

## THE SECOND ADVENT AND THE JUDGMENT DAY.

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**I**N the Hebrew Scriptures there are few indications of belief in a judgment after death, and those only in the latest books. Yahweh is a judge, even as he is king, over all the earth, and especially over his people Israel; but his sentences are executed in this life, and some strange or sudden death is in itself the severest punishment of sin, without any prospect of further retribution beyond the grave. It is as a permanent and supreme ruler that the psalmist anticipates his coming "to judge the earth" (Ps. xcvi. 13), not to hold a grand assize in which all the long arrears of suspended justice are to be finally settled. Any signal manifestation of divine power, punishing the guilty and delivering the oppressed, is regarded as such a coming, and we must not import later eschatological theories into such a simple statement as that of Psalm i. 5: "The wicked shall not stand in the judgment." In the apocryphal addition to the Book of Esther (x. 11), the escape of the Jews and the confusion of their enemies are described as a "day of judgment before God among all the nations." The belief that the Last Judgment will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, east of Jerusalem, was founded upon a passage of this description in the Prophet Joel (iii. 2, 12-14), where Yahweh makes this announcement: "Let the nations bestir themselves and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about." The name is significant (*Yahweh judgeth*), and, perhaps, became associated with the great cemetery of Jerusalem in consequence of this prediction, where the word may have been intended to have no other than a figurative meaning.

The doctrine of retributive justice, in its individual rather than in its national aspect, is more than once<sup>1</sup> insisted upon in the

<sup>1</sup> See Eccl. iii. 17; xi. 9; xii. 14.

Book of Ecclesiastes (written, probably, about 200 B. C.), but even here the Egyptian view of judgment in the spirit world, following close upon death, seems to be present to the Preacher's mind rather than a general summons of quick and dead before the divine tribunal on one great Day of Doom. Weighing the heart or actions of a man, in order to ascertain their moral worth, was an idea familiar not only to the ancient Egyptians, but to many other peoples as well.<sup>1</sup> It presents itself in India, Persia, Thibet, and Japan, as deciding the destiny of the departed soul. The scales of Osiris, of Rashnu, or of Yama are poetically attributed to the God of the Hebrews, as in Prov. xvi. 2 ("The weigher of spirits is Yahweh"), or Dan. v. 27 ("Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting").<sup>2</sup> The scales of divine justice, upheld by the archangel Michael, were almost as favorite a subject for representation on the walls of mediæval churches as was the *psychostasia*, conducted by Thoth, in the old Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. Christ takes the place of Osiris upon the throne as supreme Judge, with the twelve Apostles seated beside him, instead of the forty-two assessors of Osiris. The hideous form of "the Destroyer," Ammit, is represented by the open jaws of the diabolic Leviathan, like some monster of the deep, ready to devour the wretches condemned to everlasting punishment. In some cases the scene is evidently intended for the judgment of the disembodied soul at death, rather than after resurrection at the end of the world, and so resembles the Egyptian Hall of Truth and Justice still more closely.

The earliest foreshadowing of a universal Judgment passed upon all mankind on one great Day is found (so far as the canonical Scriptures are concerned) in the Book of Daniel, which was probably written as late as 168-164 B. C. But, if modern criticism is correct, that celebrated passage (Dan. vii. 9-14; cf. Rev. xx. 11-15) was not the first literary expression of the nascent belief. The oldest part of the Book of Enoch (chaps. i.-xxxvi.) is thought by its best English editor, the Rev. R. H. Charles, to be earlier than "Daniel," and there we read, in close association, of a general but not quite universal Resurrection and a great Judgment.

<sup>1</sup> The scene in the "Frogs" of Aristophanes (l. 1365 sq.), where Bacchus tests the relative poetical merits of Æschylus and Euripides by means of a balance is the closest approximation in Greek literature to this idea. Æschylus himself had written a drama entitled "Psychostasia," or the weighing of souls, in which the lives of Achilles and Memnon were weighed against each other, following the precedent set by Homer (Iliad xxii. 210 sq.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. ii. 3; Job xxxi. 6; Ps. lxii. 9. So in the Book of Enoch xli. 1 we read: "I saw how the actions of men are weighed upon the balance." Cf. lxi. 8. In the Talmud, man's salvation is said to depend "on a literal preponderance of his good deeds over his bad ones" (R. H. Charles *in loco*.)

