

Eschatology

I. The Definition

Etymologically this term refers to the events that happen last, at the end of the world. Traditionally these events have been identified as the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven and hell. In recent years, however, some liberals have extended the term eschatological beyond the limits of its previous meaning. They label the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ as eschatological events. Even the Flood, the Exodus, and the Babylonian captivity qualify for inclusion. Orthodox theology, on the other hand, and Merriam Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, remain true to the temporal etymology of the word - the dictionary specifying death, resurrection, immortality, the second advent of Christ, judgment, and the future state.

To include the death and resurrection of Christ, or any other divine intervention in the past, obscures the predictions of Christ's return. There is indeed a worth-while point in the liberal discussions, and it even bears on eschatology properly so-called. It is not, however, a recent liberal discovery. The point is that Christianity is an historical religion. This does not mean that Christianity, like Buddhism or Hinduism, has a history. It means that the theological contents of Christianity include assertions of historical events. The doctrines of the Atonement is not an historical events; but the crucifixion of Christ, which is an historical event, is an essential part of that doctrine. So too is the Exodus and the giving of the Law of Moses; and so on. If the enemies of Christianity could disprove the actual occurrence of these events, Christianity would have been refuted. Christianity is historical. Islam could perhaps get along without Mohammed; Hinduism and especially Buddhism do not stand or fall with any event of history. More obviously the systems of the great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel, do not contain historical data, but Christianity does.

This means that the world, and in particular mankind, is governed by teleological laws. History is not positivistic but providential; and as such, like a Divine Comedy, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Though the beginning, the creation, and the middle, the Flood, the Babylonian captivity, and especially the incarnation, require supernatural intervention, the end events, resurrection and judgment, are alone properly designated as eschatological.

## 2. The Intermediate State.

Unfortunately this strict definition leads to an embarrassment. With the emphasis on the end of history in the future, it seems improper to classify as eschatological events that have been repeated innumerable times in the past. But the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, a past and present reality for our ancestors, continues until the end. Where else then, other than in eschatology, can this Biblical teaching be located?

Chapter One of this volume mentioned the behavioristic theory of language in connection with the intermediate state of the soul. Behaviorism virtually dominates psychology today. Not only did Logical Positivism - school now in considerable disarray - propagate it; but influential philosophers also, for example, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, were its advocates. Innumerable psychologists teach it.

B.F. Skinner, undoubtedly the best known of contemporary behaviorists, has all human action determined by the strictly mechanical laws of physics and chemistry. Since behaviorists best understand the laws in the biological realm, it is they who should control the conduct of all people. Politicians and ordinary citizens should be made to conform to the behaviorists' plans for society.

Now, if we grant that behaviorists understand this science better than anyone else, it still follows that their thoughts and plans, which are of course only their bodily motions, are as much as the result of mechanical causes as the motions of other human bodies. But if all plans and ideals are equally mechanical, it is hard to show in what way the behaviorists' plans are better than those of corrupt politicians. They are all generated by the same method.

Now, it may eventuate through this causation that such psychologists will be able to seize political power. But if physics does not so favor them, and another group comes to power, the behaviorists cannot complain, for there is no rational basis for preferring their ideals above other ideals. Hence Skinner cannot rationally justify his view that since human behavior is determined in any case, it ought to be determined by scientific behaviorism. Where does Skinner find an ought in mechanism? Or even a better?

So much for the obvious enemies of Christ. There is also a lesson here for Christian apologetes. It is this: Since a person himself, Paul, Calvin, you and I, or better, since the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, “while” their bodies ... rest in their graves till the resurrection,” it follows that the man himself, far from being an instance of organic chemistry, is not even a combination of soul and body, but is strictly the soul. Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle too closely in the definition of the soul as “the form as an organic body.” Aquinas tried to avoid the denial of immortality inherent in Aristotle’s definition, but avoidance is difficult. Some other theologians or apologetes, even if they are not Thomists, argue that man is a unity, and that there is no duality of soul and body. Well, if man is the soul, he is a unity. But if we follow Augustine a man is no more a unity of soul and body than a carpenter is a unity of hand and hammer. For Augustine and what other theory so well accommodates the Biblical data on the intermediate state? - the soul is the person and the body is its instrument. So also Charles Hodge: “The soul is the self, the Ego, of which the body is the organ” [instrument] (Vol III, p 725). Also, “the body [is] not a necessary condition of [the soul’s] consciousness or activity.” (p. 726). To which Hodge adds

Rev. 14:13     Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea; saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follows them.

This is not the the only verse in the Bible that teaches the existence of such a soul (psyche), mind (nous), or spirit (ruach, pneuma). This was documented in the discussion on the creation and nature of man. To this the New Testament adds:

Matt. 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

II Cor. 5:8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The first of these three occurs in Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection, however, requires the continuous existence of the person from the time of death on. Hence the phrase, "the God of Abraham" asserts that Abraham is living now, even more pointedly than it asserts the resurrection. And lest it be thought that Jesus did not quite meet the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection, be it remembered that they denied the resurrection because they denied all life after death (Josephus, Wars II, 8, 14).

The Sadducees' denial invites comparison with an extremely opposite, though equally non-Christian, assertion of the "immortality" of the soul. The word immortality is put in quotation marks here because it is not the right term. The Pythagoreans and especially Plato - it is not true of Democritus, Epicurus, nor presumably of Aristotle either - thought not only that the soul survives death, and is in this sense immortal, but also that it will be reincarnated. It will not only survive all future deaths but has already survived all past death. The soul is eternal or more accurately everlasting. Such is the argument of Plato's Phaedo; though the Timaeus seems to speak of the construction of the World Soul out of preexisting elements, and if the World Soul, then a fortiori human souls. At any rate the Bible, denying that souls are eternal, asserts that by God's providence they are immortal.

With respect to some more modern religious groups, the most important of the three verses just quoted is the one in Luke. To this, however, one may add the account of the Transfiguration. As with the thief on the cross who entered paradise with Christ late Friday afternoon, so with Moses and Elijah. On the mount they appeared and discussed the doctrine of the atonement with Jesus. The bodily appearance was doubtless a theophany - Peter would never have recognized them by sight anyhow - but the important point is that they discussed theology. Their minds were active, and no doubt acute.

If, now, thinking were a function of the brain, of of the muscles as Dewey holds, Moses and Elijah could have taken no interest in the atonement. Although this consideration does nothing to convince secular psychologists, as was explained in chapter one, it ought to warn Christian psychologists to avoid contamination from their professional colleagues.

From time to time in the history of theology a view surfaces which, though it does not deny the existence of the soul, nevertheless denies that the soul immediately upon death enters upon a state of conscious bliss. Those who hold such a view divide into two groups. The one asserts a sleep of the soul; the other asserts a period of punishment in purgatory.

Eusebius reports that there was a sect of Christians in Arabia who held that the soul remained unconscious from death to the resurrection. Calvin wrote a refutation against a similar group in his day. Since the view is not unknown today, some space can well be allotted to its present exponents.

The Seventh Day Adventist church is the best known contemporary exponent of the view that the soul does not remain conscious after death. To support their position they assemble a large number of Scripture references. (Questions on Doctrine. 1957, pp. 522 ff.)

Some of these are:

Psa. 6:5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Psa. 30:9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?

Psa. 115:17 The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.

Isa. 38:18-19 For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. (19) The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

Strange to say, they include in this very list

I Cor. 15:17-18 And if Christ be not raise, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

This is strange because Paul's general argument here is a hypothetical destructive syllogism. The premise "Christ is not raised" implies the conclusion "They that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." But since the premise is not Paul's own - it is the premise of those he opposes - neither is the conclusion his. When the SDA includes this in its list, it give the impression of denying the resurrection of Christ. One would also like to know what they say about Christ's condition between Friday 3:00 P.M. and Sunday 5:00 A.M. They quote, "His soul was not left in hell (Greek, hades, "the grave")." IF then his soul was not in Hades, and certainly not in the grave, for souls are not bodies, nor in heaven conscious with the Father, where was it and what was it doing that Saturday?

At any rate they say about the dead, and therefore presumably about Christ, “The saints go to the grave ... while asleep in the tomb the child of God knows nothing. ... One who serves God closes his eyes in death, and whether one day or two thousand years elapse, the next instant in his consciousness will be when he opens his eyes and beholds his blessed Lord”, (pp. 523-524). But this was not true of Moses and Elijah.

The SDA writer considers the cases of some who have been raised from the dead; the widow’s son, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus, and four others. The argument is interesting: “It would surely be too bad to bring one back from heaven, where having once arrived, he would naturally expect to remain forever.” This, however, is not strictly so; for presumably when a soul enters Paradise at death, he will know that he is not yet in the final state. But to continue the quotations, “to bring one back from the realms of bliss to this vale of tears would be to run the risk of his sinning again, and so of losing his eternal reward!

This argument may impress Arminians and any others who deny predestination. But it only causes Calvinists to smile. The present volume has tried to stress the point that Christianity is a logically concatenated system. Numerous examples have been given. But what student at the start suspected that the doctrine of the intermediate state presupposes the doctrine of predestinations?

The SDA author picks up some verses on which orthodox Christians have placed more weight than they can bear. But not always. II Cor. 5:8 contains the phrase, “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” The SDA argument is, “Nothing in this text [justifies] ... the conclusion that being present with the Lord will occur immediately upon ‘being absent from the body.’ The text does not indicate when these experiences take place. We simply recognize the interval of death between the two experiences. ... Making reference to the future state, Paul speaks of a ‘building of God ... eternal in the heavens’ and ‘... our house which is from heaven’. When the change takes places and we put on immortality, he remarks that it is in order that ‘mortality might be swallowed up of life.’ Then it is at the resurrection, it seems to us, that Paul

expected to be ‘present with the Lord,’ for he says in I Cor. 15:53 that at the second coming of Christ, this mortal must put on immortality” (p. 529).

These conclusion are far from certain. First, the subject matter in I Cor. 15:33 is not the same as in II Cor. 5:8. The former says that our “phtharton must put on aphtharsia.” i.e. the corruptible must put on incorruption. But this does not refer to the soul receiving a resurrection body, because the soul is already incorruptible. The soul we have now, the soul we now are, is immortal. The next phrase is, “this thing that is subject to death (thneton touto) must put on deathlessness.” But this refers to the body, not to the soul. The verse says, “This mortal body must put on an immortal body.” Such an interpretation fits very well with the illustration of the grain of wheat in I Cor. 15:36, 37, 44. Hence the idea is not that the soul becomes deathless at the resurrection.

With this elimination of the former passage the exegesis of II Cor. 5:8 will not be burdened with a false comparison. The verse said, “absent from the body ... present with the Lord.” What or who is absent from the body? Paul of course. Then Paul is not his body. Paul is his soul. Note previously in inverse 6, Paul was at home in the body, and therefore absent from the Lord. Who or what was “at home”? Paul of course. Then his body is his home; it is Paul, that is, Paul himself, who resides there. At home in the body is absent from the Lord; and absent from the body is present with the Lord. Clearly the SDA is mistaken in referring this to the resurrection of body.

If anyone think that this is not sufficient to refute the opposing position, something more can be said II Cor. 5, not only to refute, but to explain more fully what the Bible says about the intermediate state.

In chapter four Paul had been speaking of his many afflictions. He could hardly have been unaware that he might be murdered or executed by his enemies. Nevertheless he knows that

if the home in which he now lives be destroyed, he has an eternal home in heaven. He groans in his present home and desires to live in his heavenly home.

What is this heavenly house? The SDA says it is the resurrection body. There are two other interpretations. One is that the house or home is heaven itself. The other is that the soul at death enters an “intermediate body” suitably constructed to last until the resurrection. For this view there is neither support elsewhere in Scripture, nor hint in these verses. It has been based only upon non-revelational psychology: “As without body there is no soul, so without a corporeal organisation there can be no salvation; a corporeal organisation as the necessary condition of personality, is the end of God’s work. ... The continued existence of the soul as a pure spirit without a body is to the apostle an impossibility ... for self-consciousness in a created being necessarily supposes the limitation of a bodily organisation” (Olshausen, Commentary, in loc.).

