

The Three Appearings

Hebrews 9: 24-28.

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"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation."

[The English reader should be informed that the three words which are rendered in the above passage "appear" are not the same in the original Greek. But our object is to deal with the facts set forth rather than with the words employed.]

The foregoing passage sets before us three great facts in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks of what we may venture to call three distinct appearings, namely, an appearing in the past; an appearing in the present; and an appearing in the future. He *hath* appeared in this world to do a certain work; He *doth* appear in Heaven to carry on a certain ministry; and He *shall* appear in glory. The first is Atonement; the second is Advocacy; the third is the Advent.

First, then, let us dwell for a few moments on THE ATONEMENT, which is here presented in its two grand aspects, first, Godward; and secondly, usward. The apostle declares that Christ hath appeared "to put away *sin*", and also "to bear the *sins* of many." This is a distinction of the utmost importance, and one not sufficiently understood or attended to. Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has glorified God in reference to the question of sin in its very broadest aspect. This He has done altogether irrespective of the question of persons or the forgiveness of the sins of individuals. Even though every soul, from the days of Adam down to the very last generation, were to reject the proffered mercy of God, yet would it hold good that the atoning death of Christ had put away sin-had destroyed the power of Satan-had perfectly glorified God, and laid the deep and solid foundation on which all the divine counsels and purposes can rest for ever.

It is to this fact that the Baptist refers in these memorable words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the *sin* of the world" (John 1:29). The Lamb of God has wrought a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall be obliterated from the creation of God. He has perfectly vindicated God in the very midst of a scene in which He had been so grossly dishonoured, in which His character had been traduced and His majesty insulted. He came to do this at all cost, even at the sacrifice of Himself. He sacrificed Himself in order to maintain, in view of Heaven, earth, and hell, the glory of God. He has wrought a work by the which God is infinitely more glorified than if sin had not entered at all. God shall reap a richer harvest by far in the fields of redemption than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

It is well that the reader should deeply ponder this glorious aspect of the atoning death of Christ. We are apt to think that the very highest view we can take of the cross is that which involves the question of our forgiveness and salvation. This is a grave mistake. That question is divinely settled, as we shall seek to show; for the less is always included in the greater. But let us remember that our side

of the atonement is the less, God's side of it the greater. It was infinitely more important that God should be glorified than that we should be saved. Both ends have been gained, blessed be God, and gained by one and the same work, the precious atonement of Christ; but we must never forget that the glory of God is of far greater moment than the salvation of men; and further, that we never can have so clear a sense of the latter as when we see it flowing from the former. It is when we see that God has been perfectly and for ever glorified in the death of Christ, that we can really enter into the divine perfectness of our salvation. In point of fact, both are so intimately bound up together that they cannot be separated; but still God's part in the cross of Christ must ever get its own proper pre-eminence. The glory of God was ever uppermost in the devoted heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this He lived, for this He died. He came into this world for the express purpose of glorifying God, and from this great and holy object He never swerved a moment from the manger to the cross. True it is-blessedly true-that in carrying out this object He has perfectly met our case; but the divine glory ruled Him in life and in death.

Now it is on the ground of atonement, looked at in this its higher aspect, that God has been dealing with the world in patient grace, mercy and forbearance for well nigh six thousand years. He sends His rain and His sunbeams upon the evil and upon the good, upon the just and the unjust. It is in virtue of the atonement of Christ-though despised and rejected-that the infidel and the atheist live, and enjoy God's daily mercies; yea, the very breath that they spend in opposing the revelation and denying the existence of God they owe to Him in whom they live, move, and have their being. We speak not here, by any means, of the forgiveness of sins, or of the soul's salvation. This is another question altogether, and to it we shall refer presently. But, looking at man in reference to his life in this world, and looking at the world in which he lives, it is the Cross which forms the basis of God's merciful dealing with both the one and the other.

Furthermore, it is on the ground of the atonement of Christ, in the same aspect of it, that the evangelist can go forth "*into all the world*, and preach glad tidings to *every creature*." He can declare the blessed truth that God has been glorified as to sin-His claims satisfied-His majesty vindicated-His law magnified-His attributes harmonised. He can proclaim the precious message that God can now be just and yet the justifier of any poor ungodly sinner that believes in Jesus. There is no hindrance, no barrier of any kind whatsoever. The preacher of the gospel is not to be cramped by any dogmas of theology. He has to do with the large, loving heart of God, which, in virtue of atonement, can flow forth to every creature beneath the canopy of Heaven. He can say to each and to all-and say it without reserve-"Come!" Nay, more, he is bound to "*beseech*" them to come. "*We pray* you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Such is the proper language of the evangelist, the herald of the cross, the ambassador of Christ. He knows no less a range than the wide, wide world; and he is called to drop his message into the ear of every creature under heaven.

