

have become numerous. And as proof of the accuracy of these statements, just at the present time, note Powderly, Henry George and Dr. McGlynn's recent disavowals of all such members of the "genus Homo." This lecture was not only sceptical as to some points in orthodox belief, but was entirely so much so, as to deserve no other appellation save atheistic; and in some portions of it too, it was strongly blasphemous, as when setting forth Christian intolerance as exhibited in the early and mediæval history of the Church, and even to a certain extent at the present day. In this connection he said that even the devil of the Christians' belief was more merciful or tolerant than the Church would have been. Seeing that after he had tempted Jesus Christ for forty days without getting Him to accede to any of his demands, he let Him go without either knocking Him down or putting Him to torture. Here overlooking the fact that the power was given to the evil one to tempt our blessed Saviour, to set forth His perfect humanity, that in all points He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And as to His power to overcome all His enemies, even the great adversary, the same book from which Mr. Watts quoted the temptation of our Saviour records many instances of His power over evil men, evil spirits and even over death itself. But these statements are styled by unbelievers as supernatural, therefore without the pale of reason, yea verily beyond the ken or comprehension of the natural man, as the carnal mind of man, unregenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost, is enmity against God; but by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit these truths are spiritually discerned and appreciated. Are there not miraculous conversions occurring at the present time in many of the slums of the great cities of our land, wherein men and women are raised from the greatest depths of degradation, in sin and crime and misery, to the enjoyment of a new life of purity, thrift and sobriety, by the power of the Gospel of Jesus, though in some instances it may have been proclaimed by the unkenned in the school of philosophy, and in many instances reclamation had been strenuously aimed at by merely human admonitions, without success, until the scheme of salvation had been presented to their minds? Such changes are evidently the work of the Omnipotent.

We had also to listen to a refutation of the Biblical account of the creation, and had served up to us instead the evolutionistic theory. And as for heaven, he seemed to scout the idea of the reality of there being such a place of bliss as recorded in the New Testament, and made some rather blasphemous remarks with respect to the same, which seemed to please a select few in the audience, as it seemed to excite their risible nerves somewhat. But poor Robbie Burns, with all his latitudinarianism, did assert that an atheist's laugh was a poor exchange for Deity offended. We were next informed that, ere mankind could be raised to an universal social equality, we would have to get rid of king craft and priest craft, which I would say, although Mr. Watts be an Englishman, goes far to establish the fact of his being no more loyal than he should be. I would have liked to have taken up some more of the lecturer's assertions and assumptions, as disproving the validity or worth of the Christians' belief, but as I have now written enough to occupy more space than you can well spare at one time, I shall therefore sum up by quoting a venerable missionary's testimony to the efficacy of the Gospel in upraising the degraded heathen in many parts of the globe. A veteran missionary, Rev. James Chalmers, said recently in an address in London: "I have had twenty-one years' experience among natives, I have seen the semi-civilized and the civilized; I have lived with the Christian native, and I have lived, dined and slept with the cannibal. I have visited the islands of the New Hebrides, which I sincerely trust will not be handed over to the tender mercies of France. I have visited the Loyalty Group; I have seen the work of missions in the Samoan Group; I know all the islands of the Society Group; I have lived for ten years in the Hervey Group; I know a few of the groups close on the line, and for at least nine years of my life I have lived with the savages of New Guinea, but I have never yet met with a single man or woman, or with a single people, that your civilization, without Christianity, has civilized." Testimony, such as this, is worth volumes of theory.

Now, in the words of one possessed of more wisdom than the whole fraternity of sceptics combined,

namely, that of the "Preacher," I conclude. He says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every one's work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccle. xii. 13, 14. And in order to understand how to attain to this aright, we must not merely read but search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of the truth as it is in Jesus. D. McF.

Almonte, Ont., September, 1887.

THE SECOND COMING.

MR. EDITOR, Like your correspondent, "Berean," I have for some time been deeply interested in the subject of our Lord's second coming. And I confess to be one of those who have been captivated by the Premillennial theory, and who believe that it has its foundation in Scripture honestly and fairly interpreted. The first point to which "Berean" calls attention is, Whether the Lord's second coming will be before or after the millennium? "Berean" takes for granted that he has settled this question, and has, as we think, somewhat hastily concluded that the Premillennial theory is unscriptural. It is not our intention to enter on a full exposition of this theory, which, to do it justice, would require a volume, and an abler pen than mine. But I desire briefly to refer to a few points which may serve to guide the thoughts of your readers on this great subject.

Let it be noted first that "Berean" takes for granted that there will be a millennium, when all the glorious pictures drawn by the prophets of a happy day, when war shall cease, when peace and righteousness shall prevail everywhere, and when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, will yet be realized in our world. On this point we are fully agreed.

But while we dwell on this delightful prospect, and cherish the hope of its realization in God's own good time, we are led to enquire what does Scripture teach concerning the state of the world and the condition of the Church before that better day, and what does Scripture teach about the circumstances of its introduction.

