

Correspondence.

MILLENNARIANISM.

BY REV. W. T. EVA.

[CONCLUDED.]

Thus far in favor of this theory—from which side of the question we turn to indicate a few things that press themselves with force against it. Solomon says: "A man seemeth just, in his own cause, but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him," and it is an old saying, which, in more homely phrase, embodies some thing of the same sentiment, that, "One side of a question is good until the other is heard." Here as elsewhere it finds its exemplification.

And first I remark, that this theory is no where in the Scriptures so plainly taught, as to be clearly, unmistakably, and indisputably found there.

There is, indeed, quite a number of passages, as we have shown, which are quite obscure and difficult of interpretation on any other hypothesis. But there are none—not even one—to which the Millenarian can point and say, "Here is my doctrine—dispute it if you can? Here the pre-millennial advent, the two resurrections, and the personal reign, are undoubtedly taught—explain this Scripture on any other theory, if it be possible." The plainest single passage in the whole Bible, perhaps, is that in the twentieth of the Revelation; and we all know how full of type, and symbol, and even obscure phraseology, that passage is; and what very different interpretations are, by our best commentators, actually given to it; while there are many passages which seem like great and impassable mountain barriers, to throw themselves directly in the way of millenarianism; as that in Matthew xxv., where the judgment is spoken of and the rendering of the final and eternal award to men, as immediately succeeding the coming of Christ, not the slightest intimation of a thousand years of his personal reign on the earth, as intervening between the two transactions. It will not do to say that that passage describes the judgment of the nations; for though the word nations is used in the opening of it, yet it is clear from what follows, that that word is used, not in a specific, but in a generic, sense, as meaning peoples, and not distinct political or governmental divisions or organizations. (*Ethnos* is the word—a multitude, people, etc.) And the circumstances mentioned, the address of the Judge, the doom awarded, etc., absolutely forbid the passage to be interpreted of nations as such. There are also those Scriptures which speak of the preaching of the Gospel in all the earth, and the conversion of the world, which raise difficulties in the way of Millenarianism absolutely insurmountable.

Second. I remark that this theory has never been received as the faith of God's Church; never, as such, been incorporated into any of its symbols of doctrine, whether Creeds, Confessions, or Catechisms.

This is a fact, and a most remarkable one, when it is considered what was seemingly, as we have shown, the great hope of the Apostolic Church, and that in the age of the early confessors and martyrs, Millenarianism was so prevalent. Professor Shedd, in his History of Christian Doctrine, thus brings it out:

"The oldest symbol of doctrine which we have, is that called *The Apostle's Creed*, which, though confessedly not of Apostolic origin and authority, yet is very ancient and can be traced back almost to the Apostolic Age. And in it there is no trace whatever of any thing that is distinctive in this theory. There is not there the slightest allusion to the two resurrections, and a personal, corporeal reign of Christ between them, the only specifications being that Christ shall come from heaven to judge the quick and the dead, and that there is a resurrection of the body, and a life everlasting. Both Irenæus and Tertullian, in their writings against the heretics, present brief synoptical statements of the authorized faith of the Church; but in none of them do we find the millenarian tenet, even though they wrote in the very times when that tenet was most prevalent and popular, and they themselves were believers in it. The *Decrees* of none of the great councils set forth Millenarianism as an Article of the Christian faith. The *Augsburg Confession* expressly condemns it in conjunction with the doctrine of a limited future punishment. The *Confession of Edward VI.*, from which the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England were afterwards condensed, condemns it in nearly the same terms as the *Augsburg*. The *Belgic Confession*, guards the statement respecting the second advent of Christ by teaching that the time of its occurrence is unknown to all created beings, and that it will not take place until the number of the elect is completed. And the Westminster ignores the hypothesis utterly. Now if Millenarianism is the doctrine of the Bible, it is strange that it was never received by the Church as such; or, if it was so received, it is passing strange, yea, unaccountable, that it was never incorporated into any of its Creeds, Confessions, or Catechisms."

Third. I remark that this theory involves—not so much perhaps in its principal propositions—as in the carrying out of its details—a vast amount of fanciful, if not sensuous, interpretation of the Scriptures. I do not say that it necessarily involves this, but the almost inevitable tendency seems to be this way; a tendency that developed itself even among the earliest writers in favor of Millenarianism.