There is nothing, however, in either to show that the judgment is regarded as final, or that all of every nation are supposed to be present; and in Daniel the Resurrection of the dead is not mentioned as preceding the judgment, but in quite a different connexion (chap. xii. 2). The only penalties awarded (Dan. vii. 11-12) are given against sovereign powers under the guise of monstrous beasts, and the whole scene is manifestly meant to be a figurative one, illustrating by visible phenomena the national judgments of divine Providence. The "one like unto a son of man" (Dan. vii. 13), who "came with the clouds of heaven," is "brought near before the Ancient of days," not to pronounce sentence upon angels and men, as in later Messianic apocalypses, but to receive "dominion and glory and a kingdom" which should never be destroyed. If he is to execute judgment, it is as a monarch, to whom pertains the administration of justice as one of his royal prerogatives (cf. Matt. xix. 28).

In the Apocrypha (see R. V., 1895) we find the most striking and detailed picture of the last judgment, which is to continue "a week of years," in 2 Esdras (otherwise known as 4 Ezra) vii. 31-43). A Messianic period of four hundred years, the death of all mankind, including the Christ, and a general Resurrection precede it, when the earth shall restore those that are asleep in her . . . the secret places shall deliver those souls that were committed unto them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment." In the context which has been lately discovered, we read: "The pit of torment shall appear, and over against it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell [*Gehenna*] shall be showed, and over against it the paradise of delight. And then shall the Most High say to the nations that are raised from the dead, See ye and understand whom ye have denied," etc. On one side is "delight and rest," on the other "fire and torments." This final judgment is, however, to some extent anticipated by a state of reward or punishment that follows immediately after the separation of soul and body.<sup>1</sup> The doubtful date of this composition deprives it, however, of any claim to form a link in the chain of early tradition, for it is probable that even the oldest part belongs to the latter part of the first century of our era and embodies as a whole a late phase of Jewish thought, combined with Christian elements.

But if the "authorised" Apocrypha contains no material for our present purpose,<sup>2</sup> an apocryphal work, which for long was

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Esdras vii. (75) sq. and cf. 2 Esdras xiv. 35, and Hebrews ix. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Distinct allusions to the Resurrection of the righteous (of Jewish blood) are made in 2 Macc.

strangely neglected, the so-called Book of Enoch, bridges over in a remarkable manner the gap that divides the eschatology of the Old from that of the New Testament. The extant Ethiopic translation (admirably edited in English by the Rev. R. H. Charles) is evidently composed of several distinct parts, written at various times, as it would seem, between 175-64 B. C. The first section (chaps. i.-xxxvi.) is believed by Mr. Charles to contain the earliest mention of a Resurrection of the wicked (with certain exceptions),<sup>1</sup> as well as of the righteous, and of Gehenna (the Valley of Hinnom) as the place of ultimate punishment (chaps. xxvi.-xxvii). The Last Judgment is represented as taking place in the same neighborhood that witnessed the giving of the Law (Enoch i. 4-9.<sup>2</sup> Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 2 and Psalm lxviii. 17). Fallen angels, demons (the semi-human offspring of the former) and men are alike sentenced according to their deserts. The Messianic Kingdom, which follows, of righteousness and peace on earth, is an everlasting one, though the lives of individuals are limited, as in Isa. lxx-lxxvi. The writer of chaps. lxxxiii-xc (c. 166 to 161 B. C.) is more spiritual in his view of the Messianic Kingdom, whose subjects, though still on earth, enjoy eternal blessedness. The throne of judgment is set up for "the Lord of the sheep" in "the pleasant land" (cf. Dan. xi. 16, etc., "the glorious land"), and the "blinded sheep," i. e., the apostate Jews, are cast into an abyss "opened in the midst of the earth, full of fire," the site of which is further described as in the Valley to the south of Jerusalem (chap. xc. 26), i. e., the Vale of Hinnom. The Judgment seems to precede a Resurrection of righteous Israelites only. In a later section (chaps. xci-civ), written perhaps in 134 to 95 B. C., the Resurrection and Judgment follow instead of preceding the golden age on earth, as in 2 Esdras and the Apocalypse of Baruch, and inaugurate a life of eternal happiness in a new heaven for the righteous, and the everlasting pains of Sheol for the wicked. The Resurrection seems to be confined to pious Israelites, and to be, not of the body, but of the spirit only, as in the so-called Psalms of Solomon (c. 40 B. C) and the Book of Jubilees. The latest section of all (with the exception of certain disjointed fragments), chaps. xxxvii-lxx, vii. 9, 14; xii. 43; Wisdom iii. 7, 8; cf. 2 Esdras ii. 23 (part of the work of a Christian Jew, it may be, in the third century A. D.).