And why? Because "Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He has, by His most precious death, changed completely the ground of God's dealings with man and with the world, so that, instead of having to deal with them on the ground of sin, He can deal on the ground of atonement.

Finally, it is in virtue of the atonement, in this broad and lofty aspect, that every vestige of sin, and every trace of the serpent shall be obliterated from the wide universe of God. Then shall be seen the full force of that passage above referred to, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (1 John 2: 2)

Thus much as to what we may call the primary aspect of the atoning death of Christ-an aspect which cannot be too thoughtfully studied. A clear understanding of this weighty point would tend to

remove a great deal of difficulty and misunderstanding in reference to the full and free preaching of the gospel. Many of the Lord's honoured servants find themselves hindered in the presentation of the glad tidings of salvation, simply because they do not see this wide aspect of the atonement. They confine the death of Christ merely to its bearing upon the sins of God's elect; and they therefore deem it wrong to preach the gospel to all, or to invite, yea to beseech and entreat, all to come.

Now, that Christ did die for the elect, Scripture distinctly teaches in manifold places. He died for the elect nation of Israel, and for the elect Church of God-the bride of Christ. But Scripture teaches more than this. It declares that "He died for all" (2 Cor. 5: 14); that "He tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2: 9). There is no need whatever for seeking to avoid the plain force and meaning of these and kindred statements of inspiration. And further, we believe it to be quite wrong to add our own words to God's words in order to reconcile them with any particular system of doctrine. When Scripture affirms that Christ died for all, we have no right to add the words, "the elect." And when Scripture states that Christ "tasted death for every man," we have no right to say, "every elect man." It is our place to take God's Word as it stands, and reverently bow to its authoritative teaching in all things. We can no more systematise God's Word than we can systematise God Himself. His Word, His heart, and His nature, are quite too deep and comprehensive to be included within the limits of the very broadest and best constructed human system of theology that was ever framed. We shall, ever and anon, be discovering passages of Scripture which will not fall in with our system. We must remember that God is love, and this love will tell itself out to all without limit. True, God has His counsels, His purposes, and His decrees; but it is not these He presents to the poor lost sinner. He will instruct and interest His saints about such things; but to the guilty, heavy-laden sinner, He presents His love, His grace, His mercy, His readiness to save, to pardon, and to bless.

And let it be well remembered that the sinner's responsibility flows out of what is *revealed*, and not out of what is *secret*. God's decrees are secret; His nature, His character, Himself is revealed. The sinner will not be judged for rejecting what he had no means of knowing. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and I men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19).

We are not writing a theological treatise; but we do feel it to be a matter of the gravest moment to press upon the reader that his responsibility as a sinner, is based upon the fact that the aspect of the salvation of God, and of the atonement of Christ, is most distinctly and decidedly "unto all," and not merely to a certain number of the human family. The glorious message is sent forth into all into all the world. Every one who hears it is invited to come. This is grounded upon the fact that Christ has put away sin-that the blood of atonement has been carried into the presence of God-that the barrier which sin presented has been flung down and abolished, and now the mighty tide of divine love can flow freely forth to the very vilest of the sons of men.

Such is the message; and when any one through grace believes it he can be further told that not only has Christ put away sin, but that also He has borne his *sins*-the actual sins of all His people-of all who believe in His name. The evangelist can stand up in the midst of assembled thousands, and declare that Christ has put away sin-that God is satisfied-that the way is open for all; and he can whisper the same in the ear of each and every sinner under Heaven. Then, when any one has bowed down to this testimony-when the repentant, broken; hearted, self-judged sinner receives the blessed record-he can be further taught that his *sins* were all laid on Jesus, all borne and for ever put away by Him when He died on the cross.

This is the plain doctrine of Hebrews 9: 26, 28; and we have a striking type of it in the two goats

of Leviticus 16. If the reader will just turn to the passage he will find there, first, the *slain* goat; and secondly the *scape*-goat. The blood of the slain goat was brought into the sanctuary and sprinkled there. This was a type of Christ putting away sin. Then the high priest, on behalf of the congregation confessed all their sins upon the head of the scape-goat, and they were borne away into a land not inhabited. This was a type of Christ bearing the sins of His people. The two goats, taken together, give us a full view of the atonement of Christ, which, like the righteousness of God in Romans 3, is "unto all, and upon all them that believe."

