



THE OLD PATHS

THY WORD IS TRUTH

Jeremiah 6:16

JULY, 1952, No. 247

LATTER DAY DELUSIONS CONCERNING THE LORD'S PRESENCE

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts (desires), And saying, Where is the promise of his coming (Greek-Parousia, Presence)? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4.)

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19.)

It is evident from the above Scripture in the Epistle of Peter that the Apostle was given considerable light upon the conditions that would prevail amongst the Lord's followers, during the closing years of the present Harvest-time. The implication is that, as the end of Harvest drew near, conflicting views concerning the Lord's Second Presence would be prevalent amongst those then professing to be in the light of Present Truth. Some would be claiming that His promised Presence was a clearly-established truth, evidenced, among other things, by the fulfillment of the signs

foretold by our Lord in reply to the questions of His disciples on this very point. (Matthew 24:3.) Others, on the contrary, would be maintaining that the signs referred to in the world and amongst His followers were not signs of His Presence, but evidences that He was about to come shortly.

The Apostle's remarks concerning "scoffers" are not made of people of the world who know nothing of the hope of the Lord's Return. The Epistle, of which the passage forms part, is addressed to those of "like precious faith," hence the statement of the Apostle cannot refer to those who have no expectation of the Lord's Return. The scoffing here described evidently relates to some who have an understanding of the hope of the Second Advent and who therefore believe that the Lord will return at some future date.

The scoffing, moreover, does not relate to those who will ask what has become of *the promise of His Return one day* in the future, but arises in opposition to the view maintained by those who believe that He has already come. In other words, it is a scoffing against the promise of His *Presence*, not against the promise of His future *coming*.

All who profess to be in Present Truth and are acquainted with present conditions throughout the Harvest field will bear witness to the truth of the Apostle's forecast. These conditions have come about, too, for reasons given by the Apostle. All that was expected to happen in 1914 did not take place at that time, hence brethren changed their views because, in their opinion, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

HIS PRESENCE FIRST RECOGNIZED

It is well known to most brethren that the first intimation of our Lord's Return and Presence was proclaimed amongst His consecrated followers about 75 years ago. Our late Brother Russell was the chosen instrument used by our Lord to make known to the watchers of that early hour of dawn, not only the manner and purpose of His Coming, but the incontestable Scriptural evidence that He was then present. Those who believed the evidence and accordingly accepted as a fact the truth concerning His Presence, as well as the various truths arising therefrom, were then said to have come into the "Present Truth."

During the next forty or fifty years an ever-increasing number of earnest believers were added to the Present Truth movement. Joyfully, they received the glad news that the dawn of earth's day of deliverance and blessing had at last begun to break. During those years, of course, some joined the movement whose faith, like the stony ground of the parable, was not of sufficient depth to nourish for long such an amazing and stupendous truth, hence when tests came along they sooner or later drifted away.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Between the years 1914 and 1916, the Lord for a wise purpose permitted severe tests of faith to come upon all who claimed to be in the Present Truth movement. As the numbers added to the movement increased, it became evident to many that not all professing to be in Present Truth had clearly grasped the evidences of this deeply-spiritual truth. The passing from their midst in 1916 of

that great teacher and servant of God - Brother Russell - was a further test, permitted by the Lord to prove the faith and depth of spiritual understanding of the truth people everywhere. Since then other and even keener tests of faith and spiritual discernment have followed, and to-day, almost at the end of the Harvest-time, the Adversary is permitted to bring strong delusions to bear upon the faith and hopes of the Lord's people everywhere. So searching will these delusions yet be that only such as have taken to themselves the "armor of light," specially provided for dais evil day, will be able to stand. (Ephesians 6:13.) If it were possible, declared our Lord, even the elect would be deceived. (Matthew 24:24.)

That the day of these delusions, also referred to by the Apostle Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:11), is already upon us, should be clear to all who are measurably acquainted with the appalling confusion of doctrine and lack of spiritual understanding that have become evident amongst the Lord's Ecclesias throughout the Harvest field today. For proof of this there is no need for anyone to go far afield to find it. Conditions amongst the Ecclesias here in the London area alone are typical of developments everywhere today. In this great city of London, no less than three publications have been circulated during the last few months, in an attempt to prove that the Lord is not present. The first of these claims to be issued under the direction of Elders of the Forest Gate, London, Ecclesia. The second is published by a similar group of brethren under the title " Maran-atha," but no indication is given of the particular Ecclesia which they represent. The third is written by a brother who was associated with the London Headquarters of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society for about fifty years. Each of them holds conflicting views on various details, but the one thing upon which they all agree is that the teaching that our Lord is present is entirely wrong.

It might be thought that the writers of these publications were recent comers to the Truth movement, but such a thought would be very wide of the mark. Most of them have, until recent years, believed in the Lord's Presence and have been active supporters of the Present Truth movement. Doubtless some of them now say, as others have done in past years, that they were misled by subtle arguments into the acceptance of the view that the Lord is present, but now realize that they had accepted error.

