thus make a deep impression on them. In the case of murmuring by Aaron and Miriam against Moses, a like descent "in the pillar of a cloud" was made, in order to rebuke them, Num. 12: 5. But there are other cases, where no *visible* cloud or coming was seen, and yet the like language is employed. Psalm 18: 9—13 presents us with a signal instance of this nature. The introduction to this Psalm tells us, that it was composed in commemoration of the deliverance of David "from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." Here Jehovah is said to "bow the heavens and come down; darkness is under his feet." Mounted on a chariot supported by cherubim, with "dark waters and thick clouds of the skies around him," he moved swiftly on, "thundering in the heavens, and shooting forth his lightnings." And, yet, not anything of all this was *visible* or *palpable*, when David experienced deliverance. This is not even pretended. The literal meaning is out of all question. The whole is costume. There is indeed a *person* beneath, so to speak. The *fact*, which was palpable and certain, was the *deliverance* itself—the deliverance at times of great peril and extreme danger, which was brought about by special divine interposition and aid. No ordinary language in describing this, would satisfy the feelings of David. Jehovah, his deliverer, is therefore portrayed in all the colors of awful majesty and might; and in an attitude adapted to inspire all minds with awe and terror. And if God himself could be thus described, on an occasion

merely of David's victories through his aid, then why may not the Son of man, about to destroy Jerusalem, be portrayed in like manner? And all this, without any room for the conclusion, that the description must of necessity be literally understood?

So the Psalmist (97: 2): "Clouds and darkness are round about him," i. e. Jehovah. Not literally, I trust; for "God is light." Ezekiel, in trance or prophetic vision, saw "a whirlwind from the north, and a *great cloud*, and fire enfolding itself," Ezek. 1: 4. Again, when he saw "the glory of the Lord . . . the temple was filled with a *cloud*," 10: 4. All this was seen in a state of ecstasy, and therefore with the mental eye, and not with a bodily one. But in Is. 19: 1 is an example of such a description, that is altogether to our present purpose: "Behold the Lord *rideth on a swift cloud*, and shall come to Egypt." And is this to be literally interpreted? I trust not, by any considerate expositor. The Psalmist (104: 8) has given us the generic source of such language: "Who maketh the *clouds* his chariot." Costume like this fills the mind with reverential awe. Clouds, thunder, lightning and hail are the uniform accompaniments of the Divine majesty in the Scriptures, whenever he comes to punish. And since the Saviour has told us, that "the Son of man will come in the glory of his Father, with his angels" (Matt. 16: 27), why should it be strange that his coming is represented in the same manner as that of God in the Old Testament?

Any one, who has not carefully attended to this subject, will be surprised to find how often the imagery of a *cloud* (dark or bright as the case may be), is employed in the Scriptures. We will limit ourselves, for the present, merely to the New Testament. At the transfiguration of Christ, a bright cloud overshadowed him and his disciples; and from this the Father addressed him, Matt. 17: 5. Jesus said to the adjuring high-priest: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of power, and *coming in the clouds of heaven*," Matt. 26: 64. Ye shall see — was then the high priest to live until the day of judgment, that he might see such a coming? If it is said that he might see this after he was raised from the dead, at the final day, and that all others in like manner might then see it, the reply at hand is, that the descent of Christ is always represented as *preceding* the resurrection of the dead, and not as following it. The objector to the view which I have suggested, therefore, is chargeable with a *ὑστερον πρότερον* in this case. The obvious meaning of Matt. 26: 64 is, that the high priest and his coadjutors should personally witness the coming of Christ here spoken of. If so, what

else can it be, than his coming with great power, in order to destroy Jerusalem and the Jewish commonwealth? When Christ ascended to heaven from mount Olivet, "a cloud received him out of the sight" of the disciples, Acts 1: 9. Those who are alive at the day of judgment, "will be caught up in the clouds . . . to meet the Lord in the air." In Apoc. 1: 7, Christ, it is said, "will come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, even they who pierced him, and all the tribes of the land shall wail on account of him,"—the very same description that is contained in our text, and referring to an event then near at hand, Rev. 1: 3, 1. 22: 10, 20.

In some of these cases there was doubtless a visible cloud; in others, not. But where it is not so, then does the costume or imagery of clouds adorn the picture, or make it awfully graphic, as the case may require. Beneath this costume, however, there is a *reality*; and what that is, must be judged of by the nature of the case.

Thus far, then, there is nothing to show that a literal sense *must* be put on Matt. 24: 30. There is clear and abundant evidence, moreover, that the language in question is often employed in a figurative and secondary sense. Consequently it may be so employed in Matt. 24: 30, in analogy with other like cases.