This view is probably based on Aristotle’s definition of the soul as the form of an organic body, as opposed to Plato’s view of the soul as an independent reality. Eusebius (Church History, VI, 37) reports a view very similar to that of the SDA. Calvin in his day attacked a view of “soul-sleep”, called Psychopannychianism. But let us return to II Cor. 5.

Does then the passage in question refer to the resurrection body? In opposition to this view, one may note that heaven is described as a place of many mansions, a city with many houses, or a habitation (Jn. 14:2; Heb. 11:10, 14; 13:14; Rev. 21:10; Lk. 16:9, 22). Then too, the resurrection body is not eternal. It may in some way be derived from our present natural body; but this is not eternal. Hence the house must be heaven, not a new or renovated body. Furthermore, in consoling himself and others who may suffer death in the persecutions, Paul says, “we have ... “ The argument is: Do not be alarmed: if we die, we now have a heavenly home to which we shall go. It is rather obvious that the consolation depends on the fact that immediately at death, we enter a glorious home. The contention that it merely seems immediate because we are unconscious for a thousand years or so is a very strained interpretation. The

conclusion therefore is justified that being absent from the body is coterminous with being present with the Lord.

However, the SDA quoted verses from the OT and these require a mention. They were in general similar to Psa. 115:17, "The dead praise not the Lord."

Now, as a preliminary remark, one may mention the fact that the OT says so little about life after death that some liberals assert the OT denies it. The liberal position on this point can be met with Job 19:25-27 and with various passages describing the intimate covenantal relationship between God and his people. But if the OT has little to say about a future life and a resurrection, it is not surprising that it has still less to say about the intermediate state.

Since, however, the SDA is at this time a rather prominent religious group, it is well to consider their use of the OT. For this purpose a fairly long quotation will be made from a book in which the author analyses SDA theology in considerable detail. The student will do well to read the entire book.

*"The appeal to verses referring to the condition of man in death. In the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and Ecclesiastes, there are more than a few verses which speak of the silence of the dead, the perishing of the dead man's thoughts, and so forth. These passages prove to the satisfaction of the Adventists that there is no continuation of consciousness or of any kind of activity after the occurrence of death. An examination of such texts in their setting, however, may very well lead to a conclusion different from that reached by Adventism, namely, that at the least they allow, and in some cases fairly well require, the construction that they refer to the dead not in an absolute sense but in their relationship to living persons or earthly activities."*

"An examination of one of these, selected at random, evinces this fact. Psalm 146:4, cited on page 522 of *Questions on Doctrine*, reads: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." This verse, however, is found in the course of an exhortation by

the Psalmist that men should trust in God and not "in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help." Why is this counsel to be heeded? It is because all men are subject to death; even the mightiest of them expire and are buried out of the sight of their fellows; all their designs and plans, everything that has relevance to this present form of existence, are finished completely and finished forever. This is what the text intends to teach; there is no reflection one way or the other upon the state of the person after death. Indeed, if it should be insisted that this and similar verses must be applied to the destiny of the individual in a rigidly literal sense, and that the writers of such passages had in mind to say everything that is to be said concerning death, one who believed in no kind of immortality or resurrection at all would be perfectly justified in finding support for his view in these words. Understood as referring to anything more ultimate than the the phenomenal aspects of death, they fit a view of man of the type which B. B. Warfield classifies as "Pure Mortalism" better than they do the doctrine of conditional immortality. Does not Ecclesiastes 9:5 say " ... the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten"? Where, by Seventh-day Adventist canons of interpretation, is there room for even a "conditional immortality" here?"

*"The appeal to passages referring to "immortality" and "life".* The Adventists argue that since "God alone hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:13-16), man does not have it innately; further, since "man is urged to seek for immortality (Rom. 2:7), he does not now possess it."

"The former of these verses, Paul's words to Timothy, are among the favorite texts by which Adventism proves that man is not immortal, and at first glance it would seem that this is all they need to make their case; the verse says in so many words that immortality cannot be predicated of anyone but God. The difficulty is, however, that if the "immortality" which is envisioned here is of a kind which can be partaken of by a creature at all, the movement has on its hands a text which proves far too much. How, if "God alone hath immortality," can man have "conditional immortality"? It should be obvious, therefore, that Paul is at this point using the word in a sense in which it cannot be applied to any creature. This "immortality" is an exclusively divine quality; no angel or glorified saint, not to mention the demons or lost men, will ever possess it as God

possesses it. Indeed, it is unlikely that any group in the history of Christianity, other than an occasional isolated and short-lived mystical sect, has ever taught that man does or shall have immortality in this sense, namely, as an original, eternal or necessary quality. Certainly when traditional Protestantism affirms that men are naturally immortal, it does not mean that they are so in the same way as God is immortal; it is using the term "immortality of the soul" with respect to men in general as the equivalent of "endless existence."”

“The latter of these passages, Romans 2:7, speaks of "immortality" in still another sense. That this is so is evident from the context, in which the words "glory," "honour," and "peace" (v. 10) are conjoined with the "immortality" for which men are urged to seek. All of these are in antithesis to "indignation and wrath and tribulation and anguish," the lot of the unrighteous. The force of "immortality" here, then, is not quantitative, in the sense of bare continuance of existence (in which sense all men are "immortal"), nor is it that of eternal and original immortality (in which sense only God is "immortal"); this "immortality" is of a qualitative kind, connoting incorruptibility, in which sense it is used of the redeemed people of God and of no others. The same principle may be applied to those passages which speak of "eternal life" as the "gift of God." This is not a "gift" of endless existence, but of perfect blessedness "in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.””

“*The appeal to passages referring to "death"*. The situation here is parallel to that which was noted in the preceding section. "Death" is used in Scripture in more senses than one, and "cease to exist" is by no means its most frequent meaning. This is manifestly the case even on the Adventists' own principles; if there is to be any future punishment at all (as the Adventists say there will be), "annihilation" cannot exhaust the meaning of "death" as the "wages of sin." The term, as will be apparent when the question of annihilationism comes under discussion, is used in a fuller and far more sober sense.”

“*The appeal to the use of "sleep" to refer to death*. The point is emphasized by the Adventists that "the Greek words for 'sleep' . . . refer in many instances to the sleep of death." In this

connection they cite the remark of W. E. Vine: This metaphorical use of the word sleep is appropriate because of the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body. It is difficult to determine what the writers of Questions on Doctrine had in view in calling attention to this fact. Vine's observation is quite correct, and it is the interpretation placed upon this terminology by the great host of Christian writers. "Sleep" is indeed a natural euphemism for death, referring to the appearances of things, no reflection upon matters more ultimate being intended. As far as the non-material part of man is concerned, therefore, it is impossible to decide from this expression, taken by itself, whether or not there is consciousness after death. There is, in fact, but one place in Scripture where the term "fall asleep" is used in close conjunction with a reference to the departure of the non-material part of man, namely Acts 7:59-60. Here, in the account of the martyrdom of Stephen, the verses read: And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

"The point will probably not need to be elaborated that this connection gives scant support to the view that to "fall asleep," used of death, implies that Stephen did not enter consciously into the presence of his Saviour and Lord."<sup>1</sup>

The section on Seventh Day Adventism began with a remark that two groups deny that the righteous soul upon death immediately experiences conscious bliss. The second of these groups is Romanism. Unlike the SDA Romanism affirms the consciousness but denies the bliss in its doctrine of purgatory. If the former section has been so long, two short considerations are enough to dispose of purgatory.

The first point is that the bible contains no mentions of purgatory. Sometimes I Cor. 3:15, and, even less appropriate, Jude 23 are used. Neither of these provide any basis for the doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert S. Bird, *Theology of Seventh Day Adventism* pp. 50-53, Eerdmans 1961.

Rev. 21:27 says that nothing defiled shall enter heaven; but this would imply purgatory only if the redeemed saints continued in their defilement. The apocryphal Maccabees 12:43 is a little better, but neither Jews nor Protestants accept the Apocrypha. The only valid argument that Romanists can use is: Many truths not written in the Bible were given to the Roman church and constitute its tradition; purgatory is one of these truths; therefore this doctrine must be accepted. This argument differs from those preceding. The former Scripture references are excellent premises, but the inference to purgatory is invalid. Here the logic is perfect, but the premises are false.

The second point can be connected with I Cor. 3:15 and Rev. 21:27. Nothing defiled enters heaven and all evil works are like hay and stubble to be burned up. This figure of burning up stubble may seem to hint at purgatory. Actually, however, there is a great difference. Purgatory is supposed to be a place where sinner suffer for their sins and thus complete their atonement. Christ's sufferings have expiated some sins, but not all. Since Christ's death was not sufficient (however necessary it might have been) to atone for all sin, the sinner himself must pay the penalty for the remainder. The present writer in another book quoted a well known gospel hymn:

Jesus paid it all,  
All to him I owe.  
Sin had left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow

The Romish counterpart is worth repeating here because it emphasizes the contrast.

Jesus paid in part:  
Thanks to him I say.  
Sin had left a bluish stain;  
He washed it somewhat gray.

### 3. The Second Advent.

With the doctrine of the intermediate state placed here because there is no better place for it, the next discussion takes up what is more properly called eschatological. The first point, possibly too obvious to mention, but clearly essential, is the fact that the NT predicts the future.

Luke 21:6 ff. There shall not be left one stone upon another. ... Nation shall raise against nation ... ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

John 21:18 When thou shalt be old, another shall find thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

Rom. 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved.

Rev. 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

Of the events the NT predicted, some have already occurred, e.g. the destruction of Jerusalem. Others, such as the world-wide preaching of the gospel, are occurring. The remainder are yet to come; and it is these, or, better, the temporal relations among these, that puzzle us as we read.

Though there are three distinctly different views concerning the order of the several events which constitute the age to come, the one event, of all the most important, and so acknowledged by all evangelicals, is the return of Christ.

Acts 1: 11 This Jesus, he who has [just] been taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in the Hay you have seen him depart into heaven.

There may be a hundred verses in the NT that predict or refer to the return of Christ. Most, if not all of the others, add some detail concerning concomitant circumstances. This one in Acts, unless one boggles at the simple phrase "in like manner," seems to be the only one that

restricts itself to the bare event itself. Even so, it is unambiguous in predicting that Jesus himself will return from heaven to earth.

With the rise of modernism in the nineteenth century, many liberals who wished to avoid too great a rejection of Scripture tried to interpret the return of Christ as the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Jesus on his Second Coming, by W.Roy Goff, 1917), or as the death of the believer, or even as the experience of regeneration. Against these views the fundamentalists emphasized the personal and bodily return of the Lord. Of course, they were right. But this emphasis need not be so vociferous today as it was then because the liberals' subterfuges are no longer possible. The subterfuges are no longer possible because (1) they were exegetically incompetent, and because (2) the liberals today do not need to fear outraging their unbelieving congregations by denying the Bible. In fact, though they often try to prove that Paul believed and has mistaken that Christ would return in his own lifetime, liberals can often please orthodox believers with their fairly accurate exegesis. Such is what the Bible teaches, the fundamentalists understood the Bible correctly, but they believed it - how stupid!

What the unbelievers reject as stupid is the obvious supernaturalism of Christ's return. Scripture emphasizes this in its description of the event. Though evangelicals divide into three main groups on the question of the millennium, they all agree that Christ will return on the clouds of heaven, in flaming fire, with the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel, accompanied by angels and saints. The student may make his own list of verses to complete this description. Deny the supernatural, and no Christianity remains.

But beyond this unanimous agreement on the main point of Christ's personal and visible return, there are three divergent theories concerning the temporal relations among some concomitant events. The questions are basically: Will there be a millennium or not; and if so, does it come before or after Christ's return.