Such an explanation of their changed views regarding Christ's Presence is not, however, likely to impress the minds of thinking brethren. Discerning minds would be inclined to reason that brethren who were so easily deceived, concerning such a momentous question as the Second Advent of Christ, might similarly be deceived a second time. Indeed, it requires but little consideration of these publications, in the light of the Scriptures, to find convincing evidence that that is just what has taken place, as it is hoped to show later. There is not sufficient space in one issue of "Old Paths" in which to deal with the points raised in all these publications, hence the purpose of the present issue is to examine the objections advanced in the first of the three publications.

THE LORD'S PAROUSIA

Most of the objections raised in the publication against the teaching that the Lord is now present arise out of the meaning of the Greek word *parousia*. *Parousia*, as all know, is the term used in Matthew 24:3, where the disciples' questions are recorded- " When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming (*parousia*), and of the end of the world (age)?"

Unfortunately for the English reader, the translators of the Authorized Version of the New Testament have incorrectly rendered the Greek term *parousia* by the word "coming," instead of using the correct term "presence." This has confused the minds of many regarding our Lord's Return. It has apparently been permitted by the Lord in order to test whether or not our degree of love for the truth and for its Giver is sufficient to stimulate us to search for an harmonious and satisfactory understanding of this very important subject. The Lord has graciously provided for this purpose the necessary helps and concordances for the benefit of all who love the truth and who receive it into a good and honest heart.

The Revisers of our Common Version admit that "presence" is the correct rendering of the Greek word *parousia* and indicate this in the marginal notes, while still retaining the erroneous translation in the text. Doubtless because of their theological views they, in common with many other translators of the New Testament, considered that "coming" instead of "presence" would make better sense. The word *parousia* (derived from *para* "with" and *eimi* "to be"), according to Young's Dictionary of Bible words and synonyms, means "a being alongside, presence."

The term clearly implies the thought of presence and not that of being on the way before arrival has taken place, as is implied in the word "coming."

J. B. Rotherham, one of our most conscientious translators, in the following brief extract from the appendix to his latest edition of the Emphasized New Testament, records some interesting remarks right to the point.

"In this edition (he declares) the word *parousia* is uniformly rendered "presence." . . . The difficulty expressed in the notes to the second edition of this N.T. in the way of so yielding to this weight of evidence as to render *parousia* always by "presence," lay in the seeming incongruity of regarding "presence" as an event which would happen at a particular time and which would fall into rank as one of a series of events . . . after all, "presence" may be the most widely and permanently satisfying translation of the looked for *parousia* of the Son of Man."

In the Emphatic Diaglott and also in Dr. Young's translation, *parousia* is uniformly rendered "presence" and no Greek scholar of repute would, we believe, deny that "presence" is the correct meaning of the word *parousia*. The difficulty with many, however, has been that they have allowed erroneous theological views to warp their judgments in the rendering of this term. There is nothing in the term itself to indicate whether one's presence is visible or invisible; the context determines that. If, for example, *parousia* is used in reference to a tangible being of flesh and blood, then his presence must in normal circumstances be visible. On the other hand, when it is used in reference to a spirit-being his presence, of necessity, must be invisible, for spirit-beings are not visible to human sight. The *parousia* ("presence") of our Lord, a spirit-being of the highest rank, must likewise be invisible, unless revealed by some *outward sign* or evidence.

We mention this very obvious matter because those brethren who object to the claim that the Lord is now present seem to be somewhat confused on the point. They quote the definitions of *parousia* given in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, namely, "presence" and "arrival," and then proceed to attempt to show that "arrival" does not mean "presence." We quote:

"Sometimes ' arrival 'is the intended and primary meaning. Paul was glad of the *parousia* (i.e., arrival) of certain brethren (1 Corinthians 16:17) and he was comforted by the *parousia* (arrival) of Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6). They no doubt remained with Paul and thus their *parousia* (arrival) extended to 'presence '."

This arbitrary effort to prove that *parousia* does not mean "presence" and that when Titus arrived he was not really present is surely nothing short of an attempt at hair-splitting. Thus, they state that in order to be present, after his arrival, Titus had to have his arrival (*parousia*) **extended** to presence. One might feel inclined' at this stage, to ask these brethren just how long they think Titus had to remain with Paul *after* his arrival in order to have the "arrival extended to presence." The average mind might be excused for thinking that when one had arrived he was then actually present, but according to the foregoing line of reasoning that would be quite wrong. The facts are that according to our most meticulous translators, Benjamin Wilson of the Emphatic Diaglott and J. B. Rotherham, translator of the Emphasized New Testament, Dr. Robert Young, as well as others, *parousia* in both the Scriptures quoted above means " presence " and is so translated by them.

In view of the extraordinary suggestions about "arrival " and "presence," the publishers of " Old Paths " have sought the views of several present-day Greek scholars at highest level. These authorities agree that "arrival "and "presence" cannot be distinguished as is attempted in the publication under examination. The Principal of one Theological College puts it this way:-

"Parousia means arrival opening out into an abiding presence, *and presence begins immediately on arrival*. In other words, arrival and presence are, so to speak, synchronous in the sense that they have a common starting-point, while presence naturally extends over a period of time."