Nor does the adjunct *μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς* (*with a host and great splendor*), at all exempt the passage from a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. "God came from Sinai with ten thousands of his holy ones," Deut. 33: 2. "When the Almighty scattered kings" before David, . . . "the chariots of God were twenty thousands, even thousands of angels," Ps. 68: 14, 17. Isaiah says (66: 15), that "the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind," i. e. chariots filled by angels. When the king of Syria was plotting against the life of Elisha, and some of his troops surrounded the city where the prophet was, he told his trembling and affrighted servant "not to fear, for they that were with them were more than they who were against them. . . . And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses of fire and chariots of fire," 2 Kings 6: 16, 17. In a chariot like these, Elijah ascended to heaven, 2 Kings 2: 11. "The angels of the Lord encamp around them who fear him," Ps. 34: 7. Zechariah saw angels in chariots, 6: 1—7. Angels are everywhere attendant on Christ. They announced his birth; they sang a welcome to it over the plains of Bethlehem. When Peter assailed the servant of the high priest who was about to arrest his Master, Christ rebuked him and said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now

pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. 26: 53. The angels then were in waiting, and were at his bidding. "Angels came and ministered to him," after a forty-days' fast in the wilderness, Mark 1: 13. "Angels strengthened him," when he agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22: 43. Angels opened the sepulchre, at his resurrection, Matt. 28: 2. Luke 24: 23. Well might he say to Nathaniel, at the opening of his ministry: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," John 1: 51.

Such then was the *δύναμις* or *powerful force* which ever surrounded and accompanied the Saviour, at his bidding. Of course we might well expect that they would be with him, when he came to the terrible work of destroying his once favorite city and nation. Our English translation has obscured and hidden from the common reader the meaning of the word *δύναμις* in Matt. 24: 30. *Power* does not give the requisite sense, but *powerful host*, or (as we say) *powerful force*. In like manner do the angels accompany him at his final coming, Matt. 16: 27. 1 Thess. 4: 16. 2 Thess. 1: 7. But to deduce from all these declarations the *visibility* of angels; to interpret literally in this way, would be passing strange in most of the cases. In some, as in the case of Gabriel (Luke i.), and of the angels at the sepulchre, a visible form was doubtless assumed, for special purposes. But other cases are like that in 2 Kings 6: 17. "The horses and chariots were present, and were round about Elisha," yet his servant could not perceive them. A *reality* and a *visibility* are, or may be, two very different things. *Spirits* are realities, but not visibilities.

There is and can be no doubt, that Christ did come, in the Bible-sense of *coming*, to destroy Jerusalem; none, that the angels would on such an occasion be in attendance on him. What then remains, to vindicate v. 30 from the literal interpretation, but the clause *δόξα πολλή*, *much splendor*? Only a word, however, need be said of this. Whenever or wherever God, or his spiritual messengers are represented as making a special development, splendor, fire, light, bright radiance, in other words the Heb. כְּבוֹד, or the New Testament *δόξα*, always attends them. On this occasion, it being a mission to inflict desolating judgments, all the awful splendor of Sinai, or such as is depicted in Ps. 18: 8—13, or in Ezekiel i. and x., might well be expected. Splendor is a necessary accompaniment and complement of the picture. But the literal visibility of all this to the natural eye, i. e. the literal sense of the passage which requires that the objects

mentioned should thus be seen, is quite another question. I trust enough has been said to show that, if we may reason from analogical cases, no such interpretation is at all necessary.

