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A  
WARNING  
TO  
WATCHFULNESS.

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BY  
F. G. BROWN.

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## PROEM.

**THE** times are perilous, and call for watchfulness and prayer on the part of all professing Christians. The temptations of the world, the deceitfulness of its riches and pleasures, can only be withstood by a close walk with God, in the faithful performance of every Christian duty.

“ Watch therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of man.”

The following work, by **BRO. BROWN**, cannot fail to aid the humble disciples of Christ in preparing them for his appearing and kingdom.

**J. V. HIMES.**

*Boston, Dec. 12th, 1843.*

## WARNING TO WATCHFULNESS.

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"And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

*Mark xiii. 37.*

ALL are familiar with the occasion on which these words were spoken. Several inquiries were proposed to the Saviour. They were in the following form :—  
 "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"  
 These inquiries were so direct and definite, that if a reply be given to them at all, we shall naturally expect it to be equally as specific and clear. Such an expectation is well founded, as will be seen on examination. The Saviour, without repelling the inquirers for what might have been thought impertinent and inquisitive proposals, and without evading the questions in the least, proceeds to give a clear narration of certain events, which shall occur in regular order, and be followed by certain signs which shall betoken his advent. And to conclude all, he urges upon them the practical duty of *watching* for his coming. This he repeatedly enforces in the course of one or two short sentences.

The disciples, in this instance, betrayed an anxiety very common among primitive Christians. They all desired to know something about the *time* of Christ's second advent. This solicitude neither the Saviour nor his apostles hesitated to gratify : had it not been a very

natural and commendable anxiety, we have reason to presume that it would not have been responded to so promptly. The theme of Christ's second coming engaged the attention and interested the soul of every inspired writer of the Scriptures, with hardly an exception. The Bible is full of the subject. Nor less was it a frequent topic of discourse among the apostles. Paul refers to the Saviour's second appearing more than a score of times; the other apostles several times; and John, as he looked along down the stream of time in prophetic vision, and beheld one event succeeding another, until he came to the glorious consummation, when Christ should be revealed from heaven without sin unto salvation, his soul heaving with unutterable delight in anticipation of that glorious event, bursts forth with the emphatic ejaculation—"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

But neither Christ or his apostles refer to that event, or to the time of its occurrence, as matters for idle speculation, or for the purpose of satisfying a vain curiosity. Indeed, it is reasonable to suppose that inquiries on this subject were prompted by the Holy Spirit, not so much for the benefit of those who then lived as for our good who should come after them. John alludes to Christ's second coming, for the practical purpose of quickening his brethren to vigilance and purity; Peter, to holy conversation and godliness; Paul, to temperance and sobriety, with other virtues; and the Saviour, in the way of imparting consolation, encouragement, and warning to watchfulness. We take it for granted, that all inquiries on the same subject at the present day, result from a sober and commendable desire to make a practical use of the doctrine; and that all efforts to gratify such inquiries spring from the same pure fountain. A mere intellectual sense of this event, together with the time of its occurrence, cannot benefit the soul in the least: nay, it may serve to sink it deeper and deeper in final wo!

From what has now been observed, we deem the inquiries proposed to Christ, by his disciples, very

important and momentous ; and the reply, together with the impressive admonitions accompanying it, of grave attention. What I say unto you, I say unto *all*, Watch, watch, watch. The command is universal, and intended to apply to all of the followers of Christ, in every successive stage of the church down to his very coming. Indeed, if it be a command more binding upon the church in one period than another, it will be conceded that it is more obligatory upon those who may be alive when these events and signs referred to shall be witnessed. If so, the instructions to watch are particularly addressed to *us*, and we cannot pass them by unheeded. Independent, however, of this inference, here is a command of universal application. As Christians, we are all looking for Christ's appearing sooner or later : some of us think the *time* of his coming is plainly revealed in God's word ; others not ; but all will allow that the Scriptures clearly teach the duty of watchfulness in respect to the Saviour's appearing. Many of us are watching for that event to occur speedily, and are preparing ourselves accordingly. It is with heartfelt grief that we find so many of the professed disciples of Jesus indifferent and unconcerned at this hour, and so many who seem to say, that as long as the Bible is silent on the time of Christ's coming, they may totally disregard all orders to watch and to prepare themselves for the great day of the Lord God Almighty. So long as such continue at ease in their Laodicean state, and slight such plain directions of the great Judge, we tremble for their safety, and justly fear that they will be among those who shall in vain cry, Lord, Lord, open to us.