THE PAROUSIA LASTS 1000 YEARS

Those who deny that the Lord is now present, ask us to believe that the *parousia* of our Lord will be a sudden and instantaneous event-sudden as a flash of lightning and clearly manifested. Quoting their comments on Matthew 24:27 and Luke 17:24 we read,

"In both these connections Jesus in effect is saying that His coming (arrival, *parousia*) will not be a hole and - corner affair. It will not be localized. When it takes place it will be sudden and clearly manifested."

In the first place, it should be noted that our Lord was not discussing the matter of His "coming" in either of the above Scriptures. He was answering the question of His disciples " What will be the sign of thy *presence*? " (Greek: *parousia*-Diaglott.) Moreover, in both these Scriptures lightning is translated from the Greek word *astrapee*. But the meaning of *astrapee* is by no means limited to lightning, even by the translators of the Authorized Version. In Luke 11:36 it is translated "bright shining," and the verbal counterpart often bears the wider meaning. Dr. Samuel G. Green defines the word as " lightning, VIVID brightness, lustre."

But supposing the contention of these brethren that in Matt. 24:27 and Luke 17:24 a flash of lightning is allowed, which according to them will not be localized. What then? To begin with, no one has ever seen or heard of a flash of lightning that was not localized, and no lightning flash is clearly manifested world-wide in a moment of time as these brethren would have us believe. Perhaps, however, they have in mind that our Lord's reference was not to an *ordinary* flash of lightning seen by human eyes, but to a special flash created for the occasion that would cover the entire planet.

Here again, however, difficulties arise, for our Lord's comparison of His *parousia* was not with any special *astrapee* provided for the occasion, but with the ordinary, everyday *astrapee* with which all were familiar. His words are, "For as the lightning (*astrapee* - bright shining) cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; **so** shall also the coming (*parousia*-presence) of the Son of man be." If, as these brethren insist, *astrapee* is correctly rendered lightning in this text, the other difficulty still persists. Lightning is always local, whether it occurs in Palestine or elsewhere. A flash of lightning, as we all know is not visible beyond a matter of a few miles. Indeed, lightning is an everyday occurrence in hundreds of places at the same time throughout the world, but in every case it is local.

Putting aside for the moment these absurd ideas concerning our Lord's comparison of the *astrapee* ("bright shining") with His *parousia* ("presence") let us consider a more reasonable and satisfactory view of the matter. The meaning of *astrapee*, as already mentioned, is not limited to "lightning," even in the Authorized Version of the New Testament. It is also rendered "bright shining," and this is important. The only "bright shining" that invariably comes out of the east and shineth even unto the west is the glowing light of early dawn which precedes the rising sun. This morning glow quickly and stealthily sweeps across the sky daily, from east to west, and at first is recognised only by the watchers of early morn. This figure of the dawning light meets all the circumstances of the case and it agrees with the general teaching of the Scriptures concerning the Lord's *parousia*.

Again, once it is realized that the Lord's *parousia* lasts for 1,000 years it is easy to see that all ideas that would limit it to a momentary event, such as a lightning flash or the twinkling of an eye, are not only unreasonable but entirely without Scriptural support. The thousand-years' reign over the earth, during which He will put down all opposing rule and authority, is the period of our Lord's *parousia*. For, declared the Apostle, "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Corinthians 15:24-25) Our Lord's *parousia* corresponds also with the world's thousand year judgment day.

When rightly understood, verse 23 of this chapter throws much light upon our Lord's *parousia* ("presence"). It is declared in this verse that the resurrection of all mankind takes place during the *parousia*, but this is hidden from the English reader through a mistranslation of *parousia* as "coming," instead of "presence." Describing the resurrection of all who have died in Adam, we read that every man will be resurrected in his own order. The first order or rank is said to be "Christ the first-fruits." Failure to grasp what is implied by this expression "Christ the first-fruits," has beclouded to many the Apostle's teaching in this connection concerning the work and purpose of our Lord's *parousia*.

It should be carefully noted that the term " Christ " is not the *personal* name of any individual. On the contrary, it is the title of a very high and exalted *office* which our Lord and His Body members have been called to occupy. The word "Christ" means Anointed, and it was not until Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at Jordan that He became Christ. Thus, concerning Jesus we read, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God **hath made** that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36.) The important point here to note, however, is that "Christ the first-fruits" is not limited to the anointed Jesus alone. His Body-members also are anointed in Him, and the Apostle tells us that the Body also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12) This verse reads "For **as** the body is one, and bath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: **so** also is Christ".

Moreover, the members of Christ, like their Head, Jesus, are also described as God's first-fruits. (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4.) Rightly understood, then, the resurrection of "Christ the firstfruits" covers the entire 144,000 members of the Body. Such is the "Mystery of Christ" and happy are all who have received the anointing in Him. (1 John 2:27.) The making alive of the members of Christ who have slept in death and the change of those who are " alive and remain " into the day of His presence take place during the *early part* of His *parousia*. Afterwards, they that are Christ's that is, those of the world who become His during His *parousia* (here mistranslated) "coming," are dealt with. That this is the mind of the Apostle may easily be seen from the following verse - "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The "end" referred to is the end of the thousand-year reign over the earth.

