

The Approaching End of the Age by H. Grattan Guinness – Part I. Chapter III.



Continued from [Part I. Chapter II.](#)

PROGRESSIVE REVELATIONS AS TO THE MILLENNIUM, THE RESURRECTION, AND THE JUDGMENT.

WE turn now to consider the teachings of the Apocalypse as to the events to succeed the second advent of Christ, and it is here that the application of the principle of progressive revelation becomes of peculiar importance.

That principle requires, as we have seen, that we receive the teachings of this inspired prophecy on its authority alone, when they are unconfirmed by other Scripture; and it requires also that we be prepared to modify impressions derived from earlier and more elementary predictions, whenever this latest revelation of the future demands it. No author expects to have the latest and fullest edition of his book corrected by an earlier and less explicit one; no author but would wish on the contrary that early editions should be read in the light of the last. The Apocalypse contains undoubtedly, the last and the fullest revelation of God on these subjects, the final expression of his purpose; prior statements must be conformed to this, and not this to prior statements.

The advent vision is followed by a vision of the judgment on Antichrist and his associates, and immediately after this we have

THE VISION OF THE MILLENNIUM.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven,
Having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand;
And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and
Satan,
And bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit,
And shut him up, and set a seal upon him,
That he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be
fulfilled,
And after that he must be loosed for a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them;
And judgment was given unto them;
And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded,
For the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God;
Who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image;
Neither had received his mark in their foreheads, or in their hands;
AND THEY LIVED AND REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS.

But the rest of the dead lived not again,
Until the thousand years were finished;
THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION.
Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection;
On such the second death hath no power,
But they shall be priests of God and of Christ,
AND SHALL REIGN WITH HIM A THOUSAND YEARS.

The twentieth chapter of Revelation, as is evident to every student of Scripture, contains several new predictions peculiar to itself.

The broad fact that there is to be a reign of Christ and his saints on earth is not new. Though little is said about it in the Gospels and the epistles, for the reason previously assigned that they occupy themselves rather with the previous advent, yet the law, the psalms, and the prophets, teem with predictions of this *reign* of Christ.

But that it should be introduced by a binding of Satan, that it should last a thousand years, these facts, dimly intimated elsewhere, are revealed here *for the first and only time*.

Are we therefore to stand in doubt about them, or try to explain the revelation in some non-natural sense? God forbid! The God who cannot lie, *inspired* this single prediction of them; is not that enough? We need not hesitate to believe what God says, even if He says it only once; and indeed we might reject most of the revelations of the Apocalypse, if we adopt the maxim, of doubting all that is only once predicted.

Not only does this prophecy require us to believe two *new* revelations, but it also necessitates a modification of previously entertained views, on two familiar and all important points of our creed, the RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD and the JUDGMENT TO COME. It reveals, what had never previously been clearly made known, that both are to be accomplished *in two successive stages*, with a thousand years between them, and not in one great act, as, but for this chapter, we might have supposed.

Are we then to distort the declarations of this chapter, in order to bring them into harmony, not with previous predictions, but with the impressions we have derived from previous predictions? No! But we must bring our impressions into harmony with the joint teaching of earlier and later revelations, which, seeing both are Divine, cannot be contradictory. No one would dream of doing otherwise, in the case of an earlier and later communication from some superior authority. Say, for instance, that the Admiralty issue a notice,

that a certain squadron is to sail next month for the Mediterranean. After a few weeks a subsequent order provides, that three vessels are to leave on the first of the month, for Besika Bay; and three more on the 30th, for Malta. Shall the commanders hesitate about giving credence to the *later* sailing orders, because they had received from the *earlier* notice an impression that all the ships were to start simultaneously, and for one and the same destination? Clearly not! There is no discrepancy or inconsistency in the orders; the difference is simply, that the later directions are more ample and detailed than were the earlier. From the earlier, the commanders received the erroneous impression they entertained; an impression they would of course abandon immediately the second order arrived.

But as regards these later visions of the Apocalypse, too many act in an opposite way. "We thought," they say, "that Scripture foretold one simultaneous resurrection of all mankind, to take place at the end of the world, and to be immediately followed by the general judgment, the final separation of the righteous and the wicked, and the eternal state. What? *Two* resurrections? *Two* judgments? And a thousand years apart? What? Christ and His risen saints, reigning over mortal men on the earth, for an entire age, while the rest of the dead lie in their graves? Impossible! The Bible never says so anywhere else! And Satan to be imprisoned for a thousand years, before he is cast into the lake of fire? This cannot be, we never gathered *this* from any other part of Scripture! Either these visions do not teach such heterodox novelties, or they are not inspired! True, they *say* this, but they must *mean* something else, for such doctrines are quite contrary to our creed, altogether at variance with the impressions we have derived from previous revelations on the subject."