( a ) Postmillennialism is the view that the preaching of the gospel will eventually convert the world and that a thousand year period of all but universal righteousness will ensue. Then Christ will return. His return is postmillennial. By far the most thorough defense of this view is David Brown's The Second Advent (on the cover of the book ) or Christ's Second Coming, Will it be Premillennial? (on the title page).

It is not possible here to reproduce the 489 pages of this carefully written volume; but some of the scripture adduced must be mentioned. Early in the volume Dr. Brown considers the parables.

First he refers to Matt.28:18-20 as indicating a long time and extensive changes between the two advents. Christ's return therefore could not have been imminent. To this agrees the parable of the tares. The field is the world -- not the Church, as those who oppose ecclesiastical discipline try to maintain - in which tares and wheat both growl until the harvest. This indicates a long time of slow but steady growth. The mustard seed and the leaven teach the same lesson. Something small becomes large through its inherent power.

But although the gospel is thus to permeate the world, there will be great reverses at times (I Timl. 4:1-3; II Tim.3:1-5; II Peter 3:3-4). These reverses do not annul the teaching of the parables on the eventual triumph of Christianity, but they do indeed show that it will be a long long time before Christ returns.

The wording of Acts 3:20-21 also, "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things ..." tends to discourage an expectation of Christ's return during the first century.

The parable of the ten pounds likewise teaches that the nobleman went into a far country for a long time. The details of the story - the antagonism of the citizens, the investment of the money, and the words of the nobleman upon his return - all teach that Christ's return was not imminent.

Dr. Brown then quotes an earlier writer:

"It is worthy of note that the only errors mentioned in the New Testament respecting the time of our Lord's coming, all consist in dating it too early... The case of the servant represented as saying, 'My Lord delayeth his coming.' ... The servant had taken up a wrong impression of the date when his Master was to be looked for; and as his Master did not show himself according to that false date, the servant, instead of distrusting his own understanding, memory, or calculation ... acted on the assumption that his Master would not come ... and so acted to his ruin. And Dr. Brown goes on to show how Paul rebuked the Thessalonians for their belief in an imminent return. Then the apostle in the second epistle explains some events that must take place before Christ returns. The Scofield Bible tries to defend an imminent return, though two thousand years have now elapsed, by defining imminence as the absence of any known or prophesied event that must occur before the second advent (Note on Mt4: 17). But Paul made the prophecy.

Later in the volume ( pp.335-358, et passim)Dr. Brown finds in Daniel the gospel's gradual conquest of all nations as the small stone grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

In addition to a great amount of similar scriptural argumentation, Dr. Brown is, let us say, vehement against the premillennialists' lukewarmness toward foreign missions. In particular he castigates the Messrs. Bonar, quoting A. Bonar who called missionary zeal "a visionary hope" (p. 317), and referring to H. Bonar's rebuke to the London Missionary Society (p. 319).

Unfortunately castigation has not been confined to one side of this debate. Time and time again the premillennialists have accused their opponents of substituting political socialism for the gospel. This is a completely false accusation. It is true that the modernists largely depend on and trust in left-wing politics "to bring in the Kingdom of God." But this is not postmillennialism. The modernists along with their rejection of the Virgin Birth and the vicarious Atonement also reject the personal return of Christ. But the postmillennialists put their trust in the preaching of

the gospel. The contrast between the two millennial views has to do with the question whether God has ordained a general conversion of all people under the preaching of the gospel, or "whether God has reserved his regenerating power, on this scale, until Christ returns and ushers in a millennium.

Reliance on the return of Christ for the conversion of the world Dr. Brown considers, not merely pessimistic, but as a denigration of the gospel. He holds that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Therefore to make the return of Christ the power of salvation, chiefly through his converting the Jews by his appearance, is to contradict Romans, even if the Jews then preach the gospel to the Gentiles and usher in an age of righteousness. Not only do the premillenarians denigrate the power of the gospel, they also face a difficulty in the role they assign the Jews. For if Christ converts the Jews by his appearing, why should not the same event also convert the Gentiles without making use of Jewish preachers? On this supposition the gospel remains entirely useless.

Dr. Brown was no modernist or liberal; yet he lived in an age that was unbelievably optimistic. Herbert Spencer had just predicted that his millennium was just about to break forth. Nearly everyone, even good Christians, were influenced. by this general optimism. Great missionary endeavor would soon convert the Chinese. But today the work of the great China Inland Mission is in ruins. Since the Congo became Zaire, nearly all Africa has turned violently anti-christian. When Christ returns, will he find faith on the earth ?

Although the foregoing summary is quite inadequate to indicate the scope of Dr. Brown's constructive argument, exegeting hundreds of verses, a great deal of it is not so much constructive as it is an exploitation of the unavoidable difficulties, as well as some distressing stupidities, into which many premillenarians have fallen. The proliferation of imposing charts, predicting the order of future events in great detail, and with great imagination, could hardly avoid the absurdities of careless enthusiasm. Many of these chart makers had little or no theological training. Even those who did, sometimes made what we today can see are egregious

blunders. In 1927 a well educated, popular preacher in Philadelphia explained that the national boundaries in Europe were then precisely those of ancient Rome. No further changes would occur; Mussolini was restoring the Roman Empire; he was the anti-christ; and the Lord would return very shortly. What about Hitler? Oh, no; Hitler is unimportant; Mussolini and Rome will dominate until Christ returns. That was 1927.

On the other hand and quite aside from the fundamentalism of post World War I, the exegetical problems are very real and very great. Then after exegesis the piecing together of the Scriptural prophecies is more difficult than any jig-saw puzzle. This is characteristic of predictive prophecy. Christ said, "and now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is to come to pass, ye might believe" ( John 14:29 ). This statement may refer to the death and resurrection of Christ, to Pentecost, or even to the second advent. In any case the disciples could not have described, on the basis of John fourteen, what was going to happen the next day, fifty days afterward, or two thousand years later. Jesus upbraided his disciples for not understanding the Old Testament. But if we are honest with ourselves, we should hardly claim to have understood the prophecies better than they. So, today, those who construct detailed charts of the future must have a very good opinion of themselves.

An integral part of the postmillenarian argument is the inability of the human mind to decipher predictive prophecy. This includes particularly the premillennialist's preference for a literal fulfilment rather than a spiritual one.

One item that Dr. Brown labors upon for some length is the assertion by many premillennialists that the Jewish temple will be literally rebuilt on the spot that now supports the Dome of the Rock. That the Israelis may yet drive out the Arabs and build a temple where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac cannot be adjudged impossible. But that such a rebuilding is a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy and that God and the Messiah would accept the sacrifices of lambs again is quite another matter.

For one thing, not all prophecies were intended literally, though a good number of premillennialists so assert. For proof one need not read beyond Genesis 3:15. But there is also Numbers 24:17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel ..."

This might be a prophecy of the second coming rather than the first; but Jesus is not a planet or a sun. Nor is he a literal cornerstone, as Isaiah says.

Cannot then the temple prophecy of Ezekiel also be figurative? Aside from the fact that the man in Ezekiel 40-43 was not a literal man, the rest of the chapter sounds very literal. However, a doubt arises when we read that holy waters flow from under the sanctuary into the Dead Sea and purify it so that the Israelites will have fish to eat. The assignment of territories to the tribes is also suspicious. Ezekiel's scheme requires parallel strips of land, each extending from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. The symmetry is perfect, but the geography is puzzling.

(b) Amillennialism.

The exceptional difficulties that eschatology presents have led some theologians to escape them by a complete denial of a millennium. If there is no millennium, then it is foolish to ask whether Christ's return precedes it or follows it. The only place where the Bible explicitly mentions the thousand years is in the extremely puzzling and apocalyptic book of Revelation (20:4-7). These visions from chapter four on, with the exception of the eventual victory of God over Satan, are almost completely unintelligible.

Commentators cannot agree. Those who take chapters two and three literally, i.e. letters to existing churches in Asia minor divide on the remainder. One group dates the book at A.D. 64 and explains chapters 4-12 as a description of Jewish persecutions of Christians; then to the end of chapter 18 is a prediction of the Roman persecutions. Finally chapters 19 and 20 describe the worldwide conquest of the gospel.

Others who also take the letters literally, but who date the book at A.D.96, explain chapters four on as a series of visions all with the same meaning and all covering the same time. The meaning is God's victory over Satan, and the time in every case is from John's day to the return of Christ.

But there are some unfortunate souls who, though they acknowledge that these letters were sent to seven actual churches in Asia Minor, hold that these seven churches prefigure seven ages in history from John's day to the second advent.

To support this view Scofield's note on Rev.1:20 states, " It is incredible that in a prophecy covering the church period there should be no such foreview." Now, assuming that the Apocalypse must cover the "church period", one may ask why chapters 4-19 cannot be such a foreview. Clearly there is nothing in the seven letters to suggest that they predict the course of history. Nor is Scofield's division of history at his particular junctures required by anything in Scripture. Nor by anything in history either. True enough, he selects some important points, such as Emperor Constantine in A.D. 316. but why not specify the fall of Rome in A.D.410 and the ensuing four hundred years of the Dark Ages? Why not put a division about A.D. 1274, when Aristotelianism conquered Augustinianism? But the worst aspect of Scofield's division is his view of the Protestant Reformation. No doubt its "works were not fulfilled", for Romanism lives on; but shall we say the Reformation has It a "name that liveth, and art dead ... I have not found thy works perfect before God... Repent... Thou has [only] a few names ... which have not defiled their garments ..." Does this describe the activities of Luther, Calvin, and Knox?

Then, next, Scofield places the second advent the end of chapter three. The text itself gives no hint of this, for which reason Scofield describes it as a "secret" rapture, quite different from the very noisy and visible rapture of I Thess.5:16-17 and Rev. 1:7. Then chapters four to twenty are supposed to describe a great tribulation on earth, after which Christ comes the third time.

In view of all these perplexities it is not surprising that some expositors simply denied the millennium and thought thereby to escape the difficulties.

If the outright denial of a millennium is not attractive, for Rev.20:4-7 must mean something, amillennialism can be equated with one form of postmillennialism. Of course David Brown expected a millennium of righteousness in the future. But St. Augustine, comparing the restricted knowledge of God during OT times with the worldwide preaching of the gospel since the apostles, taught that the millennium extends from Christ's resurrection to his return. Most Christians, however, at the end of this twentieth century, have a more pleasant picture of the millennium and are less enthusiastic about contemporary civilization.

Amillennialism can more easily accommodate contemporary savagery. Though some amillennialists expect great revivals, or at least vigorously assert that no one can deny their

possibility, the system does not need any further extension of the gospel, If the Russian communists regularly employ torture, if Mao has massacred twenty or thirty million Chinese (and so alleviated hunger in China ), not to mention his extermination of the Tibetans, and if savages have brought back cannibalism to the Congo and terror to all southern Africa, the amillennialist can accommodate it all under the parable of the tares and the wheat. He may not be so adamant as the premillennialist in asserting the inevitability of things getting worse and worse, but he can still ask, with the premillennialist, will Christ find faith on the earth when he returns?

Nevertheless, arguments against a future millennium are not too convincing. When carried out consistently they become improbable. Sometimes extremely so. Two examples are those of William Milligan, The Book of Revelation, and B.B. Warfield, The Millennium and the Apocalypse, in his Biblical Doctrines.

Milligan's exposition of Rev. 20 begins plausibly enough. "the overthrow of Satan and not the reign of a thousand years is the main theme of the first ten verses" (p. 336). "The thousand years mentioned express no period of time." This seems strange. But "They are not a figure for the whole Christian era [as with Augustine] ... Nor do they denote a certain space of time ... at the close of the present dispensation. ... They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or perfection" (p. 337). To show that the terms year and month do not always denote periods of time, Milligan refers to Ezek. 39:9, 12. He acknowledges that a "difficulty connected with this view is that in the third verse of the chapter Satan is said to have been shut into the abyss until the thousand years should be finished, and in the seventh verse we read, 'And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed'" (p. )39). Milligan immediately adds, "but the difficulty is more specious than real." What is more specious than real, however, seems to be Milligan's defense of his claim by a further reference to Ezekiel. More of this in a moment, after a consideration of B.B. Warfield's argument.