But v. 31 still remains. This says: "He shall send his angels *with the sound of a great trumpet.*" Here, of course, is a recognition of the *δυναμὴς* or *powerful host* who accompany him, in order to execute his will. What then is *the sound of the great trumpet*? Or (to begin with the scenes of the last day), what is "the trump of God" in 1 Thess. 4: 16; and "the last trump" in 1 Cor. 15: 52? Is it a literal trumpet, one literally heard by sleeping dust and ashes of countless millions? That would be verily a *forcible* exegesis, which would give *literal* ears and hearing to lifeless dust. But the last trumpet, in these two cases, is just as literal as the one now before us; and no more. In neither case can the language exhibit anything more than an illustration or simile, borrowed from the ancient use of trumpets. This was various. "The voice of a trumpet exceedingly loud" gave notice of the approach of Jehovah to mount Sinai, Ex. 19: 16. A still louder sound prepared for his communications there to Moses, v. 19. So in the Christophanies of the Apocalypse, Rev. 1: 10. 4: 1. Moses appointed trumpets for the signal to summon the assembly of the people; and to warn them when to begin the march of their camps. By the different sounds of these, all their movements were directed. Trumpets were blown to summon armies together, to direct their evolutions, and to proclaim the onset of battle. Nor was this all. The days of gladness and thanksgiving were ushered in with trumpets; as also the monthly feasts, and the fasts, Num. 10: 1—10. Joel 2: 1. The *sound of the trumpet* in the verse before us, resembles the latter class of these cases. It is not sounded on an occasion of impending contest, nor merely of alarm to the elect. It was a summons to *gather them together*, so to speak, that they might put themselves under the protection of the Son of man, while his judgments were abroad in the land. If, in the verse before us, it were a summons for the final judgment, why should not the *wicked* be gathered together, as well as the righteous? In Matt. 25: 31 seq., which clearly represents the general judgment, it is said, that "*all nations shall be gathered together*" before the Son of man. In John 5: 25—29 it is said: "*All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" Here then the trumpet-voice which summons to judgment, gathers *all* together, both the righteous and the wicked. Such also

is the representation in Dan. 12: 2. In Rev. 20: 12, John says, that in prophetic vision "he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." For these, two books were opened, i. e. the one for the wicked, the other for the righteous. So in 2 Thess. 1: 7—10, the wicked and the righteous are both summoned, and both receive their appropriate final sentence. *But not a word in our text about both parties being summoned together.* Not a word about the *final* condemnation of the wicked; nor is anything but temporal evil that is to come upon them, implied in the preceding context. What should make this case so unlike all the others which I have just cited?

There is, however, a still more analogous case in Ps. 50: 5. The Psalmist is denouncing Divine judgments on the wicked, who are threatened in the sequel with being "torn in pieces," v. 22. But with the righteous the case is different. They are to be saved from the threatened evils. The Psalmist hears the Divine majesty giving commandment (doubtless to the angels), and saying: "*Gather my saints together* unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." How *gather* them? Is the meaning *literal*, or *figurative*? Doubtless the latter; for an actual bodily assembling is surely not contemplated by the Psalmist. God is represented here as *coming*: "Our God shall come," v. 3. Then he commands his angels to "gather his saints together." And yet there are no visible angels here, and no physical assembling. Just so in *Matt. 24: 31*. The *gathering* is emblematical of promised *protection*. When the Saviour says, in the preceding context (*Matt. 23: 37*): "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have *gathered thy children together*, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," does he expect to be understood as meaning to designate a literal assembling of them? To what purpose could this be? Indeed, did any one who ever read this, attach such an idea to these words? I think not, because it would make no assignable pertinent meaning. If so, then we can have no difficulty as to the idea to be attached to the phrase *gathering together the elect*, in our text. As indicated by our Saviour's words, the brood of a hen are accustomed to gather under her wings for *protection*; little children gather around their parents instinctively in times of danger, for protection. The inhabitants of a country, when it was invaded, gathered together in their fortress for protection and safety. The elect of the Redeemer may therefore well be represented, at a time of desolation which was then approaching, as about to be "gathered in his arms and carried in his bosom." Just this same thing is predicted of the Redeemer, in *Is.*

40: 11: "He shall *gather* the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Is this now a *literal* gathering? If so, then is it a literal carrying in his bosom? But it is neither. It is figurative language borrowed from a gathering which is literal, and one for the purpose of protection. I do not see any room for doubt or hesitation here. As little can I see any, in the case now before us.

Finally, the elect are to be gathered "from (*in, out of*) the four winds." Are there, in point of fact, no more than four? And if *literality* be insisted on, then we may ask, whether the elect live *in* those winds, and so are to be gathered *out of* them? But passing this as of little moment, we must of course accede to the Hebrew use of this phraseology; and this was such as that the meaning exactly corresponds with our expression: *From every quarter*. The same idea of *four*, is comprised in the English expression *quarter* (= *quartum*). But it has now lost its arithmetical meaning, and has come to designate something equivalent to the phrase: *From every direction*. In short, *four winds* are named, and four only, because four cardinal points include all the inferior ones.