Such reasoning is not true wisdom, it is prejudice, and it is a denial of God's right to make *progressive revelations*. Wisdom, while perceiving clearly the discrepancy, would say: "Contrary as these new revelations are to the impressions derived from previous scriptures, let us see if any real variance exist, and if not, let us abandon our imperfect and consequently erroneous ideas, and receive with meekness, *all* the light on these subjects graciously granted by God."

We propose therefore first to examine what the *peculiar* teachings of these visions are, and secondly whether these teachings, taken in their most obvious and natural sense, are *inconsistent with* other scriptures, or merely *in advance* of them.

Let it be noted then, first, that this is not a vision of the resurrection of saints, but of their *enthronement* and *reign*. As far as they are concerned, the resurrection is past already before this scene opens.

Other scriptures definitely fix the moment of the resurrection of saints. "They that are Christ's" rise at *His coming*; His saints meet their Lord in the air, and come with Him to the earth (Col. iii. 3, 1 Thess. iv.). The resurrection must therefore have taken place *before* the advent described in the previous vision. What was the immediately preceding act in this Divine drama?

Multitudinous voices in heaven, are heard asserting, that Christ has assumed his kingly power, and that *the marriage of the Lamb ts come*. Now this marriage, celebrated by the glad hallelujahs of heaven, can be nothing else than that full union of Christ and His Church which is to take place at the resurrection. The angelic host describe the bride, as made "ready," as arrayed in fine linen clean and white which is the righteousness of saints, and John is instructed to write down "blessed" those who are called to the marriage supper. Now not till after resurrection, can Christ present His Church to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish," according to this scene: *resurrection must therefore have preceded this vision of the marriage supper*. No vision of it is given in the Apocalypse; how could there be? It is the event of less than a moment, it occupies only the twinkling of an eye. It could not be represented as an occurrence on earth, for the risen saints are, in a second, caught up to meet their Lord in the air; nor as an occurrence in heaven, for it is connected with the earth and the air, The precise locality of the nuptial feast is not indicated, a veil of privacy is thrown around the meeting of bridegroom and bride; it takes place, and this is all that we know. Whether any interval elapse between the resurrection rapture and the glorious epiphany, is not revealed to us here. But the epiphany *has occurred*; and the Church, under the symbol of the armies that were in heaven, has shared in the work of judging the antichristian hosts, before this millennial vision opens. In it, consequently, we have not the resurrection, but the enthronement, of the risen saints, The expression "this is the first resurrection" is not a note of *time*, but of *character*: it is tantamount to, this is the company who rise in the first resurrection, not this is the chronological *point* at which the first resurrection takes place; and the company here spoken of, like those called to the marriage supper, are declared *blessed* and *holy*.

There is similarly no vision of the second stage of the resurrection in verse 12; the dead are presented as already raised, and standing before God. But though these verses give no vision of either the first or the second stage of the resurrection, they give much new light about it; *they distinctly reveal, that there is never to take place a simultaneous resurrection of all mankind*, but that on the contrary, the distinction so marked in this life, between the godly and the ungodly, is to be more marked still in the resurrection. It shows us that the righteous shall rise before the wicked; rise to live and reign for a thousand years with their risen royal Lord; and that the "rest of the dead" rise not again till the thousand years be fulfilled,

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them." To whom? To Christ and his risen saints, to the King of kings, and to the armies which were in heaven; for we must go back to the 13th verse of chapter xix. for the occupants of these thrones, There intervenes no plural or collective noun, for which this pronoun *they* could stand. We may therefore paraphrase the words thus: "I saw Christ and his risen saints enthroned and governing the world." John noticed especially among the latter, the martyrs and confessors who had figured so prominently in previous stages of this long drama; their cries, and groans, and sufferings, and blood, had been main features of its different stages, and they are therefore singled out from

among their brethren for a special mention, which marks the unity of this scene with the whole Apocalypse. In this final righting of the wrongs of ages, the sufferers are enthroned beside the great Sufferer, the overcomers sit with Him in his throne, the faithful witnesses of Christ, reign with their Lord, the oppressed and slaughtered saints, judge the world. But this mention of a special class is by the way: the main stream of the prophecy continues thus: "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years; but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