One of the most capable defenders of Amillennialism was B.B. Warfield, who published an article The Millennium and the Apocalypse in the Princeton Theological Review (Vol 2, 1904 now included in Biblical Doctrines, Oxford Univ. Press. 1929 pp.643 ff.). His thesis is not simply that the scriptures are silent as to a millennium, but that they “definitely exclude the whole conception” (p.644 ). To sustain this position Warfield assumes that each of the seven sections of Revelation begins with the first advent and pictures history on to the second advent. He calls this " the principle of recapitulation." This is, of course, an assumption. It is the assumption of some very estimable theologians, from Augustine to Hengstenberg. But others would say that any assumption begs the question.

Warfield also stresses the fact of symbolism. John saw visions, not history. Many of the details of these visions belong to the visions only. Their purpose is to make the picture vivid - no more; and hence they do not indicate events additional to the main one that the total picture symbolizes.

Less acceptable is Warfield's next assumption: “Here as in all prophecy: it is the spiritual and ethical impression that rules the presentation and not an annalistic or chronological intent” (p.646 ).

Well, of course, some ethical or moral instruction can be found in these visions; but in contrast with the parable of the unjust steward (Mt.18:23 ) or the famous Samaritan neighbor or the parable of the sower, where the ethical element is predominant, and where the historical if present at all is subordinate, - in contrast with these the material in Revelation is strongly chronological. No doubt exegetes differ; but the interpretation that finds first a Jewish persecution and then a Roman persecution is not so absurd as to be disposed of by a mere assumption that the material is ethical and not historical.

There is one point that should be noted before discussing chapter twenty. David Brown mentioned it, and Warfield mentions it twice. The reference is to the conquering sword of Christ, which proceeds from his mouth. Warfield belabors the fact that Christ's victory is not achieved

through literal warfare - bullets and atom bombs. He holds that the sword in Christ's mouth signifies the worldwide preaching of the gospel. But this latter view cannot be deduced simply from a denial of military might. The sword in Christ's mouth could be a personal declaration of Christ himself to the Jews that he is Messiah. or, more in accord with the context, a judgment of doom.

What is really troublesome with Warfield's view is that the person on the white horse, the person called Faithful and True, whose eyes were as fire, with many crowns on his head, who had a name no man knew but himself, is taken as a symbol of a thousand missionaries, none of whom, nor all together, merit this glorious description. Is it not clear that the vision symbolizes Christ himself? At his first advent he spoke in person and miracles occurred. Why not again?

Now comes the main question: Does Rev. 20 teach that there is a future millennium or does it not?

Warfield's first argument (p.649) against a millennium depends on the word souls in Rev. 20:4. The millennium supposedly takes place on earth and those who enjoy it are people in the flesh. But Rev.20:4 is in heaven, and the souls have no bodies.

Here Warfield has forgotten what he so vigorously urged against the premillennialists, that these are visions or pictures symbolizing realities on earth. If Warfield wishes to take souls literally, as distinct from bodies, he should explain how souls can sit on thrones. Can he hold that thrones and sat are figurative, while souls in the very next phrase is literal? Then too, if we must be literal, the souls were the souls of them who had been beheaded. Hence saints who had died a natural death are excluded. Yet Warfield wants the thousand years to be a description of the intermediate state of all believers.

And for good measure, when John said, "I saw the souls of them "who had been beheaded," and four lines later says, "they lived and reigned with Christ," must the they -which is merely the third plural form of the verb - must the they mean souls? Could it not possibly be those who had been beheaded"? This may not seem so convincing as the previous objections to Warfield; nevertheless the following words are, " the rest of the dead ... " Hence in both cases the

subject of the verb could be simply “those who had lived ” without any necessary inference that John is talking about souls in sharp distinction from bodies.

The idea that the thousand years is the intermediate state of redeemed souls in heaven leads Warfield to strange conclusions. The student may consult the full text, but this abbreviation cannot much misrepresent it. “The picture is ... the picture of the intermediate state - of the saints of God gathered in heaven away from the confused noise and garments bathed in blood ... The thousand years, thus, is the whole of the present dispensation ... This period between the advents is, on earth, a broken time - three and a half years, a “little time” (Ver.3 ) ... To the saints in bliss it is, on the contrary, a long and blessed period ... “a thousand years” ... The “binding of Satan” is therefore in reality not for a season, but with reference to a sphere; and his “loosing” again is not after a period but in another sphere. ... There is indeed no literal “binding of Satan” ... what happens, happens not to Satan but to the saints, and is only represented as happening to Satan for the purpose of the symbolical picture” (pp.649-651).

Surely such an attempt at exegesis is a device of desperation. Augustine' s view that current earthly history is the millennium may sound strange to those who expected peace and blessedness on earth instead of World Wars, communism, and terror; but it is not utterly absurd. The gospel has indeed been preached to all kindreds, tribes, and nations. This is history, chronology, on earth. Warfield- well, chronology can profit by another mention.

Warfield had ruled out “chronological intent,” not only from chapter 20, but from Revelation as a whole. Let us look at the chronology of chapter 20.

First there is the binding of Satan for a thousand years. It is just nit-picking to debate whether the thousand years are precisely  $365 \times 24 \times 60 \times 1000$  minutes. This precise number of minutes or years may indeed be symbolical; but it must be symbolical of a long period of time. During this time Satan can deceive the nations no more. The text does not say that Satan cannot deceive the souls in heaven any more. No doubt he cannot. But the text says he cannot deceive the Russians, Chinese, and Americans any more, until the thousand years is completed. Here is

another point of chronology: Satan deceived the nations for centuries; then for a long time he will be unable to do so; then he will again deceive the nations for a little season.

If this does not refer to history and chronology on earth, Warfield would have to say that although the disembodied souls of the saints are now free from Satan's power, they will again be deceived for a little while before they are reunited with their bodies.

Another chronological note comes in verse five: the rest of the dead do not live [again] until Satan is released from his bonds. The verse is difficult. Who the rest of the dead are is not explained. And it does not seem proper to attach to them the immediately following phrase, "This is the first resurrection," Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that chronology is involved. We must conclude that Warfield is greatly mistaken in ruling out all temporal sequence from this passage.

Read carefully what Warfield says. The quotation is abbreviated, but the sense is clear; and anyone can easily find the original and study it slowly.

"Any hesitancy ... to adopt this [amillennial] view appears to arise chiefly from the difficulty we naturally experience in reading this apparently historical narrative as a descriptive picture of a state - in translating, so to speak, the dynamic language of narrative into the static language of description. Does not the very term "thousand years" suggest a lapse of time? ... Natural as this feeling is, we are persuaded it is grounded only on a certain not unnatural incapacity to enter fully into the seer's method and to give ourselves entirely to his guidance. ... The number 1000 represents in Bible symbolism absolute perfection ... When the seer says seven or four or three or ten, he ... expresses by each a specific [non-numerical] notion. The sacred number seven in combination with the equally sacred number three forms the number of holy perfection ten [of course, not twenty-one] and when this ten is cubed into a thousand the seer has said all he could say to convey to our minds the idea of completeness." Thus Warfield tries to rid Revelation of its chronology. How he knows that the seer by using the number 1000

has said all he could say about the complete bliss of the saints, remains unexplained. It would seem that nearly any ordinary Christian could say considerably more.

(c) Premillennialism

The present volume advocates premillennialism, though in a manner that many premillennarians will not like. For it is to be feared that premillennarians are their own worst enemies. Why, may become somewhat clear as the end approaches. At any rate, the argument of the present volume is not so much that the Bible teaches it unmistakably, as that postmillennialism and amillennialism can in no way be fitted into the Biblical data, and hence only premillennarianism is left.

Since the dispensationalists have been so vociferous and so dogmatically detailed with their charts only an architect could draw, the exegesis of a few more passages is needed to point up how much we do not know about the subject.

True, dispensationalists are not the only ones strongly attached to their formulations. Geerhardus Vos wrote The Pauline Eschatology, a tremendously scholarly work and a tremendously difficult one. In it he tries to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that I Cor. 15 definitely makes premillennialism impossible. After one had studied his argument for hours and analyzed it for more hours, one should conclude that Vos failed to prove his point. At the same time also it seems that premillennialists who want to find their view ineradicably embedded in that chapter are equally unsuccessful.

There was a short discussion of Rev. 20 a few paragraphs back. In order now not to be one-sidedly critical of some premillennarians, an amillennial objection can be disposed of. Some of them argue that in Rev. 20:4 the thrones are in heaven, that the souls of the martyrs are in view and not their bodies; and therefore John is not predicting a millennium on earth. There are two answers to this. First, chapters 4-20 are all visions in heaven, but clearly the visions are

symbolic of what happens on earth. Of the beast with seven heads (Rev. 17:9), John said, "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth ... and the woman ... is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18). What is seen in heaven symbolizes Rome. It may be imperial Rome, as many early Christians thought; or it may be the Papacy as the Reformers thought; but it must be something on earth. Second, the reference to souls reads, "the souls of them that were beheaded ..." Then it says, "They lived and reigned." The pronoun they can refer to souls --though even so the souls symbolize something -- or it can as well refer to "them that were beheaded." There is no intent to contrast souls in heaven with bodies on earth.

But the premillennialists, especially the dispensationalists, face embarrassments too. The passage now under consideration, in verse 5 says, "This is the first resurrection." Are there two resurrections? Well, in his Gospel John (5:29) asserts a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. But in Rev. 20:5,6 the contrast is not between a first and a second resurrection, but between a first resurrection and the second death. What is envisaged is one resurrection and two deaths. Further, there may be a third resurrection besides the two in John 5:29. To grasp the whole picture, or, better, to recognize some more elements of the intricate puzzle, one must note that not only in the symbolic book of Revelation, but in the prosaic epistles, the word resurrection and its equivalents do not always, do not usually, mean a bodily resurrection from the grave. Ephesians 2:1-6 identify resurrection and regeneration. Indeed, the New Testament designates the initial act of the Holy Spirit in saving a sinner as a resurrection, and uses this term more frequently than terms expressing a new birth.

Warfield, however, does not interpret the resurrection of Rev. 20:5 as the new birth. He identifies both the binding of Satan and this first resurrection with the intermediate state of the saints.

Though Warfield's interpretation is bizarre, it cannot be denied that the verses pose difficult problems. One is the identification of "the rest of the dead [who] did not live [again should be omitted] until the thousand years were finished." A second, closely related to it, is the

meaning, of the word live. Could the rest of the dead be the unregenerate? There is no hint of this in the verse. Similarly, if they did not live until the thousand years were finished, one would suppose that they did live afterward. Since, now, the word live in verse four can hardly be restricted to mere physical life such as the lost may have, but includes a reigning with Christ --nor is any resurrection yet mentioned -- the idea of spiritual life cannot be immediately ruled out in verse five. It almost seems required. Must we then conclude that verse four refers only to Christians who were martyrs, while those who were indeed Christians but not martyrs have to wait a thousand years for something similar to verse four?

Next comes the puzzling phrase, "This is the first resurrection." It has already been noted that the term resurrection often means regeneration. John himself in his Gospel (5:25) uses the idea if not the word resurrection to describe spiritual life. And of course there is Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. This interpretation of Rev. 20:5 has at least one thing in its favor: it removes all the awkwardness of attaching the last phrase of the verse to the people inverse four, with another group between who do not belong there. The rest of the dead also had been raised from with the result that they too would not suffer the second death.

Another indefensible aberration of the dispensationalists is their insertion, between Rev. 3:22 and Rev. 4:1, of a rapture so secret that there is no reference to it in the whole Bible. Incompetent novelists have described the bewilderment of the non-christian population when they discover that a fair number of people have vanished. The novelists try to achieve a dramatic effect by having engineers on trains suddenly caught up in the air with Christ while the train ploughs on to destruction. The idea could be used in the age of air travel as it was in an earlier year, but perhaps dispensationalism has receded somewhat since the demise of the Broadway Limited.