Irenæus treats the metaphors in Isaiah lxiv. 11, 12, as proper terms. He regarded the New Jerusalem in Revelations xxi., as a material city actually let down from heaven. Tertullian puts the same interpretation upon this text, and for

confirmation refers to the report, that in the Parthian war in Judea, a city was observed to be lowered down from the sky every morning, and to disappear as the day advanced. And in regard to the felicity of the earth under the personal reign of Christ, Papias makes the statement, that there would be vines having ten thousand branches and each branch ten thousand boughs, and each bough ten thousand shoots, and each shoot ten thousand clusters, and each cluster ten thousand berries, and each berry would yield twenty-five measures of wine."

The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, says that "so pleasing was this hope of the millennium to the minds of believers, that the New Jerusalem, the seat of this blissful kingdom, was quickly adorned with the gayest colors of imagination. A felicity consisting only of pure and spiritual pleasure would have appeared too refined for its inhabitants, who were still supposed to possess their human nature and senses. A Garden of Eden with the amusements of a pastoral life was no longer suited to the advanced state of society which prevailed under the Roman Empire. A literal city was therefore erected of gold and precious stones; and a supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent country, in the free enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions, the happy and benevolent people were never to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property." So Gibbon represents the tendency to fanciful and sensuous interpretation of the Scriptures by the Millenarians of that early age. Neander, especially as the theory was held by the Montanists of that day, abundantly confirms his representation.

And the history of Millenarianism in modern times illustrates the same thing. Instances in the wild vagaries of the Anabaptists of Munster; and the mischievous fanaticism of many of the Millerites of 1843; and the miserable delusion of the Mormons, whose faith is something of a fungus outgrowth of Millenarianism. Instance, also, the speculations of Dr. Cumming on the chronological prophecies: "The times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." And those also of some other good men and respectable writers in our own country.

I knew a young man, who, at the age of thirteen, became member of the Church, and received the impression that he was called to the work of the Gospel ministry. In the autumn of the year 1841, when between fourteen and fifteen years of age, he was put under the care of a pious divine, to enter upon a course of preparatory study. Unfortunately, that divine was a Millenarian, and a diligent and enthusiastic student of chronological prophecy, and in common with many others of like faith at that time, believed that the Lord Jesus would certainly come in the year 1843; and so, instead of carrying the young man forward in a course of study, he set him at that early age to preaching, under the idea, that if he did not then begin, as the dispensation would end in little more than a year, he would have no opportunity of engaging in the work of the ministry;—a piece of consistency on his part, it is true, but a practical illustration of the mischievous tendency of a fanciful interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures, the effects of which this youth feels to his sorrow to this day.

Further, it might be remarked as against this theory, that it seems to be directly in the way of all earnest, zealous, continuous effort, for the conversion and salvation of the world. Those who accept this theory, naturally enough believe that such efforts will never be instrumental in accomplishing the end intended; that the world is to be converted at or by the second coming of Christ, and not before; that up to that time it will rather grow worse instead of better; that though the Gospel is to be preached in all nations—using the term again not generically as including all men, but specifically, as embracing all governments, kingdoms, and tribes—yet it is not for their conversion, but only as a witness; and that we are to obey the command of the Lord Jesus, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," not at all with any hope that such preaching will be successful, and "accomplish that whereunto it is sent," or "prosper in the thing which God pleases," but only because it is the command of Christ—which, indeed, ought to be, and in some cases is, a sufficient motive, but which separated from the hope which generally accompanies it, that such preaching will be attended with blessed results in finally saving the world, would hardly be strong enough very powerfully to influence human nature, even that which is really, but partially sanctified. The earth is certainly to be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord," Isa. xi. 9; the world is assuredly to be converted to the true and living God, Luke iii. 6; it would seem to be the case that the same means by which a single soul is saved, are those by which millions of souls are to be saved; yea, we are expressly told that the "Gospel is the power of God to salvation"—that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And a theory which strikes at the very root of all this, and which throws itself right in the way of all general, and persistent, and hopeful effort, for the regeneration and salvation of the kindreds and tongues, the nations and tribes of men, is, to say the least of it, a doubtful one.

And finally, I would remark that the weight of learning, opinion, and piety in the Church, both of the ages past, and of the present day, is against this theory.