Subsequently, the "rest of the dead" are seen standing in the last assize, before the great white throne, to be judged. "I saw the dead small and great stand before God." The dead are thus divided into two portions; there are the dead who rise and reign, and the dead who rise not and reign not with them. There are the dead who rise to judge the world with Christ, and there are the dead who rise to be judged according to their works by God. There are the dead who rise to sit on thrones, and the dead who rise to stand before the great white throne. There are the dead who rise with spiritual bodies, how else could they last a thousand years? And the dead who rise as they died, to die a second death. There are the dead who rise emphatically "blessed and holy," and the dead who rise only to be tried, condemned, and cast into hell. There are the dead who rise immortal, for on them the second death hath no power, and the dead who rise only to become its victims. Throughout, these two classes are presented in marked and intentional contrast; the latter are beyond all question literal dead, so THEREFORE ARE THE FORMER.

This passage then teaches that the resurrection of the dead will take place in two stages, with a thousand years between. Taken in its apparent, most natural, and consistent meaning, nothing else can be made of it. Why then has it been made the victim of more distortion than almost any passage in the Bible? And why, after the ablest champions of the truth, have in unanswerable argument, defended its right to mean what it seems to mean, why to this day, do multitudes still read it with the coloured spectacles of preconceived opinion, so as to change its clear blue of heavenly doctrine, into the muddy grey of mystical unmeaningness? Why will multitudes still derange its majestic harmonies, so as to produce ungrateful discord? Why make of this graciously given clue to the labyrinth of previous prophecy, a snare to entangle our feet the further, in a maze of doubt and difficulty? Let an intelligent child, or any one who simply understands the terms used, read these verses attentively, and then answer the question, "will the dead all rise at the same time?" We will venture to assert they would unhesitatingly answer: "No! this passage declares the contrary, the righteous will rise a thousand years before the wicked."

Such is the obvious meaning of the prophecy, and the more closely it is analysed, the more clearly is it perceived to teach this doctrine. The difficulty arises from the mistaken attempt to put new wine into old bottles, to reduce the fulness of a last revelation to the dimensions of a more elementary one. Let us reverse the process, and applying the principle of progressive revelation, let us see whether every previous prophecy on the

subject of resurrection, may not without any distortion at all of the text, be harmonized with this latest prophecy,

There is but little in the Old Testament on the subject of resurrection, for it was Christ who brought life and immortality to light; but, though revealed only dimly in the olden time, they were revealed. Isaiah wrote: "Thy dead men shall live, . . . my dead body, they shall arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." Can this allude to a resurrection of others than saints? Shall "the dead, small and great," sing before the great white throne? But, to pass by other less clear statements of the doctrine of resurrection in the Old Testament, we find in Daniel xii. a passage more quoted than almost any other, in support of the idea that the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked will be at one and the same moment. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The time of this resurrection is fixed in the previous verse to be the time of the deliverance of Daniel's people from their great tribulation, that is, the time of Israel's restoration, Antichrist's destruction, and the second advent.

It seems to require some ingenuity to make out a contradiction between this prophecy and that of John. It places resurrection at the same *point* in the great chart of the future; it makes the same moral distinction, and in the same order, as our Lord in John v., and it omits in the same way all allusion to a chronological interval. It neither specifies nor excludes one, as was natural in a prediction so brief and elementary, of an event at that time so distant. The apparent discrepancy is clearly caused by *defect of detail* in this early prophecy; and we have only to *add* to its statement, the new particulars given in the later revelation, to produce perfect harmony.

Some expositors, however, render the original of this verse differently from our authorized version; translating it "the many," or "the multitude of," which is equivalent to *all*. Others consider that it will not bear this version, but rather that the two classes contrasted in the latter part of the prophecy refer to the many who rise, and to the "rest of the dead," whose resurrection is not here mentioned, but who are destined to shame and everlasting contempt.* Whichever view may be the true one, neither, it is evident, presents any important variation from the Apocalypse; the two predictions harmonize *as far as the first goes*. No contradiction can be alleged between them; we must not wonder that we do not find in the pages of Daniel, that which we cannot discover even in the Gospels, a doctrine that it was reserved for the final prophecy of Scripture, to reveal.

* "I do not doubt that the right translation of this verse is,—'and many from among the sleepers of the dust in the earth shall awake, these shall be unto everlasting life, but those (the rest of the sleepers who do not awake at this time) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.'"—Tregelles on Daniel, p. 102.

The passage of Scripture which more fully than any other dwells on the subject of *the resurrection*, the passage which has illumined the darkness of death to successive generations of Christians, and like the bow in the cloud, thrown a gleam of glory over ten thousand graves, is the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

To the sound of its majestic and marvellous strains, we commit to the dust, those whom we bury in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. But why does an intelligent and conscientious Christian, shrink from sounding over the grave of the ungodly those triumphant and heart cheering strains?