All this is most simple. It removes many difficulties out of the way of the earnest seeker after peace. These difficulties arise in many cases from the conflicting dogmas of theological systems, and have no foundation whatever in Holy Scripture. There, all is as plain and as clear as God can make it. Each one who hears the message of God's free love is bound, not to say invited, to receive it; and judgement will, most assuredly, fall upon each and all who refuse or neglect the proffered mercy. It is utterly impossible for any one who has ever heard the gospel, or ever had the New Testament in his hand, to get rid of the awful responsibility that rests upon him to accept God's salvation. Not a single soul will have to say, I could not believe, because I was not one of the elect, and did not get power to believe. No one will ever dare to say or even to think this. If any could take such ground, then where were the force or the meaning of the following burning words?-"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1: 7-8). Will any one ever be punished for not obeying the gospel if he is not responsible to yield that obedience? Most assuredly not. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

But does God send His gospel to people merely to place them under responsibility and increase their guilt? Far be the monstrous thought! He sends His gospel to the lost sinner in order that he may be saved, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. All, therefore, who perish shall have none but themselves to blame.

It is of the very last importance that the reader should be established in the knowledge and practical sense of what the atonement of Christ has accomplished for all who simply trust in Him. It is, we need hardly say, the only basis of peace. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. It is, therefore, impossible that any question as to sin or guilt can ever arise. All has been "once and for ever" settled by the atoning death of the Lamb of God. True it is-alas, how true!-we all have sin in us; and we have, daily and hourly, to judge ourselves and judge our ways. It will ever hold good of us, so long as we are in a body of sin and death, that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But then nothing can ever touch the question of our soul's perfect and eternal acceptance. The conscience of the believer is as completely purged from every soil and stain as will be the whole creation by-and-by. If it were not so, Christ could not be where He now is. He has entered into the presence of God, there to appear for us.

This leads us in the second place to consider THE ADVOCACY. Very many souls are apt to confound two things which, though inseparably connected, are perfectly distinct, namely, advocacy and atonement. Not seeing the divine completeness of the atonement, they are in a certain way looking to the advocacy to do for them what the atonement has done. We must remember that though as to our standing we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, yet as to the actual fact of our condition we are in the body. We are in spirit and by faith seated in heavenly places in Christ; but yet we are actually in the wilderness, subject to all sorts of infirmities, liable to fail and err in a thousand ways.

Now it is to meet our present actual state and wants that the advocacy, or priesthood, of Christ is

designed. God be praised for the blessed provision! As those who are in the body passing through the wilderness, we need a great High Priest to maintain the link of communion, or to restore it when broken. Such a One we have, ever living to make intercession for us; nor could we get on for a single moment without Him. The work of atonement is never repeated; the work of the Advocate is never interrupted. When once the blood of Christ is applied to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost the application is never repeated. To think of a repetition is to deny its efficacy and to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. No doubt people do not see this, and most assuredly they do not mean it; but such is the real tendency of the thought of a fresh application of the blood of sprinkling. It may be that persons who speak in this way really mean to put honour upon the blood of Christ, and to give expression to their own felt unworthiness; but, in truth, the best way to put honour upon the blood of Christ is to rejoice in what it has done for our souls; and the best way to set forth our own unworthiness is to feel and remember that we were so vile that nothing but the death of Christ could avail to meet our case. So vile were we that nothing but His blood could cleanse us. So precious is His blood that not a trace of our guilt remains. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Thus it stands in reference to the very feeblest child of God whose eye scans these lines. "All sins forgiven." Not a trace of guilt remains. Jesus is in the presence of God for us. He is there as a High Priest before God-as an Advocate with the Father. He has by His atoning death rent the veil-put away sin-brought us nigh to God in all the credit and virtue of His sacrifice, and now He lives to maintain us by His advocacy in the enjoyment of the place and privileges into which His blood has introduced us.