In the teachings of Christ and His apostles there is no intimation that Christianity will be universally received during the present age or dispensation. It will be readily admitted by "Berean," and all who advocate his side of the question, that the present age, *aion*, or dispensation began when Christ came in His humiliation to make atonement for sin, and provide salvation for His people. And it is equally clear from the teachings of the Word that the present *aion* or age will close when Christ shall come the second time in glory.

But what is the picture of the *aion* or age in which we live, as given by Christ and His apostles? First of all, this age or dispensation is elective. God's design in this age is to gather out from among the Gentiles a people to Himself, Matt. xxiv. 14, and Acts xv. 14. And when the Gospel has been proclaimed to all nations, and the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, then shall the end of the age come. But, as we have said, there is no intimation that the world will be converted, or that the reign of righteousness and peace will dawn on our race during the present *aion* or age. Instead of this Christ says to His disciples: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you," "in the world ye shall have tribulations," "when they persecute you in one city flee ye into another," "if the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." And Paul says: "All who live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;" while Peter in both his epistles sets forth the same truth in very strong colours. Such is the New Testament picture of the present age, and of the condition of the faithful in their relation to the world. Those who are Christ's know in their own hearts, in the midst of life's battles and their earnest work for the Master, a peace, a joy and a blessed hope to which the world are strangers. But they are not taught to look for the reign of peace and righteousness till this age closes, and the Lord Himself, who has gone to receive a kingdom, shall return in glory, and take to Himself His great power, and reign. "The true Church is a persecuted, suffering, cross-bearing people (John xv. 19-21 and John xvi. 33) thereunto appointed (1 Thes. iii. 3) and this will continue until Christ come (2 Thes. i. 4-10)."

Moreover, in this age Satan, the great deceiver, is going to and fro through the earth, leads men captive at his will, is going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and is represented as the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. And there is no intimation that the world will be delivered from the power of the great enemy during this *aion* or age, not until the Lord come and Satan be bound, Rev. xix. 1-3, and 2 Thes. ii. 8-10. Thus are we precluded from looking for a millennium before the second coming.

Bereans are plainly told that the tares and the wheat will grow together until the end of the age, when the Lord shall come. There is certainly no room for a millennium here. We are told that, as it was in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, so shall it be at Christ's coming. Now in all this teaching there is no hint of a period of millennial glory till the Lord come. And we are forced to the conclusion that the second coming of the Lord must be premillennial.

Before leaving this point I would remind "Berean" that the Greek word "*aion*," which in the Revised Version is translated "world," in Matt. xxviii. 19, and in Matt. xiii. 39 and elsewhere, does not mean "world." Its true meaning is "age," a period of time. The Lord's promise to His disciples was not that He would be with them to the end of the world, but to the end of this age. And in this promise it was implied that then they would, according to His promise, see Him again, and their hearts should rejoice. And in Matt. xiii. 39 the Lord does not refer to the close of the world's history, but to the close of this elective dispensation, when He will come to gather all His own, when the kingdom and the dominion shall be given to the saints of the Most High, and when there shall be one Lord over all the earth and His name one.

I desire to call the attention of "Berean" to another feature of New Testament teaching in reference to the second coming. The attitude of the faithful to that glorious event is "waiting for the Son of God from heaven," "watching and praying, seeing they know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh," "ever looking for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are not represented as looking for death as the door to perfect blessedness; they are not even represented as fixing their thoughts specially on the glorious day of restoration of which the prophets have spoken ever since the world began, but mainly, I might say, solely for the day of the Lord's coming. This is hinted up on almost every page as the consummation of the Christian's highest hopes, as the most powerful incentive to earnestness and fidelity in the Lord's service, and as the most copious well of divine comfort. Moreover, the faithful are represented as living constantly under the influence of this hope—watching, praying, labouring—that so whether He come to-day or to-morrow; that whether He come at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning, they may be ready.

Now, if such be the scriptural attitude of the faithful to the Lord's coming, there is certainly no room for a millennium before that event. We do not dwell on this point, as it cannot fail, we think, to be clear to your readers, and to every earnest student of the Word, that if such be the scriptural attitude of the faithful to the coming, that event must be premillennial.

Before closing we would remind "Berean" that while he evidently considers that Premillennialists are influenced more by fanaticism than love of truth, and even hints that they unscrupulously wrest Scripture to maintain their position, they can lay claim to the fathers and martyrs of the first three centuries with very few exceptions. This can be established by ample testimony. We shall refer to only two authorities, to which a score might be added. Bishop Russell, who was not specially favourable to this view, says: "Down to the beginning of the fourth century the Premillennial belief was universal and undisputed." And Gibbon, who was not a believer but speaks simply as a historian, maintains: "That Premillennialism was the reigning sentiment of orthodox believers in primitive times."

We do not adduce these quotations as arguments, but simply to corroborate and strengthen their own position, and also to awaken an interest in your readers on this great theme. I leave the subject for the present with these few hints, but hope to take it up again, and deal with other points in "Berean's" communications. FAITHFUL.