Because that chapter treats exclusively of *the resurrection of those that are Christ's at his coming*! There is no assertion here of a simultaneous rising of all mankind! In vain we search for any allusion at all to a *resurrection of the wicked*. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power!" Believers only can be included in the statement. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, *incorruptible*, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"; that death may be swallowed up in victory, and we obtain the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing here at variance with the vision we have just considered; on the contrary, there are two distinct harmonies with its teachings.

1. The resurrection of those that are Christ's is spoken of as a distinct event. "Christ the firstfruits, afterward *they that are Christ's*" (not "afterward all mankind").

2. This resurrection is said to be, of at the end of the world, but "*at his coming*," which, as we have seen, is 1000 years before the end of the world.

It is added "*then cometh the end*," and as well nigh two thousand years have already intervened between *the first two* events here predicted, it is doing no violence to the passage to assert, that one thousand years will intervene (according to the twentieth chapter of Revelation), between *the last two*. The prediction marches with majestic step, measuring millenaries, as it passes from one scene of resurrection to another.

1. Christ the firstfruits.
2. Afterward, they that are Christ's, at His coming.
3. Then cometh the end.

Three great epochs of resurrection: that of Christ, that of Christians, that of the ungodly; the latter not being named or described here, though its chronological point is intimated, it is at the end.*

* In the typical "feasts of the Lord" (Lev. xxiii.) there were similarly THREE INGATHERINGS, The *firstfruit sheaf*, on the morrow after the paschal sabbath; seven weeks later the *firstfruits of the harvest*, two wave loaves"; and at the *end* of the Jewish sacred year, the ingathering of all the fruits of the earth, including *the vintage*. These were the three feasts, in which all Israel's males were to appear before God. "Thrice in the year shall all thy males appear before God." (Exod. xviii. 14-17).

It is the same with the other great statement of our hope in 1 Thessalonians iv, It speaks of a resurrection of the dead in Christ, and of *such only* at his coming; and thus suggests, what the Apocalypse states, that "the rest of

the dead live not again" till after an interval of whose length it says nothing.

In Acts xxvi. 15, Paul, stating his own faith and that of the Jewish nation on this point, says "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." The vision we are considering shows this double resurrection, and adds the information, that its chronology is as twofold as its character, that the resurrection of the just, will take place a thousand years before the resurrection of the unjust. There is no contradiction here.

In Philippians iii. 11, Paul, —expressing his own ardent desire and aim,—says, "if by any means I might attain, to the resurrection of the dead." Had he put before himself as an object of attainment, and of difficult attainment too, a resurrection common to all mankind, and consequently inevitable for him? Not but a *peculiar* resurrection! A resurrection which was to his heart, as the pole to the magnet, a resurrection (three Greek words), "from among" the dead, the first resurrection, in which only the blessed and holy have part. In the same way our Lord spoke of being "recompensed at the resurrection of the just; could He have used such language if there were no distinction between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust?

In John v. 28, 29, our Lord says, "the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

It must be admitted that if we were obliged to take the word "*hour*" here in its most limited sense, this passage would undoubtedly teach, a simultaneous resurrection of all the dead. But we are not. The word ὥρα admits of wide extension, its primary meaning is "season," and our Lord Himself, in a sentence immediately preceding this, employs it to cover the whole of this Gospel dispensation, in which the spiritually dead are being quickened to life by His voice. If it admit of extension to eighteen hundred years in the twenty-fifth verse, it may well include a thousand in the twenty-eighth, and this is all that is requisite, to make it agree perfectly with the apocalyptic vision. This grand and solemn prediction of our Lord announces that *morally* there will be two resurrections, first of the just, and secondly of the unjust; the twentieth chapter of Revelation adds, that *chronologically* also there will be two, first of the just, and secondly of the unjust. There is no discord here, but there is on the contrary a marked harmony.

There is a parallelism also between the spiritual resurrections that are going on in this "hour," and the bodily resurrections that shall occur in that "hour." Neither are simultaneous; though the latter according to the Apocalypse, take place only at two epochs, at the beginning, and at the close of the millennium; while the former are, as experience teaches, still less simultaneous, and take place day by day, throughout the whole course of the dispensation. Would our Lord have used the two striking, distinct, names He does use, had He foreseen one general resurrection? Would He have spoken of "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation"?