Hence the apostle says, "If any man sin, we have"-what? The blood? Nay, but "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The blood has done its work, and is ever before God according to its full value in His sight. Its efficacy is ever the same. But we have sinned; it may be only in thought; but even that thought is quite enough to interrupt our communion. Here is where advocacy comes in. If it were not that Jesus Christ is ever acting for us in the sanctuary above, our faith would most assuredly fail in moments in the which we have in any measure yielded to the voice of our sinful nature. Thus it was with Peter in that terrible hour of his temptation and fall: Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted (or restored), strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22: 21, 32).

Let the reader note this. "I have prayed for thee, that"-What? Was it that he might not fail? Nay, but that, having failed, his faith might not give way. Had Christ not prayed for his poor, feeble servant, he would have gone from bad to worse, and from worse to worst. But the intercession of Christ procured for Peter the grace of true repentance, self-judgement and bitter sorrow for his sin, and finally complete restoration of his heart and conscience, so that the current of his communion-interrupted by sin, but restored by advocacy-might flow on as before.

Thus it is with us when, through lack of that holy vigilance which we should ever exercise, we commit sin: Jesus goes to the Father for us. He prays for us; and it is through the efficacy of His priestly intercession that we are convicted and brought to self-judgement, confession, and restoration. All is founded on the advocacy, and the advocacy is founded on the atonement.

And here it may be well to assert, in the clearest and strongest manner possible, that it is the sweet privilege of every believer not to commit sin. There is no necessity whatever why he should. "My little children," says the apostle, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is a most precious truth for every lover of holiness. *We need not sin.* Let us remember this. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or, practise sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3: 9).

This is the divine idea of a Christian. Alas, we do not always realise it! but that does not, and cannot, touch the precious truth. The divine nature, the new man, the life of Christ in the believer cannot possibly sin, and it is the privilege of every believer so to walk as that nothing but the life of Christ may be seen. The Holy Ghost dwells in the believer on the ground of redemption, in order to give effect to the desires of the new nature, so that the flesh may be as though it did not exist, and nothing but Christ be seen in the believer's life.

It is of the utmost importance that this divine idea of Christian life should be seized and maintained. People sometimes ask the question, Is it possible for a Christian to live without committing sin? We reply in the language of the inspired apostle, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 John 2: 1). And again, quoting the language of another inspired apostle, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6: 2) The Christian is viewed by God as "dead to sin"; and hence, if he yields to it he is practically denying his standing in a risen Christ. Alas, alas, we do sin, and hence the apostle adds, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

This gives wonderful completeness to the work on which our souls repose. Such is the perfect efficacy of the atonement of Christ that we have one Advocate with us in order that we may not sin, and another Advocate with the Father if we do sin. The word rendered "Comforter" in John 14: 16 is rendered "advocate" in 1 John 3: 1. We have one divine Person caring for us here, and we have another divine Person caring for us in Heaven, and all this on the ground of the atoning death of Christ.

Will it be said that in writing thus we furnish a license for committing sin? God forbid! We have already declared, and would insist upon, the blessed possibility of living in such unbroken communion with God-of walking so in the Spirit-of being so filled and occupied with Christ-as that the flesh, or the old nature, may not appear. This we know is not always the case. "In many things we all offend," as James tells us. But no right-minded person, no lover of holiness, no spiritual Christian, could have any sympathy with those who say we must commit sin. Thank God, it is not so. But what a mercy it is to know that when we do fail there is One at the right hand of God to restore the broken link of communion! This He does by producing in our souls, by His Spirit who dwells in us-that "other Advocate"-the sense of failure, and leading us into self-judgment and true confession of the wrong, whatever it be.

We say "*true* confession," for it must be this if it be the fruit of the Spirit's work in the heart. It is not lightly and flippantly saying we have sinned, and then as lightly and flippantly sinning again. This is most sorrowful and most dangerous. We know nothing more hardening and demoralising than this sort of thing. It is sure to lead to the most disastrous consequences. We have known cases of persons living in sin and satisfying themselves by a mere lip confession of their sin, and then going and committing the sin again and again; and this has gone on for months and years, until God in His faithfulness caused the whole thing to come out openly before others.

All this is most dreadful. It is Satan's way of hardening and deceiving the heart. Oh that we may watch against it, and ever keep a tender conscience! We may rest assured that when a true-hearted child of God is betrayed into sin the Holy Ghost will produce in him such a sense of it-will lead him into such intense self-loathing, such an abhorrence of the evil, such thorough self-judgement in the presence of God-as that he cannot lightly go and commit the sin again. This we may learn from the words of the apostle when he says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and"-mark this weighty clause-"*to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Here we have the precious fruit of the

double advocacy. It is all presented in its fullness in this part of the First Epistle of John. If any man sin, the blessed Paraclete on high intercedes with the Father, pleads the full merits of His atoning work, prays for the erring one on the ground of His having borne the judgement of that very sin. Then the other Paraclete acts in the conscience, produces repentance and confession, and brings the soul back into the light in the sweet sense that the sin is forgiven, the unrighteousness cleansed, and the communion perfectly restored. "He restoreth my soul: *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness* for His name's sake" (Ps. 23: 3).