It is in the hope of stirring up such to a sense of their true condition, and of arousing them to immediate duty, that we undertake to present them with the light in which the oracles of God set forth this subject ; feeling assured, that if they are the Lord's genuine children, they cannot longer be indifferent, when they see the prominence which this doctrine sustains in the Scriptures, together with the responsibilities and duties resting on Christians, arising out of the great truth of

the second coming of Christ. Certainly they will not shrink from yielding obedience to plain Scripture, fairly and honestly interpreted.

I. We begin then by inviting your attention to some plain but impressive *parables* employed by our Lord himself, for the purpose of setting this subject before us in its strongest light. The first to which we refer may be found recorded in Matt. xxiv. 42, 43, 44.

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

"But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

We learn from this parable, that to those who shall be off their guard and not expecting his approach, he will come as a thief. If found watching, our best interests will be secured; but if negligent and distrustful, our loss will be certain. A thief in his coming will surely take advantage of our absence and unconcern; the only security therefore is constant vigilance. As if the Saviour had said, Be always *ready* for my coming; lest, being surprised, you incur a like loss. As you cannot trust the thief, by saying that he will not make his depredations at this, or that hour, so neither can you determine when I may or may not appear. No man thinks of suffering his goods to be despoiled; so no Christian dreams of having Christ come without being prepared to meet him. But as our mere thinking so, never saves our possessions from the grasp of the depredator; so our mere thinking that our souls' interests will never be desolated, is no security in itself against such a catastrophe.

A second parable stands in connexion with the foregoing:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?"

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

"Verily, I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

"And shall begin to smite *his* fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

"The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

"And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here the Saviour likens himself to a lord, and his followers to the servants of a household, in whose hands the former leaves all his domestic interests, constituting some rulers to superintend and direct the affairs of his house, and to administer to his servants proper and well-timed food—"meat in due season." With an eye fixed on his instructions, such a servant if wise and faithful, will neglect no part of the duties assigned him; he will not provide his supplies at irregular intervals, nor have them always of the same character; he will adapt his fare to the season, and to the circumstances of the household. We hence infer that the wise and faithful servant of Christ will see that his duties vary with circumstances; he is not left to reason that because the health and good of the church have thus far been promoted, that therefore the same kind of truth is always to nourish it, without any variation; God has otherwise ordained. And here we find a sufficient sanction for the course pursued by second-advent hearers and preachers. The hearer believes that Christ is just to come; he accordingly feels that nothing will sustain and impart life to his soul, but those scriptural truths which harmonize with his coming. We are frank to acknowledge that in comparison with this aliment nothing else is as palatable, or nourishing to him: nor is this fact strange to one who has once tasted of the delicious qualities of this soul-reviving doctrine. While at the same time the preacher feels himself specially called on to proclaim,

**"Fear God, and give glory to him ; for the hour of his judgment is come : and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountain of waters."** Nothing less can be meat in due season : besides, all other great gospel truths cluster in sweet and refreshing profusions around this particular doctrine of the Lord's coming : the latter tending naturally to enforce the former. As we read the Scriptures, he may not shrink from the discharge of this duty at the peril of his soul's salvation. Nor may those who are subject to his care, turn away from his warnings now, at the peril of a like exposure. A minister does not conclude his services when he has proclaimed on the general doctrines of faith and repentance : his duties are more extensive and solemn ; if he thinks they are not, he had better relinquish his office, before he prepares others, by his inertness and sluggishness for the same fate which awaits himself. Nor does it suffice to plead an uncertainty or an ignorance as to the particular times in which we are living. These are made plain matters of prophecy, and may be understood : it his duty to know the times. Our Lord rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for not knowing the times in which they lived ; intimating that such an ordinary measure of perception as they all exercised in divining the least change in the natural world, would, if properly directed, assist them in ascertaining the character of the times on which they had fallen. If they did not understand, it was because they would not, or because they were more interested in serving themselves than the Lord. Just so we say of their prototypes at the present day ; had they the humble, obedient disposition of their master ; were Christ the centre of their thoughts, and affections, and souls, the objects around which their hearts yearned with unutterable agony by day and by night, there would be no kind of trouble about ascertaining the truth, and of perceiving at once the dreadful danger in which the whole world lies of experiencing the last and most terrible of Jehovah's vials of wrath.