These are the main passages in the Bible bearing on the doctrine of

resurrection. We now inquire, where does Scripture teach a simultaneous resurrection of all mankind? And echo answers, where? Yet many have so strong an impression that it is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, that they feel bound to evade in some way, the simple obvious conclusions to be drawn from the visions we are considering.

So far from being *at variance* with previous inspired teachings on the subject, the fresh revelations of the Apocalypse enable us to perceive the Divine accuracy of many delicate touches in earlier scriptures, which would have remained unperceived but for our knowledge of this truth. Such, for instance, is the discriminating use of the four Greek expressions, rendered indifferently in our version "the resurrection of the dead." Moses Stuart says: "after investigating this subject, I have doubts whether the assertion is correct that such a doctrine as that of the first resurrection, is nowhere else to be found in Scripture. The laws of philology oblige me to suppose, that the Saviour and St. Paul have both alluded to such a doctrine." The Greek expressions used may be literally translated "resurrection of dead ones," "resurrection from among dead ones," "the resurrection: that one from among dead ones," and "the out resurrection of or from the dead." The Greek expressions are not used indiscriminately; and it is evident that, had they been uniformly translated by exactly corresponding phrases, the thought of a resurrection of some of the dead, and not of all the dead, would have been a familiar one to students of Scripture. The phraseology employed on the subject is, in other words, precisely what would naturally be selected by the Holy Spirit, if resurrection were foreseen to consist of two stages; but unaccountable, if it were all to consist in one act.*

* The expression "out of" or "from" the dead is never used in the New Testament except of a resurrection in which others are left behind; it is used thirty-five times of the resurrection of Christ (and save in two passages where the ἐκ is omitted for the sake of euphony no other is used). The natural inference is that when this expression or a stronger one is applied to the resurrection of Christ's people, it implies a resurrection of some in which others are left behind. One who has examined this subject very fully says: "I am prepared to affirm that whenever ἐκ or ἐξ is used in connection with ἀνάστασις (Greek for resurrection), it is the resurrection of the just that is referred to; or at least, a resurrection in which some are left behind."—See Wood's "Last Things," p. 59.

It should be remembered also that a resurrection of some, which leaves others behind, is the only kind of resurrection of which we have any example. Such were the three resurrections miraculously wrought by our Lord; such was His own resurrection, and such was the rising which took place, when "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, after His resurrection, and appeared unto many." Why should not that which *has* happened on a small scale happen on a large?

The Final Judgment.

The commonly received opinion on this subject, that the whole race of man will appear simultaneously before the great white throne of God, to be judged according to their works, at the coming of the Lord, is based upon a great many passages of Scripture, and is tenaciously held, with a conviction that any departure from it is grave heresy. But this twentieth chapter of

Revelation, taken in its context and in its natural sense, requires a modification of this theory, It does not deny that the whole human family will appear before the judgment seat and throne of God; but it teaches that they will not do so *simultaneously*, that the act of judgment, like that of resurrection, will take place in two stages, divided by an interval of a thousand years.

The VISION OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it;
From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away,
And there was found no place for them.
And I saw *the dead* small and great, stand before God;
And the books were opened,
And another book was opened which was the book of life,
And the dead were judged
Out of those things which were written in the books
ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it;
And death and hades
Delivered up the dead which were in them;
And they were judged,
Every man according to his works.
And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire.
This is the second death,
And whosoever was not found written in the book of life
Was cast into the lake of fire.

This passage taken in its natural obvious sense, and with its context, is clearly a sequel to the previous vision, and can be interpreted only in connection with it.

The "rest of the dead," who lived not again then, do live again now; those that had done good, rose in the bright morning of this day of the Lord, to the resurrection of life, those that have done evil, rise now at its lurid close, to the resurrection of judgment.

The expression "the dead small and great" includes all who were dead, at the inauguration of this great session of judgment: not only the "rest of the dead" left behind at the time of the first resurrection, but all cut off during the course of the millennium, as well as the immense company of rebels, destroyed by fire from heaven, at its close.