It has been allowed, in a former part of this essay, that in one period of the past history of the Church, Millenarianism was generally believed in; and that during that period the voices of the ablest preachers, and the pens of the ablest writers, were on the side of that theory. But, with that exception, the drift of opinion, and the faith of the great masses of Christians in all ages and in all parts of the world have been on the other side. The most eminent of the "Fathers," ignore the doctrine utterly; Augustine, though once a believer in it, gave it up, and wrote against it! The Reformers do not at all incline to it. Neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor Melancthon, nor Cranmer, nor Knox, were Millenarians. Few of the divines or commentators of the succeeding age were inclined to the theory—though it found an able, almost solitary, advocate in Joseph Mede. Among the great luminaries of the Christian pulpit and press of the last and of the present centuries, where is there one—if we except Bengel who shines in the light of Millenarianism? Patrick, Lowth, Whitby; Doddridge, Henry, Scott, Clark, Turretin, Dick, Dwight, Hill, Stier, Alford, Stuart, Barnes—all are against it. While, of the two hundred millions of nominal Christians in the world, not a twentieth part, perhaps, are believers in the theory.

We know, indeed, that a question of revealed truth is not to be settled by human authority; and that it is a false principle to appeal to the suffrage of numbers for the determination of any Christian doctrine. And this is not the use that we make of the consideration now brought forward: indeed, if this consideration stood alone, we should attach no importance to it whatever. But taken in connection with the others now adduced, we hold it to be of some weight and worth; because, while it must be allowed that, on both sides, there is learning, piety, and an earnest, sincere desire to understand the mind and purpose of God in this matter, it shows that the preponderance of evidence—the probabilities of the case therefore—are with the side where there is the greatest aggregate of these elements. For if the millenarian theory be among the "true sayings of God," really made known in the Scriptures, strange it is, passing strange, that for ages the great mass of theologians, and commentators, and believers in the Church, have so unanimously and decidedly neglected that theory;—strange that not it, but the very opposite hypothesis, should have been the almost—*Quod semper, Quod Ubique, et Quod ab omnibus* of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The practical conclusions of the whole discussion, as they lie in my own mind, in a few simple propositions, may be thus presented:—

First, it is a matter of very little real consequence for all the purposes of saving knowledge and faith, whether the Lord Jesus shall come before or after the millennium; whether as to the order of time, there shall be two resurrections or but one; and whether the Saviour shall reign personally on the earth, or spiritually. Had it been otherwise, assuredly the truth in relation to the whole subject would have been more clearly and definitely revealed. God has not thought the matter of consequence enough so to reveal it; and the history of practical, personal Christianity proves, that in connection with either theory, or both, true faith and earnest, devoted godliness may exist and flourish.

Second, those who hold the millenarian theory ought to be cautious in their speculations on the chronological prophecies, and to guard against pushing their literalizing proclivities too far into the details of interpretation of the prophetic and symbolic Scriptures. Millenarians have, at times, greatly erred in these particulars, and in their zeal for, and devotion to, their favorite theory, pursued a course that has been calculated to bring the holy Scriptures into contempt, and to make skeptics and infidels. I myself have seen the practical working of this thing—especially in the re-action which took place after the Millenarian excitement of 1843; and I know men, who, at that time, were firm believers in millenarianism, and who, under the guidance of earnest but mistaken teachers, confidently expected the Lord Jesus then to come; but who, disappointed in the expectation, gave up all faith, not only in their favorite theory, but also in the Bible itself, and are to day living in skepticism and infidelity.

And third, those who do not hold the millenarian theory, but are firmly established in their faith in the other view, ought nevertheless to make more of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and of the great and glorious doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, than they are in the habit of doing, especially in their preaching and teaching in the pulpit. The great body of ministers of the Gospel of the present day, are, I think, in error here; for how seldom do we hear from our pulpits a discourse *distinctively* on these grand themes. Now, if any thing is clear and indisputable, it is the fact, that on these subjects the Apostles preached and wrote frequently and much; and it is very certain that in the whole range of religious topics, few are better adapted to interest and impress the hearers than these. Here, therefore, I am firmly persuaded there has been a failure; and it would be for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, if more frequently and prominently, we discoursed on *Jesus and the resurrection*. "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me to give to every man as his work shall be! Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

FAITH AND THE CABLE.