Let it now be marked, that as this parable relates to



the Lord's coming, there seems to be an intimation, in the clause last quoted, that the wise and faithful servant will be sure to announce that coming in its place : and thus he will indeed administer meat in *due* season. By so doing he shall be blessed, and by continuing so to do until his Lord comes, he shall receive marked distinctions and honors. Such are Christ's loyal subjects, who never flinch from duty, though despised, and mocked, and pitied for their conscientious adherence to their great King's instructions.

How reverse his treatment, however, who, neglecting his Lord's interests, and paying little or no regard to his coming, begins secretly to cherish the conviction that the Lord defers his return. Of this crime such an one may be guilty, when he is entirely silent about that event ; when he contends that it has already occurred ; or that it is a mere figurative coming taught in the Bible, a coming which is to be fatal to none, but glorious to all, irrespective of characters ; when he maintains that this event is far in the future, and its time nowhere taught ; when he secretly rejects the doctrine from his heart, and boldly and unblushingly publishes that the coming of Christ shall not alter his engagements, the character and method of his preaching, his conduct ; or by any other course which shall be construed by the world into a refusal to prepare himself and others for that crisis. If such infidelity as this has crept into his heart, or escaped from his lips, you may look for another step in his career of hardihood, mischief and wickedness, which will fit him, as well as all who sympathize with him, for more complete ruin. He will begin publicly to reproach and injure those who, in the honesty of their souls, believe the Lord is coming, and are trying to be prepared for him ; to brand them with heresy, and to thrust them out ostensibly for want of charity and for denunciatory epithets ; (ah ! the all-flaming eye above knows the hypocrisy of such hearts :) to sympathize with and to please those who hate the Lord's coming, and to join with them in their sensual excesses and impious indifference to this tremendous

event, with frequent cries of peace, peace : yea, more, to turn this whole subject into ridicule and jests, thereby affording merriment and sport for the wicked, blaspheming multitude. My God ! who would dare it ? Such are preparing for themselves the heaviest of Jehovah's thunderbolts. In the midst of their railing, and scoffing, and tyranny, and bacchanalian revelries, sudden and awful destruction shall be poured out upon them : and they shall be swept away into the burning lake with hypocrites and unbelievers ; " there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." With *unbelievers*, because they have concealed or sported with God's word : with *hypocrites*, because they really are such ; they have professed to love Christ's coming, and to desire the inheritance prepared for his followers ; but the mention of either has awakened within their bosoms the bitterest opposition or the most consuming hatred. Alas, how little do the deluded multitude consider, that those on whom they are bestowing their windy adulations for their successful efforts in quieting their consciences, by showing that the judgment is a great way off, are these very evil servants so vividly portrayed by our Lord in this parable ! Why are they so blinded as not to see what their teachers are ? and that the devil could not have selected more specious and unsuspecting agents by which to lay his last snare for their souls ! Yea, why do they not themselves perceive that " my Lord delayeth his coming " is nowhere found in their commission ; and that the argument which they have so long employed against Universalism, may with like force be urged against the doctrines for which they plead ? Universalism has for its sympathizers and advocates those who are reckless and hardened ; consequently, it is not of God. Well then, the anti-advent doctrine is subject to a like judgment for a similar reason. Would that all ministers who preach against Christ's coming, were as rational as one, who, after having preached several discourses against our views, accidentally passed a small group of individuals who had formed a part of his audience, and overheard them damning to hell all the

Millerites, and extolling himself and others for their giant vindication of the truth. It went like a barbed arrow to his heart; he dropped his head and began to reason:—"What, is Satan divided against himself? then must his kingdom fall!" He at once resolved on never again preaching those discourses, went home, shut himself up in his study, and there continued for days, turning over his Bible anew, and breathing out vehement prayer to God for light and knowledge: and soon, while on his knees, in his barn, was converted into the doctrine of the Lord's immediate coming.

Far more tolerable will it be for us, if we keep our peace at this time, than, by breaking the silence, we bless the wicked on whom God hath directed us to pronounce a "wo," "wo;" and sadden the hearts of the righteous, to whom we have been commissioned to bear tidings of comfort and health.

Our Saviour next introduces another parable found in the following chapter: it is the well-known parable of the ten virgins; a parable designed to illustrate things immediately before his coming.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.