<sup>1</sup> Of the four divisions in Sheol (Hades) shown to Enoch, two for the righteous and two for the wicked, the fourth was reserved for those sinners who had been already punished on earth. "Their souls will not be slain on the day of judgment, nor will they be raised from thence," i. e., from Sheol for severer condemnation (Enoch xxii. 13).

<sup>2</sup> "He will tread on Mount Sinai and appear with His hosts, and in the strength of His might appear from heaven," etc.

the date of which Mr. Charles fixes at either 94 or 64 B. C., exalts the personal importance of the Messiah, both as Judge and King. The Resurrection is one both of body and spirit, and includes all Israel, the Judgment which succeeds ushers in the Messianic Kingdom on a renewed earth. The following quotations remind one of parallel passages in the New Testament. "The books of the living were opened before him" (xlvii. 3; cf. Rev. xx. 12, 15); "the sum of judgment was committed unto him, the Son of Man" (lxix. 27; cf. John v. 22); "who rules over all" (lxii. 6; cf. Matt. xxviii. 18, etc.); "when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory" (lxii. 5; cf. Matt. xxv. 31); "on that day I will cause mine Elect One to dwell among them, and I will transform the heaven, and make it an eternal blessing and light. And I will transform the earth, and make it a blessing, and cause mine elect ones to dwell upon it: but the sinners and evil doers will not set foot thereon" (xlv. 4, 5; cf. 2 Pet. iii. 13); "he will choose the righteous and holy from among them; for the day of their redemption has drawn nigh" (li. 2; cf. Luke xxi. 28). Other *pseudepigrapha*, like the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the so-called Sibylline Books, revelled in that glorious future for Israel and the world at large, which was developed into the Chiliasm (or Millenarianism) of the early Christian Church.

The order of events in New Testament eschatology presents the same uncertainty as in the apocryphal and apocalyptic literature which formed the framework for the new picture, in which Jesus of Nazareth appeared as the mystic Son of Man. The advent of the lowly and suffering Messiah, which contrasted so strangely in the prophetic visions with a reign of triumphal majesty, was an accomplished fact, an historical memory; and a second coming "with power and great glory" was looked for as nigh at hand, before the first generation of Christians should have altogether passed away (Matt. xxiv. 30-34, etc.), an appearance (*παρουσία*) which was to herald a Resurrection of the Saints and to establish his Kingdom upon earth.<sup>1</sup> A subsequent period of peace and prosperity was expected by some to last for a thousand years (Rev. xx. 2 et seq.; cf. Slavonic Enoch xxxii and xxxiii), to be followed, in its turn, by a season of sore trial and contention, ending in the destruction of all hostile forces, a general Resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, and a new heaven and earth. St.

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 6-7 compared with Luke i. 68-74 and such prophetic intimations as Isa. i. 26; Amos ix. 11; Dan. vii. 27. The First Resurrection (Rev. xx. 4-5) is either of martyrs only, or of "the just" generally (Luke xiv. 14).

Paul, however, knows nothing of a millennium which is to intervene between Christ's second advent and the final victory over all the enemies of God. The Resurrection of which he speaks is of the righteous only at his appearing; no mention is made of one great general assize, and the Lord, after executing vengeance on his foes, returns to heaven with all his faithful followers in their risen or glorified bodies (1 Cor. xv; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17; 2 Thess. i. 7-10). The "vengeance" and "flaming fire" of the last passage becomes a universal conflagration in 2 Peter iii. 7-13, such as was predicted also by heathen poets and philosophers, but only by way of preparation for a better world reserved for the righteous. The Judgment Seat of God or of Christ (Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10) is mentioned by Paul more than once, but whether regarded as a tribunal in the spirit world (cf. Heb. ix. 27),<sup>1</sup> or in connexion with Christ's second coming, is left undetermined. In the Acts of the Apostles (xvii. 31) St. Paul is represented as preaching to the Athenians of "a man" as ordained to judge the world on an appointed day, just as Peter had foretold of "Jesus of Nazareth" to Cornelius and his friends (Acts x. 38-42); and, if the Second Epistle to Timothy is from the former's hand, we have his own testimony to the same doctrine of judgment by Christ Jesus to be passed upon the living and the dead (2 Tim. iv. 1). His allusion to saints as destined to "judge the world" and even "angels" (1 Cor. vi. 2-3) reminds us of the words attributed to Jesus,<sup>2</sup> promising his apostles that they should "sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel," i. e., as permanent rulers; and, again, of the "angels which kept not their own principality but left their proper habitation" (Jude 6; cf. 2 Pet. ii. 4), as hinted at in Gen. vi. 2, and set forth with many curious particulars in the Book of Enoch.<sup>3</sup> We may observe also how such prophetic passages as Zech. xiv. 5 ("Yahweh, my God, shall come, and all the holy ones with thee")<sup>4</sup>, and Enoch i. 9 ("And, lo, he comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment," etc.), quoted in Jude's Epistle (verse 14), receive new meaning when transferred to the grand pomp of Christ's Second Advent. The "holy ones" are no longer angels only, but departed saints as well, who escort their Lord in triumphant procession from heaven to earth (1 Thess.

