

Correspondence.

MILLENARIANISM. I.

BY REV. W. T. EVA.

"Millenarianism or Chiliasm," says one of our best writers, "is the doctrine of the two resurrections—the first, that of the righteous dead at the time of the second advent of Christ, and the second, that of the wicked at the end of the world—and a personal corporeal reign of Christ between them for a thousand years, upon the renovated earth." This, I take to be a true and comprehensive definition, embracing in its compass, if not expressing in its terms, all, or nearly all, that is essential to the theory, or that distinguishes it from the view commonly held by those who profess and call themselves Christians. I will endeavor, in a brief and somewhat synoptical way, to note a few things that may be urged in favor of this theory; to indicate a few others that press themselves with force against it; and to suggest what seems to me, to be the "conclusion of the whole matter."

And first, it may be urged in favor of this theory that there are quite a number of Scripture passages, which are difficult of interpretation on any other hypothesis.

There are some in relation to the second coming of Christ—not in reference to the fact of that coming; nor the personality of it—all agree upon these points; but in relation to the interpretation and application of certain circumstances in connection with that event. For example: "Be ye also ready, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not," (Luke xii. 40), a passage the force of which seems entirely destroyed on the supposition that the Son of man will not come until after the period of millennial blessedness; and which, to apply to the event of one's death, appears almost like a "wresting" of the Scripture. For though it be true that the hour when death will come, is indeed very uncertain, and that we ought to be "also ready" for that event, yet it is an exceedingly doubtful matter whether death can ever be spoken of as a coming of the Son of man. The phrase, Son of man, clearly refers to the human nature of Christ; and clear it is that that never comes in the event of one's death. Again: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8.) The coming here spoken of, for the same reason is evidently a personal coming of Christ; and the question of the Saviour seems very plainly to imply, that, at his coming there shall be a great want of faith on the earth; which could hardly be, except on the millenarian theory, that he will come before the conversion of the world. Also the passage where Christ affirms that, "As it was in the days of Noah, and in the days of Lot, so shall it be also when the Son of man is revealed," (Luke xvii. 30), a passage which is exceedingly difficult of interpretation except upon the millenarian hypothesis.

There are passages, also, in relation to the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. I need say nothing about that in Daniel, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom," etc., which has often been ably expounded in the interest of the anti-millenarian theory; nor of many others, the proper interpretation of which is a subject of debate between parties holding different views on the subject. But there is one passage, which, on any other than the millenarian view, has always seemed to me to be very inconsistent and obscure. It is the address of the angel to Mary: "Behold thou shalt conceive in the womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever." (Luke i. 30.) All acknowledge that a part of this promise and prediction has been literally fulfilled; the millenarian theory implies the literal fulfillment of the balance—the literal sitting of Christ upon the throne of his father David, and his literal reigning over the house of Jacob; which circumstances, by others, are not expected to be literally, but spiritually, fulfilled. Now, the question is, whether, one part of a promise or prediction being literally fulfilled, it is not reasonable to suppose that the remaining part will in like manner be literally fulfilled? Or, on what principle, by what canon of interpretation, can we explain the one portion spiritually when we are compelled to acknowledge that another portion has been fulfilled literally?

And so, there are passages in reference to the resurrection. There certainly are two resurrections of the dead spoken of, as to distinction and glory, if not to time. The passage in the Revelation, (xx. 4-6), upon its fair and natural interpretation would indicate two resurrections as to time; and though it may seem a satisfactory mode of disposing of its teaching, to maintain that the first resurrection there spoken of is a spiritual resurrection—a resurrection of "the martyr spirit," etc., yet the assertion that "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were expired," certainly raises a difficulty in the way of that interpretation, well nigh, if not quite, fatal to it. Because, it either involves a strange inconsistency and confusion in the exegesis, or, it carries with it the assumption that, after all, the great spiritual rising of the world, "dead in trespasses and sins," will not take place

until after the millennium is ended. If the word living or lived, is used in a different sense in the latter, from that in which it is used in the former part of the passage, why then it certainly furnishes an instance of great ambiguity, uncertainty, and confusion, in the use of terms in the word of God. If it be used in both parts of the passage in the same sense, why, then it involves the absurdity which I have suggested. There is a dilemma here, upon one or the other horn of which the anti-literalists must certainly hang.