"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

**" But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.**

**" Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."**

Here those who have seen evidences of the Advent near, are represented as going forth to meet their Lord, after the events enumerated have transpired, and the foretold signs have been seen. They were those who at least professed to believe that Christ was about to come, or they would not have gone forth. From the surprise on which the Bridegroom came to them, together with the unpreparedness of a portion of them to meet him, he urges the importance of sleepless vigilance and readiness for his coming. To slumber at all is hazardous in the extreme; but to sleep with little or no preparation for Christ's coming is utter folly and madness. Friends: are you slumbering over this great subject of Christ's coming? if so, do you know that you are preparing to be aroused by the cry of the Bridegroom's approach? That others, in whose piety you may have confidence, may be indifferent to this event, neither excuses your indifference, nor proves that *you* are prepared, if they are, for the archangel's trump! How desperate your condition, if, together with all your carelessness about Christ's coming, you are heedless about the state of your soul. To die in your present condition would be unendurable. Will you not then awake at once, shake off your sloth, repent over your backslidings, and fill your vessel with oil against any emergency? God help you. The present apathy of the professed church, which the prayers and entreaties of God's faithful servants and children have almost failed to break, cannot long continue; a sterner and louder alarm will soon be given, which cannot be unheard; the deafest ear shall hear it, but hear to learn such a woful doom, as no repentance can ever recall.

It appears to us that this parable, brethren, was intended more especially for us who have actually gone

forth with our lamps to meet the Bridegroom. It is to be feared, then, that some of us have not all the qualifications necessary for Christ's coming; we have perhaps a head knowledge of this truth but no heart preparation. Do not let a soul of us be deceived; to "be in this band," aye, the foremost in the train, will in no case, by itself, save us; we must have the oil in our vessels with our lamps: nor will it avail us that once they shone brilliantly; if not ready when Christ comes, all is over with us. Many are gone forth with us, who have not the same confidence that Christ will come this year; they profess an affection for the doctrine; they declare that the grand event is liable to occur at any moment; and yet what superficial arrangements have they made for it! what a miserable sense they seem to have of the preparations necessary for that tremendous occasion! Again, they are folding their arms for rest, or burying themselves in the vanities and cares of this life. Oh! that we might all exhort one another, lest, like the foolish virgins, when the door is shut, we begin to stand without, and to knock, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he from within shall answer, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

Mark has recorded the same parable with Matthew, with a little variation. This parable, although we have considered it in its place, we again refer to, for the purpose of making an additional remark.

Mark xiii. 34—37:—

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work; and commanded the porter to watch.

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning:

"Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

"And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Here the importance of keeping up a vigilant watch arises from the impossibility of calculating the hour of the Lord's return. Now, many tell us that these re-

peated admonitions of Christ to watchfulness are evidence that the time of his coming is not revealed. We can see no reason why both the time and the admonitions may not be consistent with each other, since no man can possibly know the hour, day, week, or month. But grant that we can gain no kind of clue to the period when Christ shall come, then there is a still weightier reason for unceasing watchfulness. Are such objectors now watching? If so, it is enough. Or, do they object to the time because they do not want to *watch*? They are certainly presumptuous if not *now* watching. If they cannot aver when Christ will come, they cannot know when he may not come; if they sincerely love him, they will spontaneously arise, and make such preparations for his coming as his dignity and sovereignty demand.

The porter in the parable evidently denotes the minister of Christ. It is his duty to look out and to announce to all within the house the return of his Lord; if he neglects doing this, he disregards his trust, and is unfaithful. But, alas! how many, who stand as porters at the gate, and as watchmen upon the walls, have already refused to announce their Lord's coming! Some of the poor, anxious inmates are yearning to know whether their lovely Lord be near; but these indifferent porters and watchmen are responding, "We will have none of it here; we know nothing about the Lord's coming;" while others of them, with a little more affected fidelity, are crying out, "We know as much about that matter as those who pretend to know more; we have heretofore done our duty; souls, by hundreds, have been converted through our instrumentality; were that event near, we know the Lord would let us see it. But, let the case be as it may, we shall all be safe, if we continue to pray for sinners." Now, this is an effectual quietus, it savors so much of real piety. And again; these idle porters, who have made their office a mere sinecure, or a medium for receiving the adulations of those within, are fondled, and worshipped, and applauded, by the unsuspecting

objects of their unfaithfulness. They are loved and honored the more for their peace-and-safety lullabies, little supposing that such are rocking their souls to sleep for perdition; they are passing them on direct to the pit of woe, with the brand of death all burning on their brows! Friend, do you say "That is not my minister"? And so, perhaps, every one will say; but pause, and don't be too confident of it. Your soul is above all price; the jewels of the universe are chaff to it. Make no mortal being its exclusive guardian; suffer it never to be out of your own sight. *I pray you beware, lest that very one, whom you now esteem as your dearest friend, become the author of your final ruin!*