A little reflection will convince the thoughtful of the impossibility, that the church of the firstborn should be summoned to this bar of judgment. They have already been tried, condemned, and executed, viz., in the person of the Surety. Rom, vi. 7, (Gr.) "He that has died is justified from sin (guilt)" death exhausts the penalty. Ever since the marriage of the Lamb, a thousand years before, they have been publicly owned as the bride of Christ, *one* with the occupant of the great white throne, united to Him, not only secretly by faith, but publicly in the eyes of the universe. They are his body, a part of

Himself; because He lives, they live also. And will He summon his dearly loved, blood-bought, long glorified bride, to be judged amid "the dead small and great"? Shall the saints stand and be tried, in company with their enemies and persecutors? Why, Christ Himself is their righteousness, they are pure as He is pure; shall they mingle again in the common herd of the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters and liars, from whom grace made them, ages ago, to differ? God covenanted with them to remember no more their sins and iniquities, and to blot out as a thick cloud their transgressions. Shall they now be called to account for the long cancelled score? Ages since, they received the gift of God, eternal life; shall *He* now call in question their right to his own gift? For a thousand years they have been, by the Divine Judge himself, vindicated from every shade and suspicion of guilt, before the holy angels and the entire universe; and shall they now descend from their priestly thrones, and with "blessed and holy" inscribed on their brilliant brows, and clad in their fine linen clean and white, as no fuller on earth can white it, stand amid the throng of the unholy and impure, to be *judged*, and judged according to their works? To what end should they mingle with the "lost," from whom conversion long since severed them, and with the dead, from whom resurrection long since divided them? To be afresh acquitted, say some, and to hear again the "Well done, good and faithful servant." Be it so! But then *why is neither their presence, nor their acquittal, nor their eternal portion, even so much as alluded to in the vision?* Why is there no mention of these? Why do we read only of "the dead small and great," and of *their condemnation* alone? The answer is clear. Because the dead only are there! They seek in vain, who seek the living among the dead!

Such then is the apparent teaching of this vision, on the subject of judgment. It remains to be examined, whether the strong impression in the minds of many, that this doctrine is not only additional to, but *contrary* to, the doctrine of other parts of Scripture, is well grounded or not.

We must, then, inquire on what passages this strong conviction is based, and whether they *do* definitely teach a *simultaneous* judgment of the just and of the unjust. Let it be borne in mind that *this* is the point; not the broad truth that both classes are to be judged. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," is a rule without exception, as far as we learn from Scripture. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." There is no possibility of mistaking the all-inclusive character of these and similar assertions; but they leave untouched the question we have to consider. The statements, "the commander in chief will review the army," "he will review every regiment," "every officer and every private will pass in review before him," prove that all are to be reviewed, but not that all are to be reviewed *at the same time*. Those who are forced by its internal evidence to deny that the judgment vision of Revelation xx. includes the righteous, are not thereby forced to assert, that the righteous are to go unjudged. The point to be decided is exactly similar to that we have considered in connection with resurrection; do earlier scriptures oblige us, by unequivocal assertion of *simultaneous*, to give a non-natural interpretation to these final prophecies? Or do they, in the light reflected back from these latest revelations,

accommodate themselves naturally to a different sense?

The close connection which exists between resurrection and judgment, would lead us to expect that what has proved true in the one case, will do so in the other. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, are never separated by any considerable or defined interval. If therefore the former is proved to be divided into two widely distant stages, the presumption is strong, that this will be the case also with the latter. The two resurrections indeed receive their distinctive appellations from the results of the judgments which accompany them; the "resurrection of life," and "the resurrection of damnation."

In reviewing the testimony of other scriptures on this subject, we are likely to find—in harmony with the principle of progressive revelation—many statements of the broad fundamental doctrine of future judgment, which fall in equally well with either view; some few which at first sight seem to teach simultaneousness, but which on closer examination will be seen to leave the point undecided; and some, which can only be fairly interpreted, or fully understood, by assuming two epochs and scenes of judgment.

Of the first class are such passages as, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "God will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. ii. 5). "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall He reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27).

Many such passages exist; it is not needful to multiply quotations, no argument can be built on them, in favour of either view. Without further revelation we should doubtless have understood them to teach a simultaneous judgment; with further revelation, we can read them as broad comprehensive statements, made by One who *knew*, but did not at the time wish to *reveal*, modifying details. Such passages mention the universality of the judgment, the twofold result, the fact that it is to follow our Lord's return, and they show that in either case the issues will be eternal; but they do not touch the question of *simultaneousness*.

With the closing parable of Matthew xxv. it is otherwise. This is the leading passage, of the second class above alluded to; those which seem at first sight distinctly to teach a simultaneous judgment of the righteous and the wicked. On any theory this passage is one difficult of interpretation, owing to its peculiar semi-parabolic form; the difficulty of deciding whether it is a judgment of the dead or of the living; the principle of the judgment,—*works*,—taken in connection with the eternity of the issues in either case; the limited nature of the test, on which the great award is made to depend; its relation to the previous parables; its likeness to, yet dissimilarity from, other parallel scriptures; and other features. But the following considerations seem to make it clear, that the scene here described is not identical with that in Revelation xx. 12. *This presents an award only, that an investigation*, for "the books were opened and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books;" this presents the righteous and the wicked, and mentions the eternal portion of each, that, is silent

altogether as regards the righteous; this parable in describing those gathered before the Son of man, makes use of an expression applicable to *the living*, "all nations" or "the Gentiles;" while the vision in the Apocalypse shows only the dead, "the dead small and great"; in the former, the wicked are condemned *en masse*, on the negative ground of what they have *not* done; in the latter, as individuals, on the positive ground of what they *have* done, "the things written in the books."