Daniel says, "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." (xii. 2.) Christ says: "The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall rise; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." (John v. 29.) Now here is certainly a distinction as to the characteristics and glory of those who shall rise from the dead: yea, here are certainly two resurrections spoken of by Christ himself—the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of damnation! And so the Apostle Paul "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of," or from, "the dead." (Phil. iii. 11.) The difference in the rendering of the particle ek, whether of or from the dead, makes no difference at all in the sense; for, a resurrection such as the Millenarians contend for—the first resurrection—is just as truly a resurrection from the dead—a rising up of the saints from among the great mass of the world's dead—as is a resurrection to spiritual life from the multitude dead in trespasses and sins. And the spiritual interpretation involves the absurd and fatal idea, that the Apostle here sets himself forth, as a not yet converted man; for if the resurrection of which he speaks be a resurrection to spiritual life—which, of course, is identical with the conversion of the soul—and Paul declares that he had not yet attained to that, but sets it before himself as an object for which he earnestly strove, why, the inference is unavoidable that he speaks of himself as a not yet converted man. The conclusion is inevitable that the resurrection to which he directs our thoughts is a literal rising from the dead; and such a rising as had a something attached to it, which, in some way, either as to time, or as to distinction and glory, distinguished it from the general resurrection of the bodies of all men.

These are a few of the Scriptures which are certainly difficult of interpretation upon any other than the millenarian hypothesis. There are many others of similar import and character. But these are sufficient for our purpose at this time. And they are cited, not as authority for the theory in question, but with a view, if possible, to elicit some satisfactory exegesis from those whose minds are enlightened and whose opinions are settled in opposition thereto. We confess that in our way, they are something in the nature of "stumbling blocks," which we should like to have removed.

Second. It may be urged in favor of this theory, that in some of its features, it seems to have been the doctrine of the Apostolic Church.

We do not say in whole, but in some of its features. For example, there cannot be a doubt that the Apostles and primitive Christians made much—even as Millenarians now do—of the second and personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been asserted, indeed, that that event is the hope of which they invariably speak in their writings, and that they never allude to death or the state following as, in any way, that to which they looked forward with pleasing and delightful anticipations. And while this is clearly an extreme and erroneous statement—for Paul in Philippians does speak of having a "desire to depart," or to die, "and be with Christ, which is far better," and Peter does speak of "putting off the fleshly tabernacle," by which he means to signify the event of his death, and the Apocalypse does pronounce the beatitude, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!" Yet it is as clear as a sunbeam, that the great object which was most commonly before the mind of the Apostles—that which was their absorbing and prevalent hope, was the personal coming of their Lord and Saviour. Of this they preached, of this they wrote; and in the prospect of this they evidently rejoiced.

I need not cite passages here. Quite an array of them has doubtless been brought to the attention of the reader; and many will occur at once to the recollection of the student. Indeed, so evident is this, and such an argument does it furnish in favor of the millenarian theory, that some of the opposers of that theory have found no way to get rid of its force, except in the idea that on this subject, the Apostles themselves were mistaken; an idea which, as it seems to me, it is by no means safe, for a moment to admit; for it carries along with it the implication of their fallibility in reference to a point on which they frequently wrote, and of course leaves the whole of their writings open to the suspicion of a similar fallibility. If they were in error, or liable to be in error, on one point of their teachings, why not on others? And if they made a mistake in reference to that point, what guarantee have we that they did not make mistakes in regard to other points? It is true, indeed, that in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, (2 Chap.) Paul intimates that they, the believers at Thessalonica, had received a false impression from what he had written to them in his First Epistle in regard to the time of the coming of Jesus. But the mistake was their own, not his; they had misunderstood what he had written, not he

the truth in the case: that truth he reiterates and reaffirms, guarding them only against error in regard to the time of its verification. We must admit, therefore—it cannot be successfully denied, I think—that the second personal coming of Christ was the event which constituted the great hope and desire of the Apostolic Church; that from the time when, at the ascension of the Master, the angel which appeared, addressed to the company that stood upon the Mount of Olives the words, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus of Nazareth whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," (Acts i. 11.) this, and its cognate event, the resurrection of, or from, the dead, was that, the anticipation of which was an almost constantly present and predominating support, comfort, and joy to their hearts.