Thus much, in the way of parables, we are taught the duty of watchfulness, with exclusive reference to Christ's second personal appearing. These parables include no small portion of our Lord's teachings; they are quite as impressive as any of the parables which he ever spake.

II. Let us see what is said on this great subject by way of *precept*.

Luke xxi. 34—36 :—

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

"For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Our Saviour here enumerates certain excesses and vices, which, by being indulged in, will render us unmindful of that day's approach. Undue care about our business, gross sensuality, a strife for the honors and distinctions of this world, will all have a tendency to have the Lord's coming surprise us. Such indulgences naturally indispose the mind to consider that event; they render it unsusceptible of religious influences;

they obscure the mental vision, and thereby deceive their victims by false assurances of peace, when sudden destruction cometh. Now, we cannot account for the present indifference of Christians, and their intolerable dullness as to beholding the proofs of the Lord's speedy coming, on any other ground than this: they have not taken heed to this their Lord's important warning; they are overwhelmed, with the world, in their cares, and business, and pleasures, and extravagant excesses. They are all after mammon; all feasting their bellies on the good things of the present life. They have all gone back from God; they have all their gilded projects to carry out before Christ comes; at present, they cannot heed the call, "Come, for all things are now ready." One has bought a piece of ground; another, a yoke of oxen; another has married a wife; another has a religious society to look after; another, a seminary for educating the rising ministry; and another, the heathen to convert. They have all marked out *more work* for themselves or for God; and all, with one consent, make excuse. But the Lord of the entertainment *will* have his guests notwithstanding; and they are already pouring in from the streets and lanes of the city, and from the highways and hedges, and are filling up the house. Praised be God, the intemperate, the licentious, the abandoned, the infidel, are catching the gracious call, and turning in to the royal feast; publicans and harlots are crowding into the kingdom of God, while, of those for whom the table was originally spread, the insulted Lord has sworn, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." How little do those think, who are now steeling and bolting their hearts against all conviction of Christ's coming, that the parable of the supper was spoken mainly with reference to themselves! Mark, at *supper time*, the invitation went forth. How little do they dream, who confess themselves heartily sick of hearing so much about the Lord's coming, that they are making the above excuses, and that they are rejecting invitations which God himself has caused to



be offered them! They suppose—for the devil has told them so—that this stir about Christ's coming is all enthusiasm and fanaticism. Ah! they do not see that the characters who have now accepted of the call render it fearfully ominous that the supper is just about to be eaten without their presence! Their heedlessness and worldliness blind them to all the startling tokens of the coming of the Lord. God is at work all around them, driving up events to the consummation of all things with lightning rapidity; prophecy is fulfilling with alarming exactness; while signs of the approaching glory are flaming out in all the broad archways of heaven. But nothing unusual is occurring: "Where is the promise of his coming?" asks whom? the scoffer? nay, the professed Christian. The most powerful arguments in proof of the Lord's coming are no more to his mind than is a feather to the turbulent bosom of the ocean; with one dash of his pen, he can sweep away all the researches of men of piety and learning on this subject; or, with "of that day and hour knoweth no man," he can meet giants on the field and vanquish them at a blow. Well, God designs that, so long as their characters continue what they are, *they shall be deceived*, and be involved in midnight on this subject; else as a *snare* that day could not overtake them. Never, perhaps, was the great mass of the world so well prepared for being surprised by this snare; they are just beginning to congratulate themselves on their stored-up treasures, or their vast facilities for wholesale possessions; with haughty self-complaisance they are now folding their arms, and saying to themselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." They have seized upon all the mysteries of nature, and made them servants to administer to their inflamed passions and lusts; and now, with all that pride and daring for which the human heart is distinguished, they seem as if with uplifted arms to challenge the very Almighty on his throne to arrest them in their