However, the appeal must be to Scripture. In support of a "secret rapture" J Rene Pache (Le Retour de Jesus Christ, pp. 120, 121) argues that no one saw Enoch as he was taken away. Nor did anyone see Elijah ascend in the fiery, fiery chariots (except Elisha). Only the disciples

saw Jesus ascend. Further only the Wise Men, not the general public, saw the star of Bethlehem. And Paul's companions on the road to Damascus, though they saw the light, did not hear Christ's words to Paul. Then continues M. Pache, "Similarly it could be that the voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet ... will be heard only by believers. It Of course, M. Pache cannot show any necessity that these several incidents prefigure the second advent. It is all unfounded supposition. What is more disconcerting, he does not explain --as he should have if he wished to anticipate objections--

Rev. 1:7        Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.

Although I Thess. 4:7 does not say in so many words that the unregenerate will see Christ descending with clouds, angels, and saints, the text surely describes a noisy spectacular affair. More explicit is

Mt. 24:27 ff.    As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west ... the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light ... then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now, someone may say there are two future advents, one secret, one public and Matt. 24:27 refers to the second, while I Thess. 4, whose saints are not seen and whose trumpet is not heard, refers to the first. But this device begs the question. If exegesis shows that there are two future advents, one might possibly be secret. But there would be no Scriptural reason to suppose so, unless exegesis supported the idea of secrecy. Unsupported suppositions beg the question.

There are indeed good exegetical indications of more than one advent; but they do not establish the dispensational view, for the passages assert more than two advents, comings, parousia.

Mt. 10:23      Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.

Mt. 16:28      There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Both of these verses speak of a coming within the first century. One interpretation of the second verse identifies the coming in glory with the Transfiguration that immediately follows. Some support of this view comes from I Peter 1:16, where Peter himself calls the Transfiguration the parousia. Thus the technical term, which most people reserve for an event still future, is assigned to an event that took place before Christ was crucified.

However, while the Transfiguration is a parousia, on Peter's authority, a relative secret parousia, seen only by three disciples, it can hardly be the correct interpretation of Matt. 16:28. The reason is that in the verse that precedes it Jesus had connected this coming with a judgment upon all men. Obviously this does not fit the Transfiguration. Therefore it seems best to take both 10:23 and 16:28 as references to an event that was far from secret, invisible, or inaudible, viz., the destruction of Jerusalem. Both verses predict something that was to happen in the first century. Occasionally someone tries to understand such prophecies as referring to Pentecost. But though this occurred in the first century, the Holy Ghost is not the Son of Man, and Pentecost is not a judgment or condemnation of men because of their evil works.

There is another matter that ought not to be passed over in silence. Standard dispensationalism predicts a time called "The Great Tribulation."

Rev. 1:13,14    What are these that are arrayed in white robes? ... These are they which came out of great tribulation [KJ omits the double article: the tribulation  
the

great] and have washed their robes ...

The dispensational construction is that Christ returned secretly between 3:22 and 4:1. It is so secret that the text does not mention it. At this return Christ raptured all true believers, taking them up into the clouds with himself. Then for a period of seven years the great tribulation falls on the unbelievers left on earth. Somehow or other, during this period a number of people are converted, to whom alone 7:13-14 refer.

In recent years some dispensationalists have had doubts about the pre-tribulation rapture. Two views have emerged. One allows the church to go half-way through the tribulation to a mid-tribulation rapture. The other is that of a post-tribulation rapture.

Now, there are two main objections to both these views. First, Matt. 24:21 and Luke 21:16-24 describe the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These verses do not refer to the second advent, as Matt. 24:24 makes clear. Further Matthew says

Mt. 24:21      Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Not even Hitler's treatment of the Jews was worse than that of the Roman armies. And if no future tribulation can be so terrible, nothing can now occur to deserve the name of The Great Tribulation.

What then can Rev. 7:13,14 mean? The answer, which is the second objection to the dispensational scheme, is not one that appeals to Christians in the United States of America, for we, by God's grace, have lived a calm, protected, and quiet life. But beginning with the persecutions in the Roman Empire, Christians in other nations have not been so blest. Even we face at least ... Bunyan's Holy War. The great tribulation therefore is simply the present life.

Matt. 13:21 ... when tribulation or persecution ariseth ...

John 16:33 In the world ye shall have tribulation.

Acts 14:22 We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

I Thess. 3:4 We told you before that we should suffer tribulation.

Then, finally, if this is a third point in opposition to dispensationalism, the people mentioned in Rev. 7:13,14 do not seem to be restricted to a small number who were somehow converted during a seven year period. To begin with, there as a symbolic 144,000 Jews. In addition to these there was another great multitude which no man could number, of all the nations and kindred, and people, and tongues. These are they that came out of the tribulation the great and have washed their robes ... in the blood of the lamb.

Let this much be sufficient for the great tribulation.

Since the return of Christ is a very important event and is also a very interesting subject, the student will no doubt read about it in many articles and books. A small volume of systematic theology is not supposed to be interminably exegetical. Therefore this subsection will conclude with a very brief defense of premillennialism.

First, Rev. 20 mentions a millennium. The verse must mean something. It clearly means a period of time. Vision though the chapter may be, it refers to events on earth. This much refutes amillennialism. Furthermore, if Rev. 19 depicts the return of Christ, premillennialism is the only possible view. Two considerations support the contention that the chapter indeed predicts Christ's return. First, the description of the rider on the white horse fits Christ and no one else, as previously argued. Second, in an' apocalyptic book such as Revelation, whether the successive

visions are each a summary of all history or whether they are consecutive, one expects to find Christ's return somewhere. Other events and details we might be interested in can well have been omitted, such as the Protestant Reformation, but not the I return of Christ. It is irresponsible to find it, unmentioned, between chapters three and four. Chapter nineteen is the only possibility. This disposes of postmillennialism.

Then next, many postmillennial and amillennial objections are based on the idea that the second coming is an instantaneous event; for example, there is an hour of not more than sixty minutes when all who are in their graves shall come forth to a resurrection including both saved and lost. Hence a thousand years cannot intervene. Other events which premillennialists separate in time must likewise be simultaneous. But the parousia is not an instantaneous coming. It is a presence. In classical Greek Sophocles and Aristotle both use the word to denote a being present, especially a royal visit. In the New Testament parousia very definitely means a presence; (cf. I Cor. 16:17, II Cor. 10:10, Phil. 2:12, and particularly II Peter 1:16). Since a royal visit, a tour of inspection in one of the king's provinces, can last several months, why cannot the visit of the King of kings last a thousand years? Therefore the meaning of the term parousia disposes of several objections to premillennialism.

A final point in this discussion is not so much an argument for or defense of the premillennial return of Christ, as it is a bit of advice to all three groups of proponents. It was said earlier that the Jews, not merely the Pharisees, but all the Jews from Adam (or Abraham) on failed to understand the divine predictions. Though Christ rebuked the Pharisees, we cannot see the future, even with our additional information, much better than the Jews did. Yes, we have additional information in the New Testament. Without doubt the New Testament implies more than we can see. That is just the point. We do not see too clearly. Implications definitely contained in the Bible escape our deductive activity. But also it is clear that not all future history has been revealed. No one should try to prevent someone else from deducing as many implications as possible. Rather we should thank God that he has given some men superior

minds. But in the actual situation, and on this subject as contrasted with the doctrine of the Atonement for example, the wise course is that of cautious humility.

#### 4. Judgment and Hell

##### (a) Judgment

The first point, obviously, under this heading, is the fact that God, the moral Governor of the universe, will pronounce judgment upon all people. More explicitly the judge will be Jesus Christ himself.

John 5:22,27 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

Rom. 2:6, 16 Who will render to every man according to his deeds. ... In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ...

Rev. 20:12-15 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ... and the dead were judged ... according to their works. ... They were judged every man according to their works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

As a preliminary observation one notes that premillenarians generally assert two temporally separated judgments: Christ judges the saints at his coming, and God judges the reprobate after the millennium. Without prolonged exegesis it may be further noted that there is no good reason for a judgment at the beginning of the millennium. The saints at their death are

made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory. If therefore no formal judgment is necessary for a saint at death in order to be received into heaven, none is necessary in order to be raised and participate in the millennium. So also the wicked at their death begin their punishment, though their judgment may be delayed several thousand years.

Perhaps some, for the purpose of having a judgment before the millennium, will quote

II Tim. 4:1 ... the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. (cf. Mt. 25:31-32).

The difficulty with this interpretation is first, that the phrase "the quick and the dead" rather suggests a judgment of all people, and not saints only. Then, second, if the term parousia does not mean a momentary instantaneous event, but a lengthy visit; epiphameia (appearing) can also refer to a lengthy appearance. Similarly, and even more clearly, the term kingdom is not synonymous with the millennium, and surely cannot be restricted to the latter's initial moment.

If there were a judgment day for saints only at the beginning of the millennium and another for the wicked at the end it would be difficult to exegete

Matt. 25:32-33 When the Son of Man shall come in his glory. and all his holy angels with him ... he shall at set the sheep on the his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Thus the judgment is depicted as separating the sheep from the goats; and if so, both must appear before the judgment bar together. Various verses speak of or indicate all human beings, not just half the population:

Heb. 9:27 As it is appointed. unto [all] men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Heb. 12:23    God, the judge of all.

I Peter 4:5    ... the quick and the dead.

Jude 14-15    Behold, the Lord came with his holy ten thousands to execute judgment on all, ...

Consider these verses. The first quoted suggests that the judgment is for all the dead. True, men do not die all at the same time; but if this were pressed to support judgments at different times, it would imply a separate day for each man (or for all men who died on one single day), not two for two classes, the days being separated by a thousand years. The second verse speaks of all. This does not of itself preclude several days of judgment, tnt neither does it favor such a division. Peter speaks generally of all the dead. Jude strengthens this inference. The Lord is descending with his holy myriads, presumably angels, possibly saints also; at this descent he executes judgment on all. To be sure, the emphasis falls on the unrighteous; tnt the "all" includes the saints too. Verse six includes the wicked angels as well.

That the saints also must stand in judgment is clear from

I Cor. 4:4,5    He that judgest me is the Lord ... who will bring to light the hidden things of  
darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.

Here Paul may first have in mind the adverse judgments of some Corinthians against him in contrast with the Lord's contemporary approval. But beyond the troubled situation in the Corinthian church, there is a future public judgment indicated. At that time what is hidden now will be made manifest to all. It may seem strange that "every man shall have praise from God,"

when there was so much evil in Corinth. This seeming universalism is, however, ruled out by two considerations. The first concerns the translation. One can read the phrase as "then the praise due to each one shall come from God." Stressing the article "the praise due" allows some to receive a zero amount. More on the surface is the idea that the faithful servants of the Lord who are misjudged by their contemporaries will at the end receive God's approbation. Thus saints as well as reprobates are judged.

If now it be admitted that there is one future it great day of judgment, the next and much more important topic is the nature of such a judgment. This ties in too with the nature of God, discussed in previous chapters.

When God first revealed himself to Adam, he did not particularly speak of his mercy. No doubt he exhibited his love by placing Adam in a beautiful garden and by giving him a lovely wife. But the emphasis is on the blessings of obedience and the penalty for disobedience. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man sinned, the punishment fell, and mercy was then revealed. But the mercy was not an ignoring of the penalty; it consisted in providing a substitute to bear the penalty. Abel made use of the substitute; and Moses instituted a complicated sacrificial system. The details are somewhat multitudinous; but nothing obscures the need of shedding blood.

Christian Science and those of the general populace who believe in a future life emphasize a God of love. In this they make two mistakes at once. They misunderstand love and they deny that God is just. Punishment is not punishment, in their view; it is rehabilitation. Civil society in America generally accepts this theory of penology. The murderer is not sinful; he is sick and must be cured. Capital punishment is immoral because it prevents rehabilitation. But this is not the Christian view of man, crime and punishment, nor of God. Christ died to satisfy the justice of his Father. No doubt the cross is also an expression of God's love for his elect. But this sort of love is entirely different from the Christian Science kind.