Third. In favor of this theory it may be further urged that belief in it was most general in the period when martyrdom was most prevalent, and that in the faith of this theory Christians were most ready to go to the stake, and to seal their testimony to their faith with their sufferings and blood.

Of the fact, there can be no question. Gibbon says, that "the assurance of such a millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers, from Justin Martyr and Irèneus who conversed with the immediate disciples of the Apostles, down to Lactantius who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers. . . . and must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith." Mosheim says, that "long before this period," that is, the third century, A. D., "an opinion had prevailed that Christ was to come and reign a thousand years among men before the entire and final destruction of the world. This opinion had hitherto met with no opposition. But in this century it began to decline, principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favorite sentiments." Neander says that "Millenarianism (Chiliasmus) was, in the days of Papias, Irèneus, and J. Martyr, extensively propagated," and that, "in the midst of persecution it was an attractive thought for the Christians to look to a period when their Church, purified and perfected, should be triumphant even on earth, the theatre of their present sufferings." And Professor Shedd affirms, that "the period between the year 150 and 250"—that is, the period when the blood of the martyrs was most profusely shed—"was the blooming age of millenarianism. . . . The millenarian tendency," says he, "became stronger, as the Church began in the last half of the second century, to feel the persecuting hand of the government laid upon it. . . . It was natural that the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ should be most prevalent when the earthly condition of the Church was the most intolerable." Such is the testimony gathered from writers who themselves are anti-Millenarians, to the fact that in the early age of persecution and martyrdom, the millenarian doctrine did most prevail.

In regard to the worth of the fact as an argument in favor of the millenarian theory, there will, of course, be differences of opinion; and some, perhaps most, will regard it as worth, just nothing at all. But to my own mind, I confess that there is some force in it, as furnishing some thing of a presumption in favor of that theory: for if the martyrs, when they went to the dungeon, to the arena, and to the stake, to suffer and to die for Christ, were animated by a love of the truth as it is in Jesus, and sustained by their faith in that truth, it seems, to say the least of it, a strange thing, that their Master would have suffered them to be so deluded as to rest their hope upon fancy instead of fact, and derive the peace and joy that sustained them, from a mythical fiction, instead of a true and living faith! And it seems further strange that a mere delusion—a sheer phantom of the imagination, should have furnished any part of the foundation on which was built the hope and the triumph, in the midst of pains and penalties, sufferings and death of the thousands of martyrs of that age; to say nothing of such witnesses for the truth as Irèneus, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, and others.

And yet again, even in modern and present times, this theory numbers among its believers and advocates, either partly or in whole, some of the best minds, and some of the very purest hearts of the Church. They are, indeed, comparatively few; but they are men whose praise is in all the Churches, whose reasonings are not to be despised, and whose piety and devotion to the cause of Christ, is not to be questioned. I need not refer particularly to them; the reader will remember such names as Bickersteth, and Elliot, and Cunningham, and Bonar, and Cumming, of the British Church; such as Delitzsch, and Kurtz, and Auberlen, and P. Lange, and Ebrard, of the German Church; and such as Henshaw, and Duffield, and Lord, and Newton, and Seiss, of our own country. And many others there are, whose views in some points—more or less—agree with those of the Millenarians; as Robert Hall, in the literal restoration of the Jews to their own land; and Dr. Chalmers, in a literal, material new heavens, and new earth; and Olshausen in the two resurrections.

REV. E. P. HAMMOND'S LETTER FROM PALESTINE, No. III.

In the afternoon of the 23d of November, we left our tents at Tiberias, and started upon a keen gallop for a visit to the upper end of the lake. Just as we entered the "Land of Genesareth," we passed the village of Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene.