<sup>1</sup>"After death cometh judgment." In Heb. vi. 2, however, "resurrection of the dead" occurs immediately before "eternal judgment."

<sup>2</sup>Matt. xix. 28; Luke xxii. 28. Cf. Dan. vii. 22; Wisdom iii. 8; Eccl. iv. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Isa. xxiv. 21-22, and Professor Cheyne's note thereon in the Polychrome Bible.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Dan. vii. 10.

iii. 13; iv. 14), for which purpose they have to rise from their graves (or from Hades) to meet him in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17).

In the picture of Doomsday in Matt. xxv. 31 sq. the heathen only are gathered before the throne of the Son of Man, in accordance with the language of Old Testament prophecy,<sup>1</sup> separated into two classes and sentenced to eternal weal or woe according to their treatment of those whom he styles "the least of these my brethren." This judgment of "the nations" is by some commentators (e. g., Dean Alford) distinguished from a previous one in which the saints themselves are included, before the Millennium. There are thus two future Comings of Christ, and, if the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A. D. 70) be regarded as a genuine *Parousia*, no less than three will have to be admitted! Such are the expedients to which harmonisers are driven by their methods of interpretation.

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith does not enter into the representations of final destiny, even when drawn by the Apostle himself. It is strictly judgment by works according to which sentence is pronounced,<sup>2</sup> and this is the teaching of the "Athanasian" Creed, one of the main standards of orthodox faith.

"The last trump" of 1 Cor. xv. 52<sup>3</sup> refers to the instrument for convoking assemblies, so familiar to Jewish ears (as well as to Greeks and Romans<sup>4</sup>), and already hallowed by august association with the presence of Deity (Exod. xix. 16; Zech. ix. 14). It inaugurates the new era of redemption, even as the trumpets at the Feast of that name ushered in the New Year, and is, perhaps, also intended as a signal of judgment (cf. Rev. viii. *et passim*), or a call to arms (Zeph. i. 16; Jerem. iv. 19) against the enemies of Christ (2 Thess. ii. 8). The conjunction of *κέλευσμα*, "shout of command," with *σάλπιγξ*, "trumpet," in 1 Thess. iv. 16, supports the latter view. "The last trump" implies other preliminary blasts, like our "last bell" of church or school; though the phrase is peculiarly appropriate as indicating the end of all things.

The expectation of the return of Jesus Christ to the earth from which he vanished at his ascension into heaven is one which finds many a parallel in popular tradition. Hope creates its own illusions, and feels convinced that the great warrior who has so often defeated his country's foes will return once more at the hour of her

<sup>1</sup> See Ps. cx. 6; Isa. ii. 4; Joel iii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Rom. ii. 5-6; 2 Cor. v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "the trump of God," 1 Thess. iv. 16, and "a great sound of a trumpet," Matt. xxiv. 31.

<sup>4</sup> See Soph. *Electra*, 711; Juvenal, vi, 250.

greatest need, that the great teacher who has left the world all the poorer for his loss will yet rejoice the hearts of his faithful followers by coming, when things are at their worst, to rescue and reward his own and to punish their persecutors. Fear, too, may anticipate the reappearance of a departed tyrant; and, for the Christians of the end of the first century, the dreaded Nero fell under the dagger that ended his life, only to be reserved for a future manifestation as the mysterious Antichrist of prophetic revelation. Generation after generation passed away without seeing the fulfilment of the popular expectations of a speedy return of the Master (see Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32; Rev. xxii. 7, 10, 12, 20). But each succeeding generation took up the hope as a legacy from its predecessor, though with diminishing confidence of prompt realisation (see 2 Pet. iii. 8-9).