We trust the reader will be enabled to understand this great fundamental truth. Many, we are aware, find it difficult to reconcile the idea of intercession with the truth of a perfect atonement. If, say they, the atonement is perfect, what need is there of intercession? If the believer is made as white as snow by the blood of Christ—so white that the Spirit of God can dwell in his heart—then what does he want of a priest? If by one offering Christ has perfected for ever all them that are sanctified, then what need have these perfected and sanctified ones of an advocate? Surely we must either admit the thought of an imperfect atonement or deny the need of advocacy?

Such is the reasoning of the human mind, but such is not the faith of Christians. Scripture does most surely teach us that the believer is washed as white as snow; that he is accepted in the Beloved—complete in Christ—perfectly forgiven and perfectly justified through the death and resurrection of Christ; that he can never come into judgement, but is passed from death unto life; that he is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—not in the old creation, but in the new—not a member of the first Adam, but of the last; that he is dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to the law, because Christ has died, and the believer has died in Him. All this is largely unfolded and constantly insisted upon by the inspired writers. Scores of passages might easily be quoted in proof, were it needful.

But then there is another aspect of the Christian which must be taken into account. He is not in the flesh as to the ground of his standing, but he is in the body as to the fact of his condition. He is in Christ as to his standing, but he is also in the world as to the fact of his existence. He is surrounded by all sorts of temptations and difficulties, and he is in himself a poor feeble creature full of infirmities, not sufficient even to think anything as of himself. Nor is this all. Each true Christian is ever ready to acknowledge that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. He is saved, thank God, and all is eternally settled; but then he has, *as a saved one*, to get through the wilderness; he has to labour to enter into God's rest, and here it is that priesthood comes in. The object of priesthood is not to complete the work of atonement, inasmuch as that work is as perfect as the One who accomplished it. But we have to be carried through the wilderness and brought into the rest that remains for the people of God, and for this end we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. His sympathy and succour are ours, and we could not get on for one moment without them. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and by His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary He sustains us day by day in the full credit and value of His atoning work. He lifts us up when we fall, restores us when we wander, repairs the link of communion when snapped by our carelessness. In a word, He appears in the presence of God for us, and there carries on an uninterrupted service on our behalf, in virtue of which we are maintained in the integrity of the relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us.

Thus much as to the atonement and advocacy. It only remains for us to treat of the advent. We wish specially to remind the reader that in treating of the death of Christ we have left wholly untouched one grand point therein, namely, our death in Him. This we may, if God permit, go into on another occasion. It is immensely important as the power of deliverance from indwelling sin as well as from this present evil world and from the law. There are many who merely look to the death of Christ for pardon and justification, but they do not see the precious and emancipating truth of their having died in

Him and their deliverance in consequence from the power of sin in them. This latter is the secret of victory over self and the world, and of deliverance from every form of legality and mere fleshly pietism.

Thus we have glanced at two of the weighty subjects presented to us in the closing verses of Heb. 9, namely, first, the precious atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ in its two aspects; and secondly, His all-prevailing advocacy at God's right hand for us. It only remains for us to consider in the third place HIS ADVENT, which is here presented to us in immediate connection with those great foundation truths which have already engaged our attention, and which, moreover, are held and prized by all true Christians. Is it true that Christ hath appeared in this world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? and to bear the sins of the many who though grace put their trust in Him? Is it true that He has passed into the heavens and taken His seat on the throne of God, there to appear for us? Yes, blessed be God, these are grand, vital and fundamental verities of the Christian faith. Well, then, it is equally true that He shall appear again, apart from the question of sin, unto salvation. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation."