If this parable does describe a judgment of the dead, (which is most unlikely,) then we are compelled by the later revelation to apply to it the same rule, as to the first class of passages, and to conceive that our Lord presented the judgment as a great whole, and was purposely silent, as to the interval between its two stages. Other great and important events had to intervene; the moral effect to be produced on the minds of his disciples by this truth of judgment to come, was the same, whether it were to take place at once, or at intervals; and the object He had in view did not require that He should enter into details, for which they were not prepared. The same Divine reticence, which had purposely hid from their view the interval between His own approaching departure and His return, hid also the interval between the stages of this judgment. In this view of the passage the first session of the judgment is at the advent, when the righteous are rewarded with the kingdom; the whole millennium is included under the phrase, "then shall He sit on the throne of his glory"; and the concluding session of the judgment is at its close, when the wicked are doomed to everlasting fire.

A considerable part of the impression of simultaneousness which it produces on the mind, is to be attributed to the parabolic form of this prophecy. Divested of this, and translated into a plain declaration of the future, it would seem as natural, to apply to it, as to any other passage on the subject, the principle of prophetic perspective.*

* Professor Birks, of Cambridge, to whose writings on prophecy frequent reference is made in these pages, while holding that there will be *two resurrections* of the dead, the first at the beginning and the second at the end of the thousand years of Revelation xx., lays stress on the *simultaneousness* of the judgment of the saints and that of the ungodly, as involved in the discriminating character of the first resurrection. In a letter to the author, written after he had read the first four hundred pages of this work, Professor Birks says: "I agree fully with almost every sentence in the first four hundred pages, except one small section, pp.68-78. I think the vision from Revelation xvii. 1 to xxi. 8 is one integral part of the prophecy. I fully agree with what you write on the first resurrection, but I think you overlook the fact that this resurrection is a public act of Divine acquittal to those included in it, and by the distinctness of the two resurrections is implied sentence of condemnation to those excluded from it. This account of final judgment then I thus hold to be parallel to Matthew xxv., and that the simultaneousness of the twofold judgment is more strongly affirmed here than even there; but with regard to the judgment on degrees of glory or of punishment, this extends over the whole day of judgment of a thousand years, and the two parts belong to its evening and its morning.

"May God give an abundant blessing to your work, which I think to be one of great importance and interest to the Church, from the amount of precious and important truth which it unfolds."

Our Lord's parables in Matthew xiii, are also adduced as teaching the simultaneousness of the judgment, but the same thing is true of them. Their object is to unfold the present mixed state of things in the kingdom of heaven, in contrast with the pure state of things that shall exist after the end of this age. The division between the wheat and the tares, between the good fish and the bad, which takes place as we are expressly told at the end of this age, is a division effected at the advent, among the *living* not the dead; it is a severing between real believers, and false professors; between the true and the apostate church. The tares are still growing with the wheat in the harvest field; "the field is the world." The fish are still struggling together in the Gospel net; there is no thought here of a resurrection of the dead, it is a severance among the living. Other scriptures teach us that a resurrection of dead saints will take place at the advent, but that is not alluded to here. The tares are gathered in bundles to be burned, and the wheat is gathered into the garner. "One shall be taken and another left." "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The parables of Matthew xiii. present the thought of severance, and not that of judicial investigation and award.

We next look at the passages which teach more directly the truth, that judgment to come will take place in two stages. Foremost among them is our Lord's own memorable declaration, John v. 24; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." It is well known that the word here translated condemnation, κρίσις, means *judgment*, and is so translated in the verse but one previous. The believer shall not come into judgment, when judgment is to be to condemnation, Not, he shall not be condemned in the judgment, but he shall not even *come into it*. The same word is used in verse 27 and again in verse 29, where it is translated "damnation." Now this resurrection of damnation, or resurrection to judgment, is clearly that spoken of in Revelation xx; *and into that, our Lord Himself declares his people shall not come*. There shall be a reckoning of Christ with his people, as many passages which shall be examined presently teach; but this is not judgment. Alford says: "the reckoning which ends with 'Greek words' is not 'κρίσις,' the reward is of free grace. In this sense the believers in Christ will not be judged according to their works, They are justified before God by faith, and by God; (Greek words.) Their passage over from death to life, *has already taken place*,—from the state of spiritual death, to that (Greek words) which they (Greek word) already. It is to be observed that our Lord speaks in very similar terms of the unbelieving being *condemned already*, in chapter iii. 18, The perfect sense of (Greek word) must not be weakened or explained away." Let those who hold that there will be a simultaneous judgment of the just and of the unjust explain this statement of our Lord. He does not say that believers shall not be condemned in the judgment, but that they shall not *come into it*. Can anything be clearer than this?