BY REV. HENRY FOWLER.

The heart of the American Church beats in sympathy with the sublime undertaking to give the Gospel to all the nations of the earth. We were tempted to drop the enterprise, weighed down with rebellion at home, but instead we enlarged our sphere of foreign effort. We are solicited to concentrate our benefactions upon the freedman and the pioneer, but we feel that by doing for the African and the Asiatic, we shall not do less for the cotton picker of Carolina or the digger of Colorado. He who sends the Gospel to the heathen is not the one who fails to give to the needy of America. He who encircles the world with his Christian sympathies, prayers and efforts, is the one who does the most for his own country. The fervor in his soul for foreign missions fires up the love of home missions. He *denies himself that he may give to both*.

This oneness of home and abroad in the heart of the Christian is illustrated by the unity of all continents through the successful laying, this last year, of the Atlantic Cable.

One of the assassins of our martyr President is arrested in April by one of our national officers. The same day is our Government apprised of the fact. Out of Egypt starts the message. With one throb it crosses the Mediterranean, with another it slips under the British Channel, with a third it is in Heart's Content, and then readily finds its swift way to Washington, and ramifies to countless homes throughout our broad Republic. Wonder of wonders! All hail to the energy of him who has devoted the best part of a life to the surpassing enterprise. Let us, as Christians, give God the glory, as we note that Cyrus W. Field, as a Christian, believes his success to be an answer to prayer. In a statement made by him of a history of the Cable, a statement of admirable completeness, as well as beautiful simplicity, occurs this paragraph:

"Such, gentlemen, in brief, is the story of the telegraph, which you wished to hear. It has been a long, hard struggle. Nearly thirteen years of anxious watching and ceaseless toil. Often my heart has been ready to sink. Many times, when wandering in the forests of Newfoundland in the pelting rain, or on the deck of ships, on dark, stormy nights—alone, far from home, I have almost accused myself of madness and folly to sacrifice the peace of my family and all the hopes of life for what might prove, after all, but a dream. I have seen my companions, one after another, falling by my side, and feared that I too might not live to see the end. And yet one hope has led me on; and I have prayed that I might not taste of death till this work was accomplished. *That prayer is answered*; and now, beyond all acknowledgments to men, is the feeling of gratitude to Almighty God!"

Every follower of Christ may learn a lesson from the example of this heroic faith. Cyrus Field felt that the principle of the Atlantic Cable was true, that the work would be accomplished that it would be a blessing to the world. And so he toiled on. So he enforced the convincing logic of his case to the minds of capitalists. So he solicited subscriptions from one counting room to another. So he enlisted the co-operation of Statesmen and of governments. So he sacrificed a private fortune. So he visited Newfoundland twenty times and crossed the ocean forty times. We may say that he "hated his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also," for the sake of that great enterprise to which he had consecrated his being, with trust in God and for the sake of humanity.

Each follower of Christ has before his vision an object yet more grand—the kingdom of God; a principle true as the Word of Jehovah—Redemption through Christ; a work gigantic enough to inspire the utmost effort and call forth the highest faith—the salvation of the whole world. Yes, the Christian Church is striving to encircle the earth with the cable of Christian love, to bring all nations into the unity of Christian brotherhood, to declare the Gospel in the one language received by all mankind, to distribute the messages of salvation to every kindred and people and tribe, to every town and hamlet and house, and to every man, woman and child, to every conscience and to every soul. Sublime purpose! If the Cable parts, a new one must be made! Yes, the old one must be fished up from the depths and be re-united. The Lord is on our side. It shall be done. "This is the patience and faith of the saints!"

WHEN JESUS SPEAKS.

O, when Jesus begins to speak to me, my ear, my heart is the willing captive of his tongue. When he counts over that heavy load, the sins he bore upon the tree, I love, I weep. I blush for shame when he talks over his bloody passion. How my heart is enraptured and drowned in tears when he shows his pierced hands and melted heart. How it sets my soul on fire when he recounts his victories. My God, my Christ, my heart strings break with love to thee.

The most sacred things may easily be misrepresented in so ridiculous a light as to excite profane laughter; a small measure of wit, united with sufficient malice, impiety and impudence will suffice; and such presumptuous jesters what one another's ingenuity and embolden one another to the most daring blasphemies. *Scott on Neh. iv. 1.*

LETTER FROM A COUNTRY PARSONAGE.