A somewhat different idea is designated by the expression: "From the extremities of the heavens unto the extremities of them." *Literally*, what is the *extremity* of the heaven? That would be a difficult question indeed. Less difficult is it, however, to find out what the Hebrews meant by this phraseology. With them the earth was viewed as an extended plain, having finite, or rather definite bounds. The *extremity* was where the visible heaven or welkin comes down upon the earth, and makes boundaries for it. This great arch or visible heaven they regarded, as supported by pillars around and under its border. Thus Job: "The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof," Job 26: 11. Thus the extremities of the heaven and of the earth were commensurate and conjoined. Hence we read of "the pillars of the *earth* that tremble" before God, Job 9: 6. Accordingly in Mark (13: 27), we have the phrase in question expressed thus: "From the extremity of the land unto the extremity of heaven." Except in *diction* merely, there is no difference between Matthew and Mark.

After all these explanations and modifications, we may now ask: What can be the meaning of literally gathering the *elect* from the very extremities of the earth and the heavens? Do they — will they live at the Arctic and Antarctic poles? These are extremities indeed; but not such ones as will be inhabited, methinks, when the trumpet shall sound for the assembling of the elect.

The simple idea of the two latter clauses is: 'From every quarter, and to the utmost extent where these elect are to be found.' De Wette puts the question here, as well he might: "For what purpose are the elect assembled?" His only answer is, that the disclosure breaks off here, and is resumed in 25: 31 seq. He hints indeed at a *first* resurrection of believers only, as being implied here; and he compares 1 Thess. 4: 17. 2 Thess. 2: 1, where he finds, as he believes, this sentiment. But all this gives us no satisfactory reason for abruptly breaking off the narrative, and then inserting immediately afterwards three parables which are monitory and hortatory, and finally, after a digression so long and partly irrelevant, returning at last to the work of completing the description, at the end of chap. xxv. Does not all this seem passing strange, in such a grave discourse? The theme is left *in medio cursu*; left just half finished, in case the general judgment be the subject of it; and left without a word to tell us what will be the future lot of the wicked. In all other cases, the representations of the general judgment bring to view the righteous and the wicked as *both gathered together* before the tribunal of Christ. Yet not a word of all this is here. How could the author quit his theme so abruptly, quit it *re infectâ*, and at the very time when most of all it becomes peculiarly interesting and awful?

It seems difficult of supposition, that any attentive and well-informed reader should not be impressed with such palpable defects and lack of congruity and symmetry as the verses before us exhibit, in case the general judgment be the subject of them. It would be like breaking off the Iliad before the slaying of Hector, and the subjugation of Troy. In what other part of the New Testament can be found such an abruptness and transition to another subject before the main object of any passage is developed, as takes place in the passage now under consideration, in case it relates to the general judgment?

Let us take the whole matter now, and place it in another light. If the destruction of the Jewish metropolis and commonwealth is admitted as the theme of the passage under discussion, then all is natural. The discourse itself of Jesus commences with his disciples calling his attention to the beauty of the temple and city. He tells them that all this is speedily to be marred and destroyed. They anxiously inquire when this will take place; what will be the sign of his coming, viz. in order to carry his threatening into execution; and lastly when the end of the *αἰών* would take place, 24: 1—3. This last word is indeed a somewhat difficult one. *Αἰών* originally means *age, perpetuity* or *eternity*; and these are its leading senses. So with the



Hebrew עֲלָיִם. But the Hebrew word (and so the Chaldee) came, in process of time, to mean *world* among the Rabbins. The manner of this *derived* signification may be explained, as it seems to me, by a reference to such passages as Ecc. 1: 4, "The earth (i. e. the world) abideth *forever*." To call the world *perpetuity*, then, was an easy matter; and עֲלָיִם may be viewed simply as an *attributive* designation — *the perpetual*. The same may be said of αἰών. Sometimes the secondary sense becomes enlarged, and means *the world with its cares, temptations, sins and sorrows*. In this sense it is called an *evil world*, Gal. 1: 4, and Satan is called the *god of this world*, because it is evil, 2 Cor. 4: 4. Looked at in this direction, αἰών seems at times to be equivalent also to the *world of men*; as when we say: 'The *whole world* knows or does so or so.' We can hardly give it any other sense in Eph. 2: 2, than *wicked generation* of living and acting men. Did the disciples so use it? This seems doubtful. But the Apostle (1 Cor. 10: 11) speaks of ensamples under the Old Testament dispensation "for our admonition, on whom τὰ τῆς τῶν αἰώνων have come," i. e. plainly the end of the *Jewish world* or *dispensation*. He speaks as though this were a familiar mode of phraseology. If so, then why, after all the instruction which Christ had given his disciples about his *new kingdom* and *new dispensation* — why may we not reasonably suppose that the disciples meant to ask a question pertaining to that αἰών, which was about to end? Plainly this would be altogether consonant with the drift of the preceding questions. There is nothing in the preceding part of Matthew's gospel, which leads us to the supposition, that Christ had taught the apostles, or that they believed, the final end of the world was to come at the commencement of the kingdom of heaven. He taught them, indeed, that there would, at some time, be an end of the world, and a general judgment, Matt. 13: 36—43. In Matt. 16: 27, "the Son of man coming in the glory of his Father, with his angels," and distributing rewards according to works, probably refers also to his final coming. But there v. 28 asserts another and a different thing, viz. that there "were some standing there, who should not taste of death till they should see the Son of man *coming in his kingdom*." The kingdom of Christ was then taking its rise, commencing and growing slowly during his incarnation. After this it was to come *with power*. Hence the duty of praying: Thy kingdom come! This is one of the ways, the first one, in which the Son of man was to come. A second way is the coming to take each disciple to himself, when he dies, John 14: 3. Another is the coming to destroy Jerusalem. Another is to be at