This is one of the very unfortunate instances in which *parousia* has been mistranslated as "coming". The fact is that the entire thousand years lie between our Lord's coming and the end of the *parousia* period referred to in this text. (1 Corinthians 15:24.) This is very different from a momentary flash of lightning. The reader should also note Malachi 4:2 - "the Sun of righteousness (shall) arise with healing in his wings".

EPIPHANIA AND APOKALUPSIS

The authors of the publication seem to be as much confused in their understanding of the *epiphania* and *apokalupsis* of our Lord as they are respecting His *parousia* They tell us that -

" The understanding which commends itself to us, however, is that all three expressions (i.e., *parousia*, *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis*) relate to the Lord's arrival and that in referring to it as one great event, they are used interchangeably according to the particular aspect the inspired writer has in mind."

We have just seen that according to the Apostle (1 Corinthians 15:23) the Lord's *parousia* lasts throughout the thousand years of His reign over the earth, and yet these brethren tell us that all three terms are interchangeable and refer to the *one event* of our *Lords arrival*. Let us, however, test this assertion by the Scriptures. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, we read, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of his coming (*parousia*). "Perhaps these brethren would tell us why the Apostle makes use of both these terms together in reference to the destruction of the wicked one, if, as they contend, both mean the same thing? At the same time, it would be of interest to us to learn

why the first of these terms is described as the *epiphaneia* "of" his *parousia*, seeing, as they say, they mean one and the same thing.

A little consideration of their use in the Scriptures quickly reveals that they are neither interchangeable nor mean the same thing. When the word *parousia* in this text is properly translated as "presence," it is obvious that *epiphaneia*, instead of being the same as *parousia*, is but a stage or condition of the latter. Surely no one would argue that a part "of" a thing was equal to the whole. We read, for example, of the first day of the week, but would anybody gather from that, that the first day *and* the week meant the same thing and were interchangeable? Then, why not apply the same line of reasoning to the *epiphaneia* "of" His *parousia*?

Rightly understood, as presented by our late Brother Russell in the booklet "What say the Scriptures about our Lord's Return" pages 20-22, both *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis* are merely stages in the unveiling of our Lord's presence (*parousia*), who, as a spirit being, cannot be seen by the natural eye.

Our Lord declared that He was coming as a thief and, of course, for a time only those awake and watching for the signs of His presence would be aware of it. (Revelation 16:15.) Later, the *epiphaneia* stage ("*bright shining*") "of" his *parousia* ("*presence*") would come, when thinking people in the world and many of His own professed followers, still asleep, would begin to perceive from the conditions around them that a power greater than that of any human arm had taken control of earth's affairs. Later still, the *apokalupsis* (complete unveiling) stage would be reached, when the presence of the Lord would become known to all through the gathering clouds of trouble, and thus every eye would eventually discern His presence.

The Apostle, writing to the Thessalonian brethren, informed them that "the day of the Lord (the day of His presence, mistranslated coming, and referred to in verse 15 of the previous chapter) so cometh as a thief in the night.... But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day (mark! not that event of a moment, like a lightning flash) should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4.) Does a thief in the night warn his prospective victim by signs that he is shortly coming? If he did, his visit would not be very successful. Yet these brethren tell us that our Lord, who is coming "as a thief," has foretold by ample signs that He is *coming* shortly.

According to the Scriptures, however, the Lord never did specify any signs that would indicate that He was about to come. The various signs which He did give were in reply to the question of His disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy *parousia* ("presence")?" How very fitting, then, was our Lord's comparison. "Behold, I come as a thief." Nor does the thief in any spectacular manner call the attention of the inmates of the home to the fact that he has just arrived. On the contrary, only those of the household who are sufficiently awake to detect the thief's presence would, at first, know anything about it. Later, however, to their chagrin and loss, the entire household would know all about it. How perfectly, then, does this figure of the coming of the thief illustrate both the Second Coming and Presence of our Lord. For a time, only the few watchers who are awake recognize the signs of His Presence. Later, however, as the clouds of trouble increase every eye shall discern His presence.

Contrary to the teaching of this figure of our Lord's thief-like coming and presence, we are told by the aforementioned brethren that -

" Jesus in effect is saying that His coming (arrival, *parousia*) will not be a hole-and-corner affair. It will not be localized. When it takes place it will be sudden and clearly manifested."

How very difficult it is to maintain a consistent presentation of any feature of the Divine Plan, once erroneous teachings are permitted to confuse the full vision of truth. This is true in both human and spiritual matters, and despite every effort to conceal the error, inconsistency soon manifests itself as the fatal stumbling stone. It is unavoidable. Truly, consistency is a jewel, but it is found only in the paths of light and truth.

A further and glaring inconsistency is evident in the comparison made by these brethren between the days of Noah and the coming of the Son of man. (Matthew 24:37-38.) We read from their publication: -

" The days of Noah *before* the flood are the basis of our Lord's illustration. Just as then they knew not until the flood came so shall there be the same lack of knowledge before the arrival of the Son of man . . . There was a lack of knowledge on the part of men generally before the flood and this will find its parallel in the days preceding the Lord's coming The parallel be it noted, is *not* between conditions *after* the flood had come and conditions *after* the Lord's arrival but as has been said, the parallel is between *preceding* conditions in both cases."