I John 3:16 In this have we known love, namely, that this one laid down his soul for us.

I John 4:9,10 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only Son ... to be the the propitiation for our sins.

The Bible teaches throughout that sin deserves punishment. Otherwise there was no need of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. One of the strongest assertions of God's justice and the necessity for punishment is

Rom. 2:5-11 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.

It is hard to restate in other words, certainly in any clearer words, the principles of this section. It says that there will be a day of wrath and righteous judgment. The popular god of love has neither wrath nor indignation, nor righteousness, either. The God of the Bible is righteous because he renders to every man according to his deeds. To those who continue patient in well-doing and who seek glory, immortality, and honor, God will give eternal life. That is, if there are any such persons. But on the disobedient -and all have sinned -- God will impose indignation, wrath, and tribulation. This is divine justice, impartial because it applies to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. "For there is no 'pull' with God." Note then that God's rewards and punishments do not aim at the reformation of the sinner. On a smaller scale the flood and the

doom of Sodom did not have that aim. Nor can eternal punishment have that aim. The point is that God is a God of justice.

In this discussion of the final judgment it has been impossible to avoid saying something about subsequent punishment. But before going on, we may summarize the main teachings on the judgment itself. Admittedly much of the Scriptural teaching has been omitted, particularly Jesus' parables. However, some of this must be included in the next subsection.

As for the judgment: there is indeed such a future event. Christ will be the Judge and pronounce the verdict. This judgment takes place at, or insignificantly later than, the resurrection. Those judged are all human beings and wicked angels. Is there a verse that includes the righteous angels also? The subject matter of the judgment will be the actions (external actions and internal thoughts) of those judged. And apart from a substitute to pay the penalty, all will be declared guilty.

#### (b) Hell

The Westminster Shorter catechism asks, "What doth every sin deserve?" The answer is, "Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." Eternal punishment in hell is an uninspiring topic. Even an evangelical, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., in his Systematic Theology (Vol. II, ~. 302), can restrict himself to one third of a page in a thousand page work. His section on eschatology covers 243 pages, but there are less than twenty lines on hell. This hardly does justice to the New Testament emphasis. To minimize the doctrine because of its unpleasantness is somewhat natural, for if the doctrine had not been divinely revealed, it is unlikely that any made-made religion would have invented it. True, the Homeric religion seems to have punished Tantalus and Sisyphus with unending torment; but with the other exception of a few heroes who became demigods, all men meet a dismal future. Dismal, but not punishment for sin. So too in Buddhism: Nirvana is tantamount to personal extinction; what punishment there is in Buddhism is temporary. Other religions uninfluenced by Judaism or Christianity hold

ambiguous, ill-defined views. Religious liberals, with their doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, hope to sit down with Holy Hitler and Saint Stalin in the heavenly kingdom. The secularists deny a future life altogether. But the Bible says,

Matthew: Fear not them which kill the body but are not not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (10:28). His angels shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (13:42, 50). Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ... .And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (25:41, 46).

These are not the only verses in the Gospels, or even in Matthew, that speak of everlasting punishment. If they were all assembled, one might see that the person who most forcefully and most often taught the doctrine of hell was not Peter or Paul, but Jesus himself. Paul of course stresses the wrath and justice of God; Peter, Jude, and John', particularly John, make some statements; but Jesus himself is the main source for the doctrine of hell. Were it not so, even more theologians than at present would at least keep silent about it.

Early in this volume the proof text method was defended, not merely as permissible but as indispensable. Like any method it too may be abused by careless thinkers. But there is no other way to find out what the Bible teaches except by reading the text. Here then are a few samples --samples only, not exhaustive lists -- selected from Peter, Jude, and John's Apocalypse.

Revelation: If any man shall worship the beast ... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day nor night (14:9-11). And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

Revelation is an apocalyptic book, and amillennialists never tire of saying how unintelligible it is. Assuredly there are many passages whose meaning we can hardly guess at; but some passages are exceedingly clear.

II Peter 2:4-9 If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell ••• to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world ... turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes ... the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

Jude 4-6 There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men ... denying our only Despot and Lord, Jesus Christ, ... and the angels which kept not their first estate ... he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

In addition to the idea of a terrible punishment, these verses in Jude assert the doctrine of reprobation. God's sovereignty, his doing whatever he pleases, his governance of all his creatures and all their actions, the doctrine of predestination, have all been discussed in earlier chapters. Here we have an explicit statement, similar to Rom. 9:16-22, that God has ordained certain men to destruction. This ordination did not occur after the men had infiltrated some first century congregations: the ordination occurred before, of old. From eternity they were ordained to this condemnation, as Judas had been.

Some people accept the Bible as the Word of God. It is the explicit, propositional revelation of his truth; and he himself is truth. Other people pick and choose as much or as little as they like, just as they might from Thus Spake Zarathustra, using their own preferences as the criterion of truth. But anyone who tries to say that the Bible does not teach what these verses express entangles himself in exegetical impossibilities. The verses themselves are unmistakably

clear, and the present exposition has refused to soften them. The popular glib dismissal of the doctrine of hell has of course no logical force; nor does it evince wisdom, for

In that sleep of death what dreams may come  
Must give us pause.

Or if Berdyaev is more contemporary than Shakespeare: "It is remarkable how little people think about hell or trouble about it. This is the most striking evidence of human frivolity."

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Since it was Jesus Christ himself who spoke more often about hell than anyone else did, (in addition to the verses quoted, see also Matt. 7:22,23; 11:23; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 9:25; 12:9, 10, 46; 16:22,23; John 5:28,29; 8:21) a Christian must not be silent but must continue to preach the message.

The Christian must preach the message accurately, not only because the secular world hates it, but also because various religious writers dishonestly misrepresent it. Nels F. Ferre (The Sun and the Umbrella p. 33) says that the doctrine of Christ's second coming "shuts out the living God embracing and reconciling all men with his eternal time and power," and substitutes the concept that "all mankind would be extinguished or tormented forever except the few who would escape punishment through faith in the merits of Jesus. ... It seems doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine."

In view of the many passages in which Jesus speaks of fire, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and so on, it follows that if the New Testament is so unreliable as to make it "doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine," then the New Testament is also so unreliable that Ferre has no ground for his principle of Agape. More of this in a moment. The immediate point is Ferre's misrepresentations.

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<sup>2</sup> This quotation was given by the late Fred Carl Kuehner, Heaven and Hell, in Fundamentals of the Faith, ed. by Carl F.H. Henry (p. 236). Dr. Kuehner received a spate of hate mail because of his chapter; yet he said no more than what the New Testament says, and less than the present chapter here.

The charge that the doctrine of hell means that nearly everybody will be tormented forever and only a few will enjoy eternal felicity is sometimes answered by the statement that all who die in infancy will be saved, and since there is such a high infant mortality rate in pagan lands, it follows that the redeemed will be "a great multitude which no man could number." But the question of proportion is irrelevant both to the Christian and anti-Christian alike. Ferre need not have presupposed what the exact proportion of saved to lost may be; more perspicacious than either the liberal, or the or the orthodox who uses infant mortality in his reply, William James said bluntly that one could not believe in an omnipotent God if even one cockroach suffered from an unrequited love. This is honest opposition.

Dr. Ferre's rejection of Jesus' teaching on hell is set in a context which includes the denial of the Virgin Birth. His basic principle is Agape or "indiscriminate kindness to all" (p. 57). This of course means universal salvation (pp. 246-247),<sup>3</sup> if there is such a thing as sin to be saved from.

It is worthwhile here to point out some of the inconsistencies in Dr. Ferre's position, inconsistencies which in one form or another plague other liberals a swell.

First, if Agape is sufficiently defined as indiscriminate kindness, based (?) on the verse that God sends the sun and rain upon all people, it is still impossible to deduce from this basic principle the Christology Dr. Ferre wants, or any other Christology, either. Second, Dr. Ferre cannot appeal to the verse on sun and rain because he cannot depend on "any fanciful ipsissima verba" (p. 57); and because Jesus himself was inconsistent (p.60); nor did the disciples understand him. For example, Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees is not an "authentic report in detail" and remains "a problem within the major conclusive context of Jesus' living and teaching Agape" (p. 83). Further, "we cannot know the historical Jesus" (p. 58). If, now, the Scriptures are so untrustworthy as Dr. Ferre says, no one can appeal to them for anything. Dr. Ferre's religion

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<sup>3</sup> Christ and the Christian.

therefore is not Christianity, but a personal subjective invention. "The use of the Bible as the final authority for Christian truth is idolatry. Actually it has become a very thick and formidable Umbrella to hide the Sun."<sup>4</sup> But it is the Bible in its entirety, and the Bible alone, that defines Christianity.

Other liberals professing a somewhat greater respect for Scripture have tried to avoid the doctrine of hell by expedients so puerile that a Systematic Theology is likely to think it a waste of time to mention them. But an example or two may be given. One attempt was to assert that the word eternal in "eternal destruction" merely meant "age-long." This would terminate hell in a finite time. But it would also set a terminus for heaven as well, for it is the very same word that is used for "eternal life." Nor can it be maintained, a really foolish idea, that eternal does not denote length of time, but quality of state. Obviously the quality is denoted by the words life and death; both are everlasting. J. A. T. Robinson tried to reduce the idea of eternal punishment to the phrase, "the eternal seriousness of the choice before man." But so to reduce hell is also to reduce heaven; and it becomes questionable whether the author believes in any future life at all.

The answer to all such evasions lies in the New Testament usage of the words. There the meaning is clear. To be specific, the word aionios, eternal or age-long, describes the future happiness of the saints some fifty times, and seven times the punishment of the wicked. Dr. Kuehner was completely justified in quoting W. R. Inge, "No sound Greek scholar can pretend that aionios means anything less than eternal" (p. 238).

There is another confusion that can easily be avoided. In addition to Gehenna, the Old Testament mentions sheol and the New Testament mentions hades. There is also "Abraham's bosom." Quite commonly these have been regarded as places, positions in space, geographical localities. Since both the righteous and the wicked equally descend there at death, some people divide the place into two compartments. One is purgatory, where the righteous add to the merits

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<sup>4</sup> The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 39.

of Christ by suffering enough to make up for what Christ's sacrifice did not cover; and the other is a place of torment which is eventually cast in toto into the lake of fire.

It should be obvious that sheol and hades are not places. The two words simply refer to the fact that the persons in question are dead. That this does not involve space is clear from the fact that the resurrection has not yet occurred, and the bodies of the dead are in their graves. The man is his mind or soul; this is spirit and like God does not occupy space.

I Peter 3:18-22 is a passage which ingenious imaginations, under the illusion that sheol is a space, have used for their fanciful views of a part of the intermediate state and time.

Verses 19 and 20 have puzzled a great many people, and they have tried various devices to explain how Christ preached to the spirits in prison. In general there are two types of explanation. First, the verses are taken to mean that Christ used Noah to preach to the wicked that were about to be drowned in the flood. Second, the verses are interpreted to mean that Christ in person preached to spirits in the realm of the dead. This second interpretation is divided on the identity of the dead: the dead to whom Christ preached might be the righteous dead, or they might be the wicked dead. Let us examine this second interpretation first.

This is an old and widely accepted interpretation. Irenaeus, Tertullian, both the Greek and Roman churches, and also Zwingli and Calvin hold that Christ announced salvation to the Old Testament believers and brought them from the realms of death into heaven. In accordance with this idea John 3 :13, "No one has ascended into heaven but he that came down from heaven," is said to mean that no Old Testament saint could precede Christ into heaven. They had to wait for Christ's ascension. The prison is the abode of the dead, and the preaching is the proclamation of Christ's victory.