As we rode along the now silent shore of the lake, and saw the fertile plain of Genesareth stretching away to our left for two or three miles, with not a house upon it, and only affording sustenance to the wandering Ishmaelites whose hand is against every man, I could but think of the contrast that scene presented to the eye when our Lord made Capernaum, near the northern end of the plain, "His own city." At that time all that vale was highly cultivated, and thousands of people inhabited those shores. Eighteen centuries ago Josephus describes Genesareth as an "earthly paradise, where the choicest fruits grew luxuriantly, and eternal spring reigned." But now, alas! we see the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy, and the once flourishing cities, which encircled this beautiful sheet of water, exalted to heaven in their privileges, are blotted from existence; even their very site is a disputed question, while Tyre and Sidon still preserve at least a semblance of life.

Among the teeming population, which then surrounded the lake, the Saviour spent the chief part of his ministry. His own townsmen at Nazareth had been "filled with wrath" at a sermon which he had preached in their synagogue, and had "thrust Him out of the city and led Him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built; that they might cast Him down headlong;" but he miraculously escaped from them, and "came down to Capernaum," which he adopted as "His own city." His heart yearned for the masses; and all around the sea of Tiberias He saw them gathered. Capernaum, Chorazin, Magdala, Tiberias; Bethsaida, Scythopolis, Gadara and Pella, with many villages dotted the shores of the lake. Thus it was no difficult matter, at any time, for our Lord to gather a crowd in the open air. Hence we read that "He entered into Capernaum, it was noised abroad that He was in the house and straightway many were gathered together insomuch that there was no room to receive them, and He preached the word unto them." At that time it would appear that this region was a great centre to which the people flocked.

It is probable that in no other place in the Holy Land could the Saviour have found such a hopeful field of labor. He chose to toil here among the "common people," who heard him gladly, rather than at that time to direct His attention to the more polished, and it may be, more wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem, where the self-righteous Pharisees and rationalistic loungers were ready to confront Him at every step. From among the fishermen and peasants and commercial people surrounding the lake, He called his followers and built up the infant Church. He erected no grand edifices, upon which the eyes of men might gaze with delight, but He there laid the foundations of that structure which is yet more and more to be the wonder and admiration of the universe, and of which He is Himself the "chief corner-stone." He planted no college to perpetuate His memory, but yet from under his divine teachings went forth humble men, filled with the Holy Spirit, whose words and writings have exerted a most powerful influence upon the world.

Such were some of the many thoughts, which pressed upon me, as we rode along the now silent shores of the lake, with its once cultivated vale of Genesareth on our left. We once turned aside to gather some of the celebrated papyrus, as we were told that was the only place where it could be found in Palestine. It did not appear to us how the ancients could have made paper of it.

One of the chief objects of our ride that afternoon was to ascertain if possible the site of ancient Capernaum. It is well known among Biblical scholars that it has long been a disputed point as to whether Capernaum was located at Ain et Tiny or Tell Hum. Dr. Robinson and Dr. Porter are of the opinion that the ruins at Ain et Tiny are those of the city where our Saviour dwelt. But Dr. Thomson argues very strongly, and I am inclined to think conclusively, that Capernaum was at Tell Hum. It seems remarkable that the place where the Saviour spent so much of His time and which was the scene of so many of His miracles and where so many of His parables and discourses were uttered, should ever have been so lost sight of, as to make its locality a question. For centuries, at least, His followers must have loved to linger around the spot filled with so many sacred and tender associations. But alas, it appears that for many centuries the place was neglected and then forgotten.

Capt. Wilson, by his recent explorations, has done much to prove that Tell Hum is the veritable site of Capernaum. It is perhaps a mile northeast of Ain et Tiny. Thither we hastened that we might place our feet on the floor of the synagogue recently uncovered, upon which it is known for a certainty that our Saviour walked. As we moved among its majestic but fallen Corinthian columns it was an affecting thought to reflect that we were upon the only pavement in existence which is believed to have been thus honored. Even though we should admit that this synagogue belonged to Chorazin, as Dr. Porter thinks, rather than to Capernaum, still there can be no doubt that our Saviour entered it while upon earth.

The views at Tell Hum appeared much more extensive than those at Ain et Tiny. Oh, how solemn appeared these words of our Saviour as we read them from our Bible on the spot. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto Heaven shalt be brought down to hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sidon it would have remained until this day." Matt. xi. 20, 23.