It will be noted in this connection and, indeed, throughout the entire publication, how carefully these brethren avoid any reference to such accurate translations of the Greek text as are found in Benjamin Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott and J. B. Rotherham's Emphasized New Testament. It is common knowledge that, in the earlier days of the Harvest, both of these translations were acknowledged as the most accurate and useful versions then available and were extensively used by most brethren in the Present Truth. Our guess would be that most, if not all, of these brethren have at least one, if not both, of these versions on their book shelves, although in their writings they avoid all reference to them.

The explanation of this would seem to be that in every case where *parousia* occurs in the New Testament, both of these translations render it consistently as "presence", although the correct rendering of the term was contrary to the theological beliefs of the translators themselves. Below, we give the respective renderings of Matthew 24:37-38 in each of these translations.

Diaglott. "For **as** the days of Noah, **thus** will be the presence (*parousia*) (mark ! not *coming* but the *days of His presence*) of the Son of Man. For as in those days, those days before the deluge, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and pledging in marriage, till the Day that Noah entered the Ark, and understood not, till the Deluge came, and swept them all away; **thus will be the presence** (*parousia*) of the Son of Man."

Emphasized New Testament. " For just **as** the days of Noah **so** will be the *presence* of the Son of Man; For as they were in those days that were before the flood, Feeding and drinking, Marrying and being given in marriage, Until one day Noah entered into the ark; And they observed not until the flood came and took away all together, **so** will be the *presence* of the Son of Man."

Indeed, there could be no comparison whatever drawn between the lengthy years or days of Noah's testimony to the coming deluge "while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:20) and the *sudden arrival* of the Son of Man, which these brethren declare will be like the momentary flash of lightning or the twinkling of an eye.

Our Lord made no reference whatever in this prophecy either to the *coming* of Noah or to the *coming* of the Son of Man. The comparison which He made was between the days of Noah (the days of his presence) *before* the flood and the *days* of the Son of Man's *parousia* - ("presence") *before* the fire of trouble consumes the present evil world (2. Peter 3:7). In Noah's days there was scoffing at the building of the ark, with all that it implied respecting the coming deluge. In the present days of our Lord's Presence there is again scoffing, as foretold by Peter, at the testimony of Present Truth and what it implies of an approaching disaster to the present world order, as the result of His Presence.

We are asked to note particularly in this connection that

"a careful comparison of the two parallel accounts in Matthew 24:37-38 and Luke 17:26-30 will reveal that the days of Noah, the conditions prevailing, and the coming of the flood on the same day he entered the ark are in Matthew referred to the *parousia* (v.v. 27, 37, 39) whereas the identical details are applied in Luke to the *apokalupsis* (v. 30) . . . On a certain day, there will be a swift *parousia* with a swift *apokalupsis* for 'behold, I come quickly.'"

We are, of course, aware that *parousia* is used in the Matthew account and that the word *apokalupsis* occurs in the Luke version. There is no inconsistency or difficulty about this.

Matthew 24:37 compares the days of Noah to those of the *parousia*. Luke 17:26 - the corresponding verse - likens the days of Noah to the days of the Son of man. The word *apokalupsis* does not occur until verse 30 and is simply a further feature of truth, namely, that the same conditions will exist even in this *further stage* of the *parousia*.

The inference which we are asked to draw from this comparison is that the Lord's *parousia* and *apokalupsis* are used interchangeably and mean one and the same thing, namely, the swift and momentary event of the Lord's arrival. That inference is, however, shortsighted and misleading. It has already been shown from the Scriptures that the Lord's *parousia* refers to the thousand years of His reign over the earth for the purpose of blessing the human family. Moreover, we have seen that the terms *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis* refer to progressive stages of His *parousia*, at which His presence is recognized and becomes known, first, to a minority of the human family, and, later, to all mankind by the complete unveiling of His presence, through the great day of trouble when "every eye shall see him" and discern His presence.

There is no need, then, to infer that because one writer in general terms mentions certain events as occurring during the *parousia* and another describes the identical same events more particularly as occurring in the *epiphaneia* or the *apokalupsis*, then these two terms and the *parousia* must mean one and the same thing. The simple and obvious explanation is that since the terms *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis* refer to stages "of " the thousand-year *parousia* period, they therefore could not refer to the entire *parousia* time. What is described in one Scripture as occurring during the *parousia* period in no sense would conflict with other Scriptures which describe the same things as occurring in either the *epiphaneia* or *apokalupsis* periods, since the latter are merely stages "of " the entire *parousia* period.

CAUGHT UP TOGETHER

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 is another Scripture which these brethren quote as proof that the Lord is not now present. They say

" If we consider carefully Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 we shall see that it cannot be held as Scriptural that after the Lord has returned any of His faithful people will continue to remain in the flesh."