As further support of this view Acts 2 :27, 31 are taken to mean that Christ's soul went to hell or at least to the abode of the dead, though of course God would not permit his soul to be held there. Some have also appealed to Philippians 2 :10 by taking the things under the earth that

bow at the name of Jesus to be either the righteous or wicked dead. More plausible is the use of Ephesians 4 :8, 9. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive ... Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" These lower parts of the earth are supposed to be the realm of the dead, and the idea is repudiated that this descent is the Incarnation or Christ's descent to earth.

Before adopting this ancient view certain problems must be faced and solved. In the first place Peter's text does not mention anything about preaching to the saints. The spirits to whom Christ preached are explicitly called disobedient. This fact must be taken as a fixed point of interpretation. There is no reference to Old Testament saints. So, if Christ preached in person to anyone between the time of his death and resurrection, it would have to be the wicked dead, and whatever captivity Christ led captive, it could not be the Old Testament saints considered as held in prison.

In the next place the only disobedient people that Peter mentions are those who lived in the days of Noah. This time-reference is another reason for refusing to think that Christ preached to Abraham, David, and the prophets. Not only is it wrong to call these men disobedient, but further they did not live at the time Peter mentions.

This time-reference also militates against the view that Christ preached to all the wicked dead. From what Peter actually says, we could only conclude that Christ preached to those who were disobedient in the time of Noah. But without pressing this point too far at the moment, let us consider other aspects of the idea that Christ preached personally to the wicked in hell, and that the preaching, of necessity, is the announcement of their condemnation.

As for the notion that Christ announced the damnation of the wicked in hell, it is hard to see how it ties in with the context. The main idea that Peter wants to enforce is that Christians should be willing to suffer for Christ's sake and to suffer unjustly. Preaching to the wicked in hell does not advance Peter's main purpose. Or, if attention be centered on the nearer idea of Christ's

being raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, it still is not clear how this announcement of damnation adds to the theme. And it will hardly do to say that Peter just had to fill space to make his epistle long enough, and so was driven to insert something true but irrelevant.

But the decisive objection to understanding these words to refer to the announcement of damnation is that the verb, to preach, ordinarily means to preach the gospel. It does not mean a judicial sentence, nor in the New Testament does it refer to sundry announcements. The regular meaning is the announcement of the gospel.

Because this is so obvious, some interpreters have tried to hold to the general view while modifying it to make Christ's work the preaching of the gospel instead of the announcement of damnation. While this maneuver escapes these immediate objections, it must face others.

Since the Bible does not teach that there is a second chance to be saved, a chance in the next life, but teaches that man's destiny is irrevocably fixed in this life, there would remain no reasonable purpose for preaching the gospel to the wicked in hell. And, to return to a previous point, all these attempts fail to explain the mention of the antediluvian unbelievers. Any preaching in hell should be directed to all, and not to just a few. But the text specifically mentions those who lived in the days of Noah.

This view therefore, though adopted by many and held for so long a time, must be set aside. Perhaps the other view, held by Augustine and Beza, will prove better. According to this interpretation Peter is thought to say that Noah spoke by the Holy Spirit to his disobedient contemporaries and that the flood which destroyed them is a type of baptism.

This interpretation must also face objections. For one thing, it is pointed out that Peter makes the subject of the verb Christ. Christ went and preached, and hence Noah cannot be the preacher. However, this objection is not so serious as it might seem at first. Peter actually says, Christ was made alive by the Spirit, by whom also he preached. This preaching therefore was

done by Christ through the Spirit. What this might mean can be seen in chapter one verse eleven. In the first chapter Peter speaks of the Old Testament prophets. These prophets had received a message from God, and they studied the message to see what God meant. The words are, "searching what ... the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand ... " Now, obviously, if the Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets, then too Christ through the Spirit could very well preach in the person of Noah. To suppose that the Spirit of Christ is not the Holy Spirit and could not therefore inspire Noah is a supposition contrary to Peter's thought and contrary to other New Testament passages. For example, Paul in Ephesians 2 :17 virtually says that it was Christ, through his missionaries, that preached the gospel in Ephesus. So far as this point goes therefore, this interpretation stands up under scrutiny.

If the preaching was Noah's testimony to his contemporaries, then one, must ask the question, What is the prison? The other interpretation assumed that the prison must be hell or hades. But could it be hell, if Noah was preaching to living people? There are two answers to this question. First, one might assume that the prison is the prison house of sin. It is as reasonable to speak of the bonds of sin as it is, to speak of the bonds of hell. The mention of a prison therefore does not rule out the idea that Noah was the preacher. But there is a second and a better answer to the question. The prison may still be hell and Noah still the preacher. For the verse can be interpreted to mean "the spirits (now) in hell." That is, the men to whom Noah preached are now in Peter's day suffering their just recompense. This is not just a guess, but is based on Peter's manner of speech. In 4:6 we shall see that the gospel was preached to certain people who are now dead. The preaching had been done previously; when Peter wrote, they were dead. Further, that Noah was the preacher is supported by II Peter 2 :5.

Another argument is that the participles, *died*, *Made alive*, *went*, and the verb *preached*, indicate a temporal succession, and hence the preaching must have occurred after the death of Christ, and not in the time of Noah. But in the first place, if this were so, the preaching would have had to occur after Christ's resurrection, and not between his death and resurrection, as is usually supposed. Furthermore, the mention of the preaching is not so clearly connected with any

alleged temporal succession as it is with the reference to the Spirit. Of course the resurrection had to follow the crucifixion; but the thought of the passage is not on the time element, but on the significance of these events in bringing sinners to God.

Thus the several objections that are raised against the personal preaching of Noah do not make this interpretation impossible.

Now, positively, this interpretation is the only one that can explain the mention of the wicked at the time of Noah, and the mention of Noah is motivated by Peter's desire to show that the flood is a type of baptism. In the larger connection Peter is explaining the work of Christ, the turning away from sin, the salvation of believers out of an ungodly world, and their tribulations during their lifetime. Peter thinks he can make his ideas clear by an Old Testament example, and Noah is more suitable than any other. For this reason Peter can confine his thought to one group of men. Had he been thinking of a personal preaching by Christ in hell, he could not have restricted his attention to this one group.

The reference to the time of Noah is of course explicit and obvious; and the statement that eight souls were saved in the ark is a plain matter of fact.

Some further historical information could prove useful. In earlier centuries several theologians have held non-scriptural views about hell. Origen (185-254) of Alexandria and John Scotus Eriugena (810-877) both make statements that sound like universalism. But also they seem to speak of the fixed reprobation of the wicked. Often by very conservative writers they are castigated for having corrupted Christianity through the intervention of Neoplatonic philosophy. There is some truth in this, particularly in the case of Eriugena, who labored under the misapprehension that 'Dionysius the Areopagite' was actually Paul's convert, when factually he lived in the fifth century. Origen, of course, could not make this mistake. One must note that he lived before Athanasius, that he opposed Gnosticism, that he came at least close to the doctrine

of the Deity of Christ by using the Old Testament concept of Wisdom, that thus and in other ways anticipated the full Athanasian doctrine, even using the " terms consubstantiality and coeternity. But it is hard for us, who live under the influence of sixteen centuries of Trinitarianism, and almost five centuries of Reformed theology, to evaluate justly the confusion of those early minds.

The Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation were clearly universalists than was Origen. The great Lutheran creed, the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (chapter 17) says, "They [the Lutheran churches] condemn the Anabaptists who think that to condemned men and devils shall be an end of torments."

At the present time, in addition to the "mainline' liberal churches, such smaller groups as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists deny the Scriptural doctrine of hell. One of their number (and therefore not necessarily an official opinion) explained to the present writer that the fires of hell consume the wicked, but after they are completely burned up, the fires naturally go out. Strange: had he never heard of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched?

Objections to the Scriptural doctrine of hell are easily answered exegetically, if the objector acknowledges the written words of God. Of course the large majority of contemporary objectors do not believe the Bible; and it is quite useless to base a Christian answer on their private non-christian criteria. Yet a little attention to their views may disclose, sometimes, either self-contradictions or misrepresentations of the Biblical position. For example, some may say it is unreasonable and unjust to punish a man eternally for an offense that took only a few minutes to commit. The more thorough procedure would be to require the objector to deduce his theory of justice from his empirical basis; and this cannot be done because normative principles never follow from factual observation. But more superficially, though at the same time more embarrassingly, At can be pointed out that the seriousness of a crime is not proportional to the time it takes. A murder may take a second; an embezzlement a long time; but most people would

admit that murder is worse than theft. Further too, the seriousness of a crime depends on the position of the party offended. To lie to your neighbor is a sin; but to lie in court under oath is a greater sin. To sin against God merits eternal punishment because God is the eternal God.

To give such answers is to obey the divine command of

I Peter 3:15 Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts always and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

In summation then, the Bible teaches that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come; and that this punishment lasts forever. It would be hard to state the doctrine in clearer language than the words of the Bible itself.

## 5. Heaven

If Dr. Buswell gave so few lines to the unpleasant subject of hell, one might think that theologians would wax expansive on heaven. H. B. Smith has one page in 621. H. C. Thiessen has about a page and a half in 281. W. G. T. Shedd gives heaven just about two pages out of some 1350, and concludes with 137 pages on hell. Hodge does not do much better. If the present writer is any improvement in proportion, it may be because he has padded the section with Scriptural quotations.

That the righteous dead, after the resurrection, will enjoy an everlasting felicity has already been indicated in those verses which contrast it with the everlasting punishment of the wicked. Several verses from Matthew (chapters 10, 13, and 25) were quoted, And there is no need to repeat them here. There was also a slight reference to II Peter 2:4-9, something a little fuller than Romans 2, and some reference by chapter and verse only. To these must now be added, in a condensed form, the longest of all Biblical accounts of heaven.

Rev. 21:1 - 22:5      And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... the new Jerusalem ... prepared as a bride ... And I heard a great voice ... Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men ... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ... the holy Jerusalem ... having the glory of God ... And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it ... And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it .. his servants ... shall see his face ... For the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.

In addition to the absence of tears, sorrow, crying, and death, this passage excludes also the cause of such evils, namely sin. As it is said in

Matt. 13:43      Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.

Since the tares have been gathered and burned, and all things that offend and them that do iniquity have been cast into the furnace, and Satan has been cast into the lake of fire, the redeemed will find themselves to be the spirits of just men made perfect. Further references will substantiate this point in one way or another.

To show the systematic or interrelated nature of theological truth, the mention of the indefectible righteousness of those in heaven reminds us of the earlier denial of free will. As Augustine long ago pointed out, in heaven man non posse peccare, cannot sin. He has no free choice whether to steal, commit adultery, curse God, or not. If there were such a thing as free will, it would be a curse, rather than a blessing as the Arminians hold.

Before continuing with New Testament references, let us note that many liberal theologians deny to the Old Testament any notion of heaven and a future life. Such a view, however, seems utterly inconsistent with the theme of the Covenant. When God said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward," though the context mostly concerns earthly affairs, one must reflect that if there be a God -and it is hard to understand how those who deny God can have any hope of a future life whatever - and if God makes such a covenant with his chosen people, an everlasting life with him who is eternal is most probable. But in addition to sections on the Covenant which predict earthly blessings, there are other and clearer Old Testament teachings. We admit that the Old Testament says much less than the New Testament. However, there are definite statements and fairly clear implications. The case of Enoch and Elijah come immediately to mind. These two translations absolutely require a life after death. Otherwise the accounts would be meaningless. Another passage, short but more explicit, is

Job 19:26      After my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

Then, too, though an orthodox Jewish rabbi would be hesitant to admit that the New Testament correctly interprets the Old, for us

Heb. 11:17-19 By faith Abraham ... offered up Isaac ... his only begotten son, ...  
accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ...

is at least a hint that Abraham believed in the possibility of life after death. True, the verse might mean only that Abraham expected God to raise Isaac to this life again. But even this minimum meaning would suggest further ideas. One should not automatically opt for the literal minimum.

Similarly the resurrection in I Kings 17:21 ff. and II Kings 4:34 ff. require some sort of intermediate state and an incorporeal soul. In conjunction with the covenants and promises, these two implications would cause a meditative mind to think of heaven. Psalm 86:12-13 is somewhat of a support; and Psalm 16:10-11 speaks explicitly of everlasting felicity at God's right hand.

