

Correspondence.

DR. GOODWIN ON THE SECOND ADVENT.

Two articles on the above subject have recently appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, from the pen of Rev. E. P. Goodwin, D. D., pastor of the First Congregational Church of that city. Coming from such a source they would naturally be read with interest. In the case of many, interest will have shaded off into disappointment in view of the line of thought and mode of argument pursued. I frankly confess to this.

There is a lack of candor about the articles in question which I did not expect. The views held by Dr. Goodwin on the second coming of Christ are those known as pre-millennial. All familiar with the controversies which have been had on this point in past years and ages, will read between the lines and readily trace the presence and influence of the theory which the Dr. is well known to hold. It is the question whether Christ will come prior to or after the millennium, which is the main issue in this discussion. Instead of fairly raising it, and squarely meeting it, the Dr. conveys the impression that the pivot of the controversy is whether Christ will or will not come the second time in a personal and visible manner. He is very well aware that the great bulk of the Christian world hold to a personal and visible coming, that it is to them "a blessed hope," and a "glorious appearing." Why then argue as if this were doubted or denied? The "literal personal return" of the Lord Jesus has been the common belief of the church in all its sections, from the days of the apostles down to our own time.

Fairness as well as candor is deficient in the articles under consideration. The ordinary reader, not familiar with theological controversy, will infer that there is a considerable number of Christian people who do not believe in Christ's personal second coming. Not a few will suppose this to be the case with all those who differ from Dr. Goodwin on this subject. Such are charged with going to the Bible under the influence of "preconceived opinions,"—put on a par with the unbelieving Jew who rejects Christ's first coming, and charged with making "utter nonsense" of the Scriptures.

How is it that, while the Dr. combats at length the views of those who think the passages of scripture which refer to the second advent, are exhausted in their meaning by his coming for believers at death, or by the descent of the Holy Spirit, he does not make the remotest allusion to those who, believing as firmly as himself that Christ will personally come again, maintain that this event will not occur until the Kingdom of Grace has run its course, and the Kingdom of Glory

takes its place? He is apparently presenting the views that prevail in the church on the subject of Christ's second coming, yet this, the most widely prevalent of them all, is completely ignored. The fact is that most of the first article is taken up with fighting a man of straw, while, here and there, a shot is furtively aimed at the non-believer in pre-millennialism, who is really in the mind and eye of the writer.

In the second article the enquiry is raised, "when is this return to occur?" Surely, now, we shall have a square issue in regard to the two theories, pre-millennial and post-millennial. But no, the article is occupied, first, by exposing the folly of those who fix precise dates, a task very easily performed; secondly, by an effort to prove that the Bible is apt to jumble up events in prophetic announcements, a favorite libel on the scriptures among pre-millennarians; and finally, by a labored argument to show that the second advent is imminent." In the course of this article, the Dr.'s peculiar theory comes out more distinctly, especially where, after quoting several texts he says:—"The one thought foremost in them all is, that it is the Lord's coming upon which the exaltation of believers and the filling of the earth with righteousness and peace depends." That mass of christian ministers and christian people, upon whom Dr. Goodwin has opened his masked battery of two great guns, do not accept this interpretation, but believe that the triumph of the church in the prevalence of righteousness and peace throughout the earth will be accomplished by the preaching of the gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and will precede the personal coming of the Lord Jesus.

In this connection the passage of Scripture is quoted which declares that "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." The use made of this proof-text by the pre-millennarians is well-known to all who are familiar with the controversy. The gospel is to be preached everywhere as a witness against unbelievers, and when there has been this world-wide proclamation of it, the present dispensation will be wound up, and the "Lord's coming" do the work the gospel has failed to do. Dr. Goodwin conveys the same idea when he tells us that "the object of this witnessing of the gospel is the gathering out of all the nations God's elect." &c.

Under the sub-head "THE RETURN IMMINENT," we are told that "it may occur at any day or hour," that therefore the church should be in an attitude of constant expectancy, that this was the state of mind in which the early believers lived and died, that the Holy Spirit set every where the seal of his endorsement upon it as the attitude which especially honored the Lord, bore fruit of highest christian experiences of consecra-