This seems a very extraordinary statement to make in view of the fact that the very Scripture referred to states that some will remain after the Lord descends from heaven and *after* He has raised the dead in Christ. The Scripture continues " Then (i.e., after the events described in ver. 16 have transpired and the dead in Christ have been raised) we which are *alive* and *remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." To remain means *to stay behind and not to go* with others who have already gone. Here, then, is a definite statement by the Apostle that *some* of the Lord's followers who are alive when He comes will *remain* after the others are raised. A good many students of the Bible have considered very " carefully " these words of Paul and have arrived at very different conclusions from these brethren. Why, it might be asked, should that be so? The answer is that Paul's letter to the Thessalonians did not contain certain statements concerning the coming of Christ as they are here represented by the translators of our Authorized Version. That is not saying that their failure in this respect was deliberate. The trouble was that in their case and, indeed, in the case of many since their day, had they rendered every Greek word of the text by its corresponding English term, it would not, according to their theological views, have made sense. They did their best in the circumstances of those far-off days of King James, and gave us a translation which they considered both reasonable and accurate.

Since the Authorized Version was translated, however, increased knowledge of Greek manuscripts and also of more accurate meanings of certain Greek terms has come to light. This is reflected in such translations, already mentioned, as the Emphatic Diaglott, Rotherham's Emphasized New Testament, and Dr. Young's New Testament translation. Three Greek words, in particular, mistranslated in the Authorized Version, occur in the verses I. These. 4:13-17 now under consideration. These words are (1) *parousia* (verse 15) translated " coming ", but now acknowledged by all Greek scholars of repute to mean " presence ". (2) *Eis*, rendered " unto " in the sense of "up to" (verse 15) but now acknowledged to mean "into" rather than merely "up to". (3) *hama*, translated in verse 17 as "together", but now acknowledged to be more accurately translated " at the same time as ". According to Dr. Young *hama* is an adverb of time. It is always related to

some time period in the context. The time feature of this context is the *parousia* time of verse 15, mistranslated "coming". Keeping in mind the points just mentioned, the following would be the sense of verses 15-17 -

This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain "into" the *parousia* (presence) of the Lord shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up during the same time (the *parousia* time) with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The point which the Apostle emphasizes in these verses is that those who are alive when the Lord returns and who remain into the *parousia* period, will have no advantage over those who have fallen asleep in death. It had been revealed to him by the word of the Lord that the dead in Christ would be raised at the beginning of the *parousia* period, while those alive when he had arrived would be taken later in the same *parousia* period. It is thus seen that the mistranslation of *hama* as "together," in the sense of being in contact with each other, is unfortunate and misleading. *Hama* relates to the time period *parousia* mentioned in verse 15 of the context, which is mistranslated "coming" instead of "presence." Stated otherwise, it means that while the dead in Christ are raised at the beginning of the *parousia* period, the living who are *not* taken *then*, will be taken one by one at the moment of death "from henceforth." (Rev. 14:13.) Both classes are taken during the same time *period*, namely, the *parousia*, but not at the same *moment* of time.

The use of the word *hama* in Colossians 4:2-3 proves that it refers to a period of time - "be earnest and unwearied in prayer-and pray at the same time for us also." (Weymouth.) It was not an instantaneous prayer.

ONE TAKEN, THE OTHER LEFT

It is asserted by the brethren who deny that the Lord has already returned that the words "one shall be taken and the other left" refer to the Second Advent when, in a moment of time, one is taken to be with the Lord and the other left on the earth.

"Jesus (they write) will take to Him, receive to Himself, one. The other will be left. At the same moment of time, in different parts of the earth, night in one place, early morning in another, broad daylight elsewhere, from every kindred and tongue and people and nation, one shall be taken and the other left."

This hardly agrees with the Apostle Peter's words that the *day of the Lord* (not, be it noted, a moment of time, but the day of His presence, the thousand years referred to in the previous half-dozen verses) will come as a thief in the night. (2 Peter 3:10.) Also our Lord's own words, "Behold, I come as a thief." (Revelation 16:15.) Had these brethren carefully considered the next verse of the chapter, Luke 17:37, they would have found our Lord's own explanation as to what He meant by one being taken and the other left. But, first of all, note that the time referred to by our Lord is the "day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:30.) It is the *apokalupsis*, the revealing or unveiling stage of our Lord's presence. Secondly, there is not a word in the context about anyone

being taken to heaven or to anywhere else away from the earth, nor even that the taking would be simultaneous at the various hours of night and day. Thirdly, it is important to note that the taking and leaving time, according to the Lord, is in a particular "night" described by Him as "that night" - that night when, through the mounting troubles in the world and amongst the Lord's followers, thinking people will begin to realize that a power vastly greater than that of any human being has assumed control of earth's affairs. While the watchers realize that the morning has come, at the same time they know that the night of trouble cometh also. (Isaiah 1:12.) Indeed, the present Harvest will eventuate in a "night . . ., when no man can work". (John 9:4.)

Returning now to our Lord's statement, one shall be taken and the other left, the disciples "answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? (where are they taken to?) And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Various species of eagles and vultures in Palestine are noted for the almost incredible speed and perception with which they locate, and gather around to feed upon, the body or carcass of any animal that has come to grief.