Although this should be sufficient to show that the Old Testament does not limit human life to three score years and ten, which means that there is no further obligation to defend the presence in the Old Testament of the ideas of heaven, reference may be made to

Provo 14:32 The righteous hath hope in his death. And if anyone object to this translation.

Prov. 15:24 The way of life is above the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath, cannot be altered by a better translation. See also Prov. 23:14

It is indubitable therefore that Scripture contains a clear promise of heaven. But does the Bible give any detailed information about the character and activities of that future life? This is a question which not only interests believers, but which also stimulates unbelievers to their objections.

Corliss Lamont, in a remarkable chapter, This Life is All and Enough (Humanism as a Philosophy, second edition, pp. 100-144; and The Philosophy of Humanism, i.e. the fifth edition of the preceding, pp. 81-115) in addition to his arguments for evolutionary behaviorism, where memory consists of "neuronic pathways of the cortex," which means that "Human bodies think" (ital. his), attacks the idea of a life after death on the ground of its boring triviality. If there were a future life, not only "good old Rover" should be immortal, but poison ivy as well. Now, while many people would love to pet good old Rover in heaven, the idea of poison ivy is not so appealing. Since heavenly flees and lice are, in Lamont's view, foolishness, "This Life is All and Enough." Communistic equality can make this present life so lovely that no one would want immortality. Medicine will increase the life span --though if 100 years is better than 70, why is not a thousand, or an eternity, still better? However, death is inevitable and we might as well like it. This view also removes the fear of hell. Anyhow, there is plenty of enjoyment here. Man is

clearly a success because the population is steadily increasing and at an ever higher rate" (p. 137). We may soon produce the Superman -- and how that will rejoice the neuron pathways of our cortex as it decays in the grave! Also in the longer run, we need not anticipate an end to progress because we need not accept the second law of thermodynamics: which is of course true, but irrelevant.<sup>5</sup>

But then and incredibly, This Life, if it is All, really is not Enough; for "Even I, disbeliever that I am, would frankly be more than glad to awaken some day to a worth-while eternal life" (p. 124). Lamont clearly thinks that the Biblical picture of the future life is not worth-while. But how pitiful is his humanistic lament!

If any Christian in the pew is disturbed by Lamont's refutations of arguments in favor of immortality, one word will stabilize him. Well meaning, but not always too intelligent theologians have tried to defend the doctrine of immortality and heaven by, for example, "the light of nature and reason." Even Bishop Butler, whose scholarship was considerable, opened his Analogy of Religion with a chapter on the Future Life, based on empirical observations, and did not get to Revealed Religion until page 185 (Works, ed. by Gladstone, 1896). Even John Gill tried this, and added a paragraph on the natural desire in mankind for happiness, plus another on the unequal distribution of goods and evils. We may grant that all such arguments are logical fallacies, as Duns Scotus, who was not a dunce by any means, long ago showed. Lamont's arguments therefore do not disturb the Christian because he bases his hope on revealed information rather than on sensory observation.

Accepting now the truth of a future life in heaven, we look to revelation for some information on the nature of its activities.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As to inevitable progress, cf. A Christian View of Men and Things, pp. 42 ff.; and on thermodynamics, cf. The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God (both by the present writer).

<sup>6</sup> Mystically minded liberals and neo-orthodox often deny that revelation is a matter of information. God is not suppose to communicate any truth to us, any information, but he gives us himself. And what is true about such a god?

With sin and all its deleterious effects gone, are we restored to Adam's position in Eden, or do we enjoy a higher and happier type of life? What does the Bible say?

Point one, though expressed in figurative language, is the Biblical assertion of a direct vision of God. In addition to the verse in Job, previously quoted, there are

Matt. 5:8      They shall see God.

I Cor. 13:12    For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.

I John 3:2      We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Rev. 22:4      They shall see his face.

The Old Testament had already said that we shall be like him:

Psalm 17:15    I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake  
with thy likeness.

Since God is spiritual and not corporeal, this 'vision' will be quite different from our present eye-sight. Let us not inattentively quote "Eye hath not seen ... neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him." Here Paul speaks of what "God hath [already] revealed unto us by his Spirit." We must not minimize the riches of God's present revelation. Nevertheless the heavenly revelation will be greater. When Paul was caught up into the third heaven, God revealed truths to him that he was forbidden to repeat to us. Doubtless God will give us those truths and others too when we see him 'face to face.' By way of " contrast, Peter, on the lake of Galilee, at the 'great draft of fishes, said to Jesus, "Depart

from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." At times therefore Jesus so revealed his deity that men wanted to escape from his presence. But in heaven, with sin eradicated, we can see God as he is.

But do we just stand and look? Hardly: at least 'vision' is figurative. An entirely literal meaning can be had from the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is not that Moses and Elijah literally saw Christ through their eye-balls, for Moses' body, if not Elijah's, lay buried beyond Jordan. What they 'saw', was the doctrine of the Atonement, as they discussed it with Christ. The verb see often means understand. When a student in High School puzzles over the instructor's explanation of a theorem in geometry, he finally (we hope) exclaims as the truth 'dawns' on him "I see it." From common language therefore, and from the Transfiguration, we may well surmise that much of our activity in heaven will be theological study. But before going on with the idea that God is truth and thus rational, and that therefore the surmise is correct, here on earth we are interested in some other matters.

Some things that have interested us in this life, such as theology, will interest us in heaven also; but not all of our present activities will be reproduced. This is to be expected, for "We shall be like him." In what respects we shall be like and in what we shall remain unlike him must be determined by various references. One present interest is marriage. Yet even on earth the marriage bond is dissolved by death and the surviving spouse is free to marry again. We now all remember the question about the woman with seven husbands. It came as an objection to the concept of the resurrection; and Jesus replied

Mark 12:25    When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.

Other bodily functions also cease. Consider roast beef and lobster tails.

I Cor. 6:13    Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it

and them.

This verse gives us some difficulties. In Luke 24:43 the resurrected Christ ate a little fish. So far as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" is concerned, and Christ's not drinking wine again until he drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29), we may regard the language as figurative. Certainly there are no flocks and herds in heaven, of if there are, there is no beef and no ovens. But Christ's eating fish before his disciples eyes can only be literal. Now, it must be acknowledged that Christ's body after the resurrection was surprisingly different from the one he had before. First, it was not always recognizable, as Luke 24:16 indicates. If this verse means only that God altered the vision of the two disciples, and thus has no bearing on the recognizability of Christ's body as such, the last verse of the account (at 24:31) relates something that never happened before the resurrection. Verse 36 also is startling; and verse 51 records the ascension. Similar to Luke 24:36 is John 20:26. So, then, his eating fish, it seems reasonable to suppose, may have been an anomalous miracle, uncharacteristic of resurrection life. Otherwise I Cor. 6:13 would be hard to understand.

But there is something further. Paul in I Cor. 15:3-22 most strenuously asserts the bodily resurrection of Christ, not only as an historical event but as an historical event that is absolutely indispensable to Christianity. Karl Barth therefore cannot be called a Christian, as his famous or infamous interview with Carl F. H. Henry proved. Nevertheless Paul makes some puzzling statements about the resurrection body.

I Cor. 15: 35-50 With what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be ... But God giveth it a body ... It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption ... a spiritual body ... [so] we shall also bear the image of the heavenly ... Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

These verses come in answer to objections raised by some persons in the Corinthian church. They thought that a resurrection was impossible because of the nature of the body. Paul sharply begins his answer by calling them "Stupid!" He goes on to stress the great difference between our present body and the resurrection body. Instead of referring to the changed nature of Christ's resurrection body (perhaps because he had already spoken at length about Christ's resurrection), he draws an analogy of a grain of wheat and the plant that grows from it. But analogies do not give much specific information. The student may wish to consult a few commentaries.

However, and however great the differences may be, at least one thing remains the same. Man is still a temporal being in heaven. The Greek Orthodox often say, 'God became man so that man could become God.' But it is a little late for man to become eternal and omniscient. Eternity is without beginning; man began. Omniscience does not merely mean 'knowing everything;' it also means not having learned. But men learn. In conjunction with this, Augustine made memory the principle of personal identity. Mr. Jones in heaven is the same person as Mr. Jones was on earth, because of his intellectual continuity. But memory requires a prior time. Man, a created being, remains forever a created being and therefore remains temporal.

Parenthetically let the student be advised to compare Hume's humanistic account of personal identity with that of the great bishop of Hippo.

But though temporal, man was created in the image of God. The image is rationality because God is spirit and truth. Therefore life in heaven will be chiefly or perhaps entirely intellectual activity, for we shall be like him. If memory serve the writer, it was C. S. Lewis who said that whatever in heaven is not silence is music. If by "silence" he meant the absence of communication, the Bible adjudges him to be wrong. We shall discuss the Atonement with Moses and Elijah, and with Christ too, and with the Father also. In heaven we shall know and know more.

I Cor. 13:12 Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known.

Some theologians, the great exegete H. A. W. Meyer, for example, want this verse to say, 'I shall know as God knew or chose me at the moment of my conversion.' This interpretation depends on restricting the aorist tense to a single point of time --which is often the case. But the chapter does not concern itself with a contrast between our partial choice at the moment of conversion and our fuller and perfect choice of God later in heaven. Meyer takes his view in order to avoid the superficial understanding of the verse that makes our future knowledge entirely on a level with God's omniscience. Yet even so he does not succeed, for he says, "Then will my knowledge of God be so wholly different from a merely partial one, as it is now, that, on the contrary, it will correspond to the divine knowledge, so far as it once at my conversion made me its object, namely (opposite of ek merous) by complete knowledge of the divine counsel." But in complete knowledge one item is integral with all others. Complete knowledge of one event involves knowledge of every other event. Thus with "complete knowledge of the divine counsel" Meyer ascribes too much to human beings in heaven.

Nevertheless we must insist that the heavenly life is one of knowledge. This introduces a slight difficulty with one verse, for I Cor. 13:8 says that knowledge shall vanish away. This could mean that God's activity in revealing new information to the apostles will cease with their death. The canon then will be closed. Or one may seek the explanation in the next verse, introduced by the conjunction gar to indicate a reason for what precedes: "for we know in part." Thus a fuller knowledge will abolish the partial characteristic of former times. At any rate, verse 12 asserts the continuance and multiplication of knowledge in heaven. Naturally love or obedience also remains because, as previously shown, sin or disobedience has ended.

Some people on the basis of verse 2, deprecate knowledge. They should remember, however, that without knowledge there could be neither love nor obedience. Paul excuses, or at

least extenuates, his youthful persecution of the Christians because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Responsibility depends on knowledge.

In any case, when Paul most emphatically asserts, "But we have the mind of Christ," and "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus," and when John records Jesus' words, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free, I, we must not assume that their full force and application is exhausted in this earthly life.

On the contrary, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," as Job said previously. While this does not guarantee that the poor pupil who has been deprived of a solid education by the fad of the new math and other atrocities of the National Education Association will instantly become expert in calculus; nevertheless each saint will become fully rational, as God is, since the noetic effects of sin will have disappeared, so that no longer will anyone make mistakes in simple addition.

Nor shall we any longer be deceived by disturbing emotions, for God is without parts and passions; and no one will base his conclusions on empirical inductions. Rather,

Psalm 36:9    In thy light shall we see light.

I John 1:5    God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If in this life

I John 5:20    The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, ... This is the true God and eternal life,

if in this life we have the glorious yet incomplete light of the gospel, and if "now are ye light in the Lord [and] walk as children of light," how much more shall we live in truth and understanding when we no longer are confined to a mirror and a dark enigma!

I John 5:6     The Spirit is truth.

Rev. 21:24    The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light [of God's glory and of the Lamb].

Rev. 22:5     For the Lord God giveth them light.

Rom. 11:33,36 O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God ... For of him and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever.  
Amen.