Into what judgment then shall they come? Into one, distinct alike in its objects, principles, results, and period, from the judgment of Revelation xx. 12.

In the judgment of sinners the object is to determine their eternal destiny; in the judgment of saints *their* eternal destiny is already determined; they are, from the moment they believe, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, one with the Lord Jesus, possessors of eternal life, and heirs of eternal glory. The resurrection which precedes their judgment has manifested this; for when Christ their life appears, they appear with Him in glory, they see Him and are like Him, conformed to the image of God's Son. Now it is clear, that when these *already glorified saints* stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the point to be investigated and settled is *not* whether they deserve and are to have eternal, life and glory; grace has already given them these, though they deserved eternal condemnation: but the point to be investigated and decided is, how far they have been faithful servants and stewards of their absent Lord; how far their works, as saved persons, can stand the test of Christ's judgment, and what measure of reward each is to enjoy. Their common possession of eternal life does not forbid degrees in glory, and the fact that they are saved by grace does not forbid that they shall be rewarded according to their works. That this is a very different thing, from the eternal destiny of each individual, being made to depend on his own works, is evident.

The judgment of sinners is on the ground of "rendering to every man according to his works,"—justice; the judgment of saints is on the ground of grace, for it is grace alone that rewards any of our works.

The judgment of sinners ends in the blackness of darkness for ever; the judgment of saints ends in "then shall every man have *praise* of God." The one is a judgment of *persons*, the other of *works* only. The one as we have seen is prefigured in symbolic vision in Revelation xx.; the other is spoken of in various places, in the epistles addressed to the early church. "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"; that is, the searching, penetrating, soul-discerning judgment of Christ, shall put the works of His people to the test, and only the perfectly pure shall abide the test. Some works, like wood, hay and stubble, will be destroyed by this "fire"; but, even so, the man who did them shall be saved; his works may perish but he shall "never perish" according to His Saviour's promise. In Romans xiv. Christians are urged in view of this judgment, not to judge each other, "for we shall all stand before the (Greek word) or judgment seat of Christ," not the "throne," as in Revelation xx.

The period of the judgment of sinners before the great white throne, is a thousand years or more after the coming of the Lord. The period of the judgment of saints is fixed to be *at* the coming of the Lord. 1 Corinthians iv. 5: "therefore judge nothing before the time, *until the Lord come*, who both 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."

We conclude therefore that these two judgments cannot be the same, and that so far from being at variance with other inspired prophecies, the twentieth chapter of Revelation enables us to understand and combine previous statements, and sheds new light on many also. Judgment will no more be

simultaneous than resurrection; both will take place at two grand epochs, marking respectively, the morning and the evening, of the day of the Lord; the former will be a resurrection and a judgment unto life, the latter a resurrection and a judgment unto condemnation.

Whence then has arisen the exceedingly prevalent opinion to the contrary? From the littleness of the finite mind, that comprehends with difficulty the vast, far reaching, and complete designs of the Infinite; from the lack in us of the patient continuance of searching the Scriptures; from the irreverent neglect with which the last prophecy of the Bible is too often treated; and from the not giving it, even when studied, its due authority—the non-recognition of the principle of PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.

From Dean Alford's Commentary on the New Testament we extract the following testimony to the doctrine of two distinct resurrections of the dead.

"I cannot consent to distort its words (Rev. xx.) from their *plain sense* and *chronological place* in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the apostles, and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense; and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside *the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents*. As regards the text itself, *no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion*. If in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain (Greek words) at the first, AND THE REST OF THE (Greek words) ONLY AT THE END OF A SPECIFIED PERIOD AFTER THAT FIRST, in such a passage the first may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance of language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but IF THE SECOND IS LITERAL, THEN SO IS THE FIRST, *which in common with whole primitive Church and many of the best modern expositors, I maintain and receive as an article of faith and hope.*"

END OF PART I.

(To be continued.)