Our Lord made use of this well-known characteristic of the eagle species in finding food, to illustrate the spiritual discernment and alertness with which His consecrated followers detect and gather around the message of Present Truth concerning His *parousia* (presence) during the Harvest of the present Age. Present Truth is the sickle which separates and tests the spiritual discernment of all the professed followers of the Lord. The Greek word *paralambano*, here rendered "taken," according to Dr. Young means "brought near or alongside." Through the understanding of Present Truth the one is brought into closer fellowship with the Lord, while the other, lacking in discernment, is left in the darkness in which the message of Present Truth found him. Rejection of any truth relative to the Divine Plan must result in comparative darkness, for, declared the Apostle John, "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not (declare) the truth". (1 John 1:6.) It is thus seen that the body or food to which the spiritually minded of the Lord's followers are gathered and which they feed upon during the Harvest period is the "meat in due season" concerning the presence and purpose of the Chief Reaper. This harmonizes fully with the context and there is no need for one to draw upon his imagination about being taken away physically from the earth, or about the moment of taking being at night, early morning, broad daylight or any other hour of the day. Anyway, it would be a little far-fetched to suggest that there is any analogy between hungry eagles satisfying their appetites upon a dead body, and the taking of the Lord's followers into their heavenly abode.

THE TIME OF HARVEST

The Harvest is another feature of Present Truth over which the objectors to the Lord's Presence seem to have stumbled. It is only natural, of course, that they should do so, because the Scriptural teaching concerning the Harvest of the Age is not compatible with their view that it will not last longer than a moment of time, like the twinkling of an eye, or as someone has expressed it, just a split second.

We read (page 12)-

" But we have still more exact information in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 about this gathering. The Lord shall descend, the dead in Christ shall rise (surely simultaneously)

and the living shall be caught up *at the same time with them*. This is the harvest, the gathering into the barn, the only consistent interpretation of reaping that includes both dead and living - all in Christ. The exact time that this takes place is given us in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

It is strange that in order to obtain more exact information about the Harvest these brethren should have to call a false witness, of improperly translated terms, to bolster up the case. We have already seen, earlier in this treatise, under the caption, " Caught up together " that there are three Greek words in the context of this Scripture, *parousia*, *eis*, and *hama*, all improperly translated in the Authorized Version. Why then do they rely upon a false witness to uphold their case? Moreover, in their quotation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, the Scripture from which they obtain the "more exact" information as to the length of Harvest-time, which they say occupies only a "moment" or "the twinkling of an eye," two words upon which the Apostle's reasoning turns are omitted. These words are "first" in verse 16, and "then" in verse 17. Both words (which concern time) describe the order in which the dead in Christ and the living in Christ are gathered. The dead "first" and "then" afterwards the living who remain later.

Since, according to the above view, the entire Harvest or gathering time is but a moment, the twinkling of an eye, one might be excused for asking just how these brethren think that this "twinkling of an eye," or split second of time, is divided between the " first " or dead class and the "then" or living class who are said to remain. To remain means to stay behind and not to go at the same moment as anyone else who departs, and yet we have these Elders of a London Ecclesia telling us that all go *simultaneously*, in the twinkling of an eye. Let us, however, dismiss from our minds all such false reasoning about the Harvest and let us consider what the Scriptures have to tell us regarding this very important matter - the Harvest of the Gospel Age.

THE NATURAL HARVEST AS A FIGURE

Our Lord made use of the figure of the natural Harvest in order to instruct His followers concerning the work and purpose of the Harvest of the present Age. In the natural season, there would be no Harvest to gather without a previous seed-sowing, and it is likewise true that the thought of seed-time implies anticipation of a coming Harvest, when the results of the season's efforts are gathered safely into the barn. (Matthew 13:30.)

The proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the beginning of the Age is described by our Lord as a sowing work. " He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." (Matthew 13:37.) This sowing work, begun by our Lord, was to continue until the end of the Age, for, declared our Lord - "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then (when that is done) shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14.) This end, or consummation of the Age, is elsewhere described by Him as the Harvest. Moreover, He declared, " in the time (not in a moment) of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them (in due course): but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13:30.)

There are no Scriptural grounds for the view that the Harvest of the Gospel Age would be a period of 40 years. This 40-year period was merely a surmise based upon the assumption that the Jewish

and Gospel Age Harvests were of equal length. It was, however, a reasonable surmise for anyone to make 40 or 50 years ago.

Although the Harvest began with the arrival (presence) of the Chief Reaper in 1874 A.D., the Scriptures, so far as we are aware, do not specify any definite date when it will end. The fact is that there are no chronological dates given in the Scriptures beyond 1914 A.D.- the end of the "Times of the Gentiles." The suggestion made by certain brethren that 1954 would witness the end of the Harvest and the gathering of the elect, is purely a speculation and proves nothing. It would not be true to say that the natural Harvest had ended so long as any of the wheat still remained out in the fields. Likewise, it would be incorrect to say that the Harvest of this Age had ended while any of the wheat class remained this side of the veil.