The principal point of variance between the earlier and later Fathers of the Church, with regard to eschatological beliefs, is found in Chiliasm (or Millenarianism), the temporary reign of Christ in person within the earthly Jerusalem. It was the last relic of that exaggerated Jewish patriotism which permeated the Christianity of the first two centuries, in spite of St. Paul's repeated assertion that Israel had forfeited all peculiar privileges. The Book of the Revelation is the only canonical writing which, filling in the picture of Daniel's reign of the saints (Dan. vii. 18, 22, 27), explicitly teaches a definite millennium and a double resurrection (Rev. xx); and, perhaps, on that very account, its canonicity was doubted by many of the later Fathers.<sup>1</sup> Even the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. xxi) is, as it were, a glorified edition of the old one, which is to descend from heaven at the time appointed. Barnabas alludes to a millennium of righteousness which is to succeed the advent and judgment of Christ, and deems it typified by the institution of the Sabbath (Barn. xv). Chiliasm, and that of a pronounced type, was advocated by Papias (according to Eusebius), Justin Martyr, and Irenæus; Tertullian and Cyprian spiritualised its cruder features, while Clement of Alexandria and Origen rejected the whole scheme as carnal and incongruous, a view which gradually obtained almost universal acceptance.<sup>2</sup> Millenarianism was revived by the Anabaptists, in the first half of the sixteenth century, and was a prominent tenet of the more fanatical section of the English Puritans ("Fifth Monarchy Men") in Cromwell's

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria (*ob.* 265 A. D.) was the first to dispute its authenticity.

<sup>2</sup> Lactantius (fourth century) is the latest Christian Father, of any mark, who maintains a literal millennium.

day. Learned theologians of modern times have often tried to revive belief in a millennial and personal reign of Christ on earth with more or less success. But all such attempts assume an extravagant aspect when reduced to the details of plain prose and exposed to the dry light of a critical age. The *Parousia* itself is but an expression of the yearning hopes of a persecuted people, the craving for which has long died out,<sup>1</sup> though left as an article of a stereotyped creed, which it is held pious to repeat but impossible to realise.

Christianity, as a dogmatic system dealing with matters beyond human ken, is but a shadow of the truth at best, and its creeds are "symbols" in another sense than that in which the term was first applied to them. The Coming of the Christ-King is ever in progress. The sign of the Son of Man is to be seen in "milder manners and diviner laws," rather than in monstrous portents displaying themselves in the sky above our heads.<sup>2</sup> If the valley of Jehoshaphat as the gathering-place of all nations, the glen of Hinnom opening to admit the damned into its fiery gulf, the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven and remains on earth,—if these are explained as figurative, what are we to say of the material descent through the sky of the Son of Man, the trumpet blast and the war cry of the leader of the heavenly host, the restitution to the light of the vanished bodies of all human beings from the most remote antiquity and over every quarter of the globe, the palpable white throne of Christ, and the audible sentence upon each one of the countless millions of mankind? Is it not all a phantasmagoria of the clouds indeed, when treated apart from the yearning aspirations and the limited knowledge that combined to create the fantastic picture. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,"—the world of spiritual ideas can only be faintly represented under concrete forms and in carnal language. The soul, the heart, the conscience of man are the sphere of divine manifestation, of divine judgment, of divine sovereignty. "The Kingdom of God is within you." The Resurrection of the dead is no dramatic rending of the tombs and restoration of flesh and bones

<sup>1</sup>When the dreaded year 1000 A. D., which was expected to see the end of the world, passed away without a sign, a spirit of unbelief took the place of extreme credulity; and then it was that those terrible pictures of the Day of Doom, which are so often found on the walls of mediæval churches, began to be painted as a means of stimulating expiring faith! The *Dies iræ* eclipsed the "Day of Redemption," the Deliverer was forgotten in the inexorable Judge.

<sup>2</sup>This celestial portent (Matt. xxiv. 30), preceded by simultaneous eclipses of sun and moon and the falling of the stars from heaven, was interpreted by early Christian writers as the apparition of a gigantic cross in the sky, or a column of flame dropping fiery destruction on the wicked.

that have mingled with the dust, but the assumption of a higher life by passing through the gate of death,—*mors janua vitæ*. The Judgment Day is no fixed point of time, but the constant action of that natural and eternal law, akin to the *Karma* of Buddhism, which St. Paul has expressed in these pregnant words: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

"Still, in perpetual judgment,  
I hold assize within,  
With sure reward of holiness  
And dread rebuke of sin.

"The stern behest of duty,  
The doom-book open thrown,  
The heaven ye seek, the hell ye fear,  
Are with yourselves alone."

—J. G. Whittier, *The Vision of Echard*.