It was with an interest greatly augmented by our afternoon's explorations that we read the account of the many miracles that were performed at Capernaum and the memorable admonitions and parables which He there uttered. We could scarcely realize that in our wandering that day, we had perchance trodden upon some of the stones of the house of Jairus, in which once lay his little daughter, twelve years of age, whom Jesus raised to life; and that we had perhaps stumbled upon some of the very stones which once formed the house of the centurion whose servant Jesus raised, and of whom He said, I have not found so great faith, not in Israel. (Luke. vii. 9.)

I cannot fail to speak of our having seen near Capernaum what was evidently a small harbor where the disciples of our Lord, who were fishermen, used to anchor their boats, after they had been employed at their usual avocation upon the waters day or night. Perhaps it was near that very spot "that as He walked by the sea of Galilee He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea and said unto them 'come ye after me and I will make you fishers of men.'" And but a short distance farther on where "He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother who were also in the ship mending their nets"—and who, when called by our Lord "left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after Him."

On the morning of the 24th we took our departure from Tiberias and the sea of Galilee and started for Nazareth. It was a beautiful morning with a most exhilarating atmosphere. As we rose higher and higher upon the hills of Galilee and occasionally looked back at the Lake nestled at their feet, how different was its calm appearance to us from that, which it presented twenty-four hours before when we were tempest tossed upon its angry waves. It did not appear of half the size it did the day before when we were sailing upon it, "and there arose a great storm, and the wind and the waves beat into the ship." But this change was no greater than that we have sometimes seen in the moral world, when from Mount Sinai the thunders of God's law alarm the trembling sinner, and the storm of divine vengeance bursts upon him and the waters of his soul, so deceitfully calm, are thrown into violent commotion. O how vain, at such times, are all human powers to allay the tempestuous agitation of the troubled billows.

But when the Saviour in love and mercy has arisen with the potent words upon His lips, "Peace be still"—then, O how quickly has the wind ceased and that "peace, which is like a river," filled the heart. At such times, it is only the sight of our risen Lord, apprehended by faith, that can give peace to the troubled soul. Peace only can follow where the anxious, trembling sinner believes, not in any works of righteousness of his own, but because Christ has once suffered, "the just for the unjust," therefore, He, by God's appointment, has the right to speak peace and pardon to all who trust in Him. Every tempest-tossed soul must, with some degree of faith, look upon the Saviour's wounded hands and feet and believe that "He was wounded for our transgressions," if he would enjoy lasting peace. This truth seems to be contained in the words in John xx. 19, 20, "Jesus stood in the midst and saith unto them, peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you." As if to repeat the words, "Look to these wounded hands, see how much I have suffered that your sins might be forgiven! O then let the troubled waters of your souls subside. Peace be unto you."

After an hour's ride, we approached a grassy plain situated upon a high upland. Our Syrian Dragoman told us we were standing upon the spot where the "five thousand" were miraculously fed with "seven loaves and five little fishes." We read over the account in Matt. xv. 29-39, and tried to think the tradition was in accordance with the Scripture narrative, but our minds were not free from doubt. It was evident to us that the miracle spoken of in Matt. xiv, where the "five thousand men, beside women and children" were fed with "five loaves and two fishes," was performed on the East coast of the lake, but we could not be sure about the other miracle. After gathering some pretty flowers from beside some large basaltic stones, one of which the Latins call "men a Christ," we hurried on to the Mount of Beatitudes, where it is said our Lord delivered His sermon to the "multitude." It is now called the Horns of Hattin—taking its name from the village at its foot. Its position seems to correspond with the conditions of the Gospel narrative; for we read, "And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease amongst the people, and His fame went throughout all Syria." "And there followed Him vast multitudes of people from Galilee and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan, and seeing the multitude He went up into a mountain, and when He was set His disciples came unto Him." (Matt. iv. 23-25; v. 1.) O what a glorious sight—that vast audience upon that broad mountain top with the mighty Saviour of the world for their Preacher! It was most inspiring to stand upon that sacred spot—that grand gathering place for the mountaineers of Galilee, and the fishermen from Genesareth! Full in view to the right, lay the calm waters of the Lake. Directly in front was Safed, that "city that is set on a hill," to which He doubtless pointed, by way of illustration, as He uttered the words from which I have quoted.