Many make the mistake of supposing that the work of reaping ends the Harvest. This is not so, either in the case of the natural Harvest or the Harvest of the present Age. Reaping is merely the *first stage* in the gathering work. After being reaped, the natural wheat requires to remain for a certain time in the field for weathering purposes, so that any sap still remaining may be dried out; otherwise, it would be unfit for the barn. This is true also of the spiritual wheat. Reaping, which means separation from earthbound ties and sectarian confusion by the sickle of Present Truth, is the first stage in preparation for the Kingdom barn. Like the natural wheat, however, various weathering experiences are necessary before the sap of the old nature and its desires are completely neutralized and the wheat fitted for the heavenly barn. It surely sounds strange doctrine to be told by these brethren that "the time of Harvest" in which the entire work of reaping and gathering the elect, both dead and living of the present Age, is accomplished, will occupy but one moment of time equal to the twinkling of an eye. How significant in this connection are the words of our Lord - "If your very light turns dark, then - what a darkness it is!" (Matthew 6:23 - Moffatt.)

The foregoing account of the Harvest is dependent on recognition that there is an "alive and remain" class living on into the early years of the *parousia*. Naturally, the Harvest includes also the gathering of the dead in Christ.

CHRONOLOGY

On the question of chronology, the writers of the publication under consideration say -

" It is not our intention to refute along any chronological lines the claim that the Lord returned in 1874 A.D.- indeed the onus is on those who believe that He came then or at any subsequent date to prove their claims-but we would merely say that the chronological evidence which has been submitted, we consider to be slender, inadequate and unreliable."

We take it that, by the "chronological evidence" which they consider "slender, inadequate and unreliable," they mean the chronological time links set out in Volume II of "Studies in the Scriptures," showing that 6,000 years from the Fall ended in the year 1874 A.D. If the time links which make up that chain are so slender and unreliable as suggested, why then did they not (to use their own expression) attempt to "refute" them. Instead, they say-" the onus is on those who believe that He came then or at any subsequent date to prove their claims ". We fail to see any logic

in this statement, and the various time links of Bible chronology which make up the 6,000 years from the Fall to 1874 A.D. still stand unrefuted. "Old Paths" will be pleased to learn from these brethren which links of the chain they consider so unreliable.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, we are told

"teaches that there will be a class, those remaining alive unto the Lord's coming, who will not die but will be changed without seeing death."

This is in direct conflict with two important Scriptures which teach exactly the opposite. Psalms 82:6-7, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High". The only mighty ones of this Age in God's sight, to whom the title "children of the most High" could apply are the Lord's faithful followers. Of these John wrote "Behold, what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 John 3:1.) Nevertheless, declared the Psalmist - "ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Adam was the first prince and God gave to him the dominion of earth, but he fell into death through sin and lost it. (Genesis 1:26-28.) Jesus was the other prince, born to be a king, and possessing the right to eternal life. He fell into death, a willing sacrifice in order to redeem mankind from death. The Lord's faithful followers who walk in His steps also fall as He did, by dying with Him as willing sacrifices. (Romans 6:8.) Revelation 14:13, despite all the efforts of these brethren to explain it away, plainly teaches that all the saints of God must die. The blessed dead of this verse, who *die* in the Lord from **henceforth**, i.e., from the commencement of His *parousia*, are they who are "alive and remain" into His *parousia* after the dead in Christ are raised first. Their change one by one at death takes place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at (during) the last (seventh) trump. (1 Corinthians 15:52.)

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Briefly summing up the entire matter, it seems clear from the conclusions reached by these brethren on the subject of our Lord's Return that they are now back again to the very teachings that many of us left 50 or more years ago. Indeed, most of these views concerning the Second Advent, with but little variations, are held even to-day in the smaller sections of Babylon such as the so-called Plymouth Brethren, Seventh Day Adventists, and various others. It is sad, indeed, to think that having been delivered from the errors and confusion of Babylon's teachings through the light of Present Truth, these brethren should have once more returned to the "beggarly elements" from whence they were delivered. It may, perhaps, be suggested that this is judging on the part of "Old Paths." To such suggestion we quite agree, but judging what? If we do not exercise our judgment faculties and are unable to judge or discern between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error, we are (according to the Apostle) mere babes in Christ. (Hebrews 5:13-14.) If we are incapable of judging the obvious principles of right and wrong and truth and error now, is it likely that we shall be entrusted with the judgment of men and angels in the life beyond? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3.) One thing, however, that we should not attempt to judge is the standing before God of anyone professing to be a footstep follower of the Master.

We have endeavored in the foregoing to make clear the fundamental principles involved and all items of detail will easily fall into line. If, however, any of our readers have any difficulty in

refuting any of the minor points included in the publication in question, we will gladly publish their enquiries with the Scriptural answers.

HARVEST SIFTINGS

During the Harvest there have from time to time been assaults on various features of Present Truth. It is clear that we are faced with yet another test, and this time it is the Presence of the Lord - the "sickle" of the Harvest. We are compelled to take a serious view of the attempts to disprove this wonderful Truth and all who love the Truth will share our concern.

In these circumstances, extra supplies of this issue have been printed and we invite our readers to submit names and addresses of any brethren to whom they would like this issue to be sent. Bulk supplies can be sent to Classes, if desired.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

"Old Paths" publications are specially designed to assist the brethren when features of Present Truth are attacked. Those who have themselves lost faith in the Present Truth always seem to be possessed of unusual zeal in an endeavor to destroy the faith of others. It is for this reason that many issues of " Old Paths " deal with the subject of the Lord's Presence and Kingdom, and the numbers listed on the back page are available, free of charge, for further reading.

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