the Millennium. Then there is a *final* coming in the glory of his Father, to raise the dead and judge the world. I regard v. 28 here as serving merely to confirm what had been said in the preceding verse. It is as much as to say, the proof that he will finally come and judge the world, may be gathered from the fact, that his kingdom, according to his declaration, shall be firmly established before the generation then living should pass wholly away. This first coming would be the earnest or pledge of his future judicial proceedings and of his rewarding the righteous.

I know not whence then the conclusion is made out, that the disciples believed the judgment-day to be contemporaneous with the destruction of Jerusalem. There is nothing in chap. 24: 1—4 which leads to such a turn of the question on the part of the disciples. It is quite inapposite, unless we can make out a good reason to believe, that the disciples cherished the opinion attributed to them. And I cannot see why we should assume such an extravagant belief on their part, one which was plainly in contradiction to all the current opinions of the Jews of that period on this subject. They expected the Messianic time to continue, at least a thousand years. It was to be the *sabbath* of the world. Where did the apostles get the notion, that this period was to endure only one generation? Not from Jesus; he taught no such falsehood. Not from the Old Testament; for a *long* and prosperous reign is everywhere there given to the Messiah. Will the advocates of this notion, then, show us where the disciples could obtain it? Until they do, I must content myself with believing, that the *end of the world* means what it does in the mouth of Paul, 1 Cor. 10: 11, as quoted above. If so, then all is consonant and harmonious.

But let us go on with the discourse. False Christs are to come; wars are to be frequent; persecution will arise; false prophets will come; the Gospel will be preached wide abroad; the Roman army will invade Judaea; the disciples must flee for safety; false prophets will in vain promise the appearance of a Christ, i. e. of a deliverer; and finally, the coming of Christ to the work of desolation will be sudden and unexpected. The Roman eagles will pursue until they light upon the carcass which they intend to devour.

Thus far as an introduction to verses 29—31, on which I have now been commenting. Then comes the scene of the devouring. It will be a day of awful gloom, as if all the luminaries of the skies were extinguished. The signs that betoken the impending doom will fill the land with bitter mourning and lamentation. But in the midst

of all this, the elect, the true-hearted disciples of Christ, will be safe. His angels will guard them. *He will gather them under his protecting wing; "gather them with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."*

Here we have a beginning, a progress, and an end. At the end is comfort to the elect, and destruction to the wicked and malignant persecutors.

[To be concluded.]

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## ARTICLE VI.

### THE PRACTICAL ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

By Rev. Charles White, D. D., President of Wabash College, Ia.

DIVINE revelation may be regarded either as a body of truths for intellectual inquiry and admiration, or as a collection of rules and motives for the guidance of human life. These two aspects run into each other, but may be properly conceived of and spoken of separately. For its contemplative uses, religion cannot be too greatly esteemed and respected. Its lessons and influences, however, for this real, acting world, where we spend the preparatory portion of our being, are more immediately important and indispensable.

It is the happy feature of our time that religion, like science, has left her cloistered retreats and her abstruse speculations, and passed into the earnest, matter-of-fact concerns of mankind. This decided assumption of the practical on the part of religion, marks the present as a signal era, in her aggressive movements toward the conquest of the world. This was to have been unhesitatingly looked for by all the pious students of the Divine character. A visible and effective industry is a distinguishing attribute of the great Author of Christianity. Said Christ: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." This, that is, the Divine example, is the great principle of the universe. Christianity without practical bearings would have been an anomaly and a contradiction in the Divine dispensations.

We proceed to consider the *fact* and the *advantages* of a practical character in Christianity.