Having just returned from a ten day's tour to Western Pennsylvania, the occurrence seem of sufficient interest to communicate. A kind and urgent request was sent me to visit Newcastle, Lawrence county, Pa., and assist at a series of meetings proposed to be held in that place. Without gainsaying the time was set and the journey made.

The desired religious services were to take place under conditions somewhat peculiar and promised to be of more than ordinary interest.

Newcastle is the seat of justice of Lawrence county, Pa., forty miles north-west from Pittsburgh. A town, or embryo city, having various railroad facilities; at the junction of two beautiful little rivers—Neshanic and Shenango. Large manufactories for smelting and rolling iron, and also glass making have been established here, with considerable trade. A fine farming and fruit growing region surrounds the place. A population of some eight thousand of all nationalities, of all creeds and confessions—Jew and Gentile, Christian and infidel.

Here is a congregation owning a commodious house of worship, and lately coming into connection with the New School General Assembly. During those dark days when slavery ruled church courts with such an iron hand, this congregation was organized in connection with the Free Presbyterian church; a small body, radically anti-slavery. When the New School Assembly took her present high and consistent position on this subject, this congregation in Newcastle, feeling that its special mission in the direction of its organization was fairly completed; asked and was received into connection with the New School Assembly. Its able pastor Rev. A. B. Bradford is now compelled, through failing health, to terminate his labors with the people.

There is also in Newcastle a congregation in connection with the Reformed Presbyterian church, (N. S.)—its pastor Rev. W. T. Wylie.

Both of these congregations are respectable in numbers and efficiency; yet neither of them able alone to afford a pastor on adequate support, or to take an effective part in the various efforts of Church extension.

A Union meeting of these two congregations was arranged to be held in the large New School Church. To this united meeting I went, and preached for eight successive evenings—preached twice on the intervening Sabbath, joining also 3 P. M., of each day in a Union meeting for prayer, conference and converse with inquirers. God's blessing was evidently there from the beginning. Christians long separated by ecclesiastical forms, soon felt, as they drank together into Christ, they were really one. The community became impressed with the truth; "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The meetings grew in numbers and interest. Those without, seeing this new and unwonted demonstration of Christian unity and brotherhood, were strongly attracted. It was court week in Newcastle. Lawyers, jurors and witnesses came to the meetings, evening after evening, and will have carried the union home with them to various localities in the country. An increasing spirit of earnestness, inquiry and prayer was manifest. Christians were revived, backsliders reclaimed and sinners brought earnestly to inquire. A time to be remembered. The meeting is still continued and may the Holy Spirit be poured out as at Pentecost.

Our hope is, that the brethren of these two congregations, having had such happy and practical evidence of what union in sympathy and effort means, will be loath, after these meetings have ended, to go back to the weaker efforts of separate organizations. It would seem their wisdom to unite and form one congregation, retaining the efficient services of brother Wylie, and thus constitute a church strong for work at home and efficient for good abroad. Such a peaceful, cordial, and happy re-union of numbers, strength and efforts would do more to draw together Christians now separated, than volumes of theoretic platforms.

The New School Presbyterian church is not numerous but efficient in Western Pennsylvania. This region comprises perhaps the strongest elements of efficiency and strength in the United States of the Old School, United and Reformed Presbyterians. From such elements of society certain results may be expected and in none of them will the inquirer be disappointed—industry, frugality, with abounding physical comforts; the Sabbath kept holy, wide-spread religious intelligence, social order, absence of crime; and in the late struggle of our country, the people, as a mass enthusiastic for the Union.

It is a matter of interest and gratulation that in the midst of this grand array of Presbyterianism, one, if not the most, efficient congregation is in the New School connection—that of brother Johnson in Pittsburgh. Should the Union in Newcastle be consummated, a new strength will be given the church in that interesting section.

A. M. STEWART

FRAZER PA., Feb. 26, 1867.

PROFITLESS DISPUTES.

Alas! that men should waste their talents, spend their time, and trouble the Church with so many disputes, which appear altogether dry and tasteless in the hour of death; that they should write on religious disputes as men in passion or in jest; and appear to contend for victory more than for truth; and to seek rather to dishonor their brother than to honor their God.