Here, then, we have the matter most definitely stated. As truly as Christ hath appeared on this earth-as truly as He lay in the manger of Bethlehem-was baptised in the waters of Jordan-was anointed with the Holy Ghost-was tempted of the devil in the wilderness-went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil-groaned, and wept, and prayed in Gethsemane-hung upon Calvary's accursed tree, and died, the Just for the unjust-was laid in the dark, silent tomb-rose victorious on the third day-ascended into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for His people-*so* truly shall He appear ere long in the clouds of Heaven to receive His people to Himself. If we refuse one we must refuse all. If we question one we must question all. If we are unsettled as to one we must be unsettled as to all, inasmuch as all rest upon precisely the same basis, namely, the Holy Scriptures. How do I know that Jesus *hath* appeared? Because Scripture tells me so. How do I know that He *doth* appear? Because Scripture tells me so. How do I know that He *shall* appear? Because Scripture tells me so.

In a word, then, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the Advocacy, and the doctrine of the Advent all rest on one and the same irrefragable foundation, namely, the simple declaration of the Word of God, so that if we receive one we must receive all.

How is it then that while the Church of God in all ages has held and prized the doctrines of atonement and advocacy, she has practically lost sight of the doctrine of the advent? How comes it to pass that while the first two are regarded as essential, the last is deemed non-essential? Nay, we may go further and say, how is it that while a man who does not hold the first two is regarded as a heretic, and justly so, yet the man who holds the last is by many regarded as hardly sound in the faith or sane in intellect?

What answer can we give to these questions? Alas! the Church has ceased to look for her Lord. Atonement and advocacy are held because they concern us; but the advent has been virtually let slip, although it so deeply concerns Him. It is due to the One who suffered and died on this earth that He should reign; to the One who wore a crown of thorns that He should wear a crown of glory; to the One who humbled Himself to the very dust of death that He should be exalted and that every knee should yet bow before Him.

Most surely this is so; and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will see to it and bring it to pass in His own appointed time. "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110; Heb. 1). The moment is rapidly approaching when that blessed One who is now

hidden from the eyes of men shall appear in glory. Every eye shall see Him. As surely as He hung upon the cross and is now seated on the throne, so surely shall He appear in glory.

Seeing these things are so, art thou among the number of "those that look for Him"? This is a solemn question. There are those who look for Him and there are those who do not. Now it is to the former that He shall appear unto salvation. He will come and receive His people unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also (John 14). These are His own loving words, spoken at the moment of His departure for the solace and comfort of His sorrowing disciples. He counted on their being troubled at the thought of His leaving them, and He seeks to comfort them by the assurance of His coming back. He does not say, Let not your hearts be troubled, for you shall soon follow Me. No; but "I will come again."

This is the proper hope of the Christian. Christ is coming. Are we ready? Are we looking for Him? Do we miss Him? Do we mourn His absence? It is impossible that we can be in the true attitude of waiting for Him if we do not feel His absence. He is coming. He may be here to night. Ere another sun arises the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet may be heard in the air. And what then? Why then the sleeping saints-all who have departed in the faith of Christ-all the redeemed of the Lord whose ashes repose in the graveyards and cemeteries around us or in the mighty depths of the ocean-all these shall rise. The living saints shall be changed in a moment, and all shall ascend up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15: 51-54; 1 Thess. 4: 13-1 Thess. 5: 11).

But what of the unconverted-the unbelieving-the unrepentant-the unprepared? What of all such? Ah! this is a question of awful solemnity. It makes the heart sink to reflect upon the case of those who are still in their sins-of those who have turned a deaf ear to all the entreaties and all the warnings which God in His long-suffering mercy has sent to them from week to week and year to year-of those who have sat under the sound of the gospel from their earliest days, and who have become, as we say, gospel-hardened. How dreadful will be the condition of all such when the Lord comes to receive His own! They shall be left behind to fall under the deep and dark delusion which God will assuredly send upon all who have heard and rejected the gospel. And what then? What is to follow this deep and dark delusion? The deeper and darker damnation of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Oh! shall we not sound a note of alarm in the ears of our fellow-sinners? Shall we not more earnestly and solemnly warn them to flee from the wrath to come? Shall we not seek by word and deed-by the double testimony of the lips and the life-to set before them the weighty fact that "the Lord is at hand"? May we feel it more deeply, and then we shall exhibit it more faithfully. There is immense moral power in the truth of the Lord's coming if it be really held in the heart and not merely in the head. If Christians only lived in the habitual expectation of the advent it would tell amazingly upon the unconverted around them. May the Holy Ghost revive in the hearts of all God's people the blessed hope of their Lord's return, that they may be as men that wait for their Lord, that when He cometh and knocketh they may open unto Him immediately!