profligate career, or to interfere with their concerns. But their impiety and rebellion shall not pass unnoticed, they may be driven and baited on to ruin a little while longer, like the ox for the slaughter, and then the great snare will be drawn, and *they shall not escape!* O, careless sinner, backslidden professor, the storm is certainly coming! the heavens are already growing dark and lowering! the terrible thunders of Jehovah's vengeance are just ready to dash upon your guilty head! the forked lightnings of divine justice and insulted mercy are just ready to leap upon your unsheltered soul! the world stands waiting for the awful tragedy! Turn, then, sinner, from thy wicked works, and secure a refuge ere it be forever too late. And, slumbering Christian, with tears I would warn you, I would entreat you, to get ready for that great day; it is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly. Nothing but ceaseless prayer and watchfulness will qualify you to escape the snare, and to stand before the Son of man; if taken, you will certainly be destroyed. Come, then, would you escape that snare; you must no longer be a dweller here; the ties that bind you to earth must at once be severed; you must become sober, temperate, heavenly-minded, watchful, prayerful. You can have no just sense of the crisis which is just before you, without adorning yourselves with these graces, and admonishing your souls to vigilance, humiliation, and prayer. For one, I tremble, lest, with all my efforts to the contrary, I be at last left; left with a careless and God-hating world, to perish eternally.

Luke xii. 35, 36, 40 :—

“Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning;

“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.”

“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”

Romans xiii. 11 :—

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to

wake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

The salvation here referred to must be that which awaits the Christian at his Lord's coming. In view of the nearness of this perfect salvation, and the dawn of that day which shall reveal Christ from the parted skies, the apostle urges his brethren to awake out of sleep, and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. i. 7, 8 :—

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thess. v. 4.—Please read the whole chapter, and obey its instructions.

2 Thess. iii. 5 :—

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient *waiting* for Christ."

Hebrews ix. 28 :—

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

No man, in the scripture sense, can be *looking* for Christ, who is not from his soul praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," and living in view of the Lord's coming.

James v. 7, 8 :—

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

"Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Here the character of a real Christian is betrayed. Amid the wrongs and cruelties which the innocent and harmless suffer, it might be natural for him to feel a little impatience to have these grievances redressed by

the great Arbiter in person. But he is to be patient and to continue a calm and steadfast confidence in the God of justice, assured that the Lord's coming draweth nigh. To multitudes, at the present day, this advice is quite superfluous; they are more concerned for a guilty world than they are for the insulted and outraged government of God. But, praised be God, there are some, to whom the apostle's caution is seasonable. Brethren, be patient; do not feel like hastening the divine movements, or to have Christ come merely to save you from the chagrin which you might be expected to feel if he does not come as you expect. Others have *waited* for this event longer than we have. Millions of saints, who have fallen asleep in Jesus, are sympathizing with us, and looking and waiting as well as ourselves. The prize hung up for us in heaven's palace is well worthy the exercise of long patience and toil. Let us fill up every moment with duty and diligence, that we may at last receive, from the lips of our King, the "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

1 Peter iv. 7:—

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

2 Peter iii. 12:—

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

*Looking for and hasting*, or earnestly desiring and reaching forward unto, the coming of the day of God. Yes, brethren, we *will* do it, though all the hosts of Satan be let loose upon us, and though his sympathizers here charge us with want of pity for those who are to be the sufferers by this, to the wicked, awful catastrophe. If it be right to obey man rather than God, judge ye.

John, the revelator, who has recorded the principal, grand events which were to occur between his and the

closing-up scenes of the *last* day, has interspersed similar hints and warnings ; as in Rev. iii. 3 :—

“If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

And again, Rev. xvi. 15 :—

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

Such are some of the numerous calls and warnings to the Christian to watchfulness with respect to Christ's second glorious appearing. They are calls from the highest authority—calls from which no man may with safety turn away. Now, in view of them, we ask,—and we ask with emphasis,—Where is the professed church of Christ at this moment? You say Christ is your lawgiver: how dare you, then, withhold your obedience to his plain demands? How can those get away from such imperious commands, who have heretofore maintained, with such commendable pertinacity, that the Bible must be our sole guide in all questions of duty or opinion? Where are those who have expressed their abhorrence of all mere tradition, and have contended so manfully for a rigid reference to the pure and unadulterated word of God, honestly, fully, and faithfully *translated*, even to the smallest preposition, and yet, with the Bible fairly teeming with the great truth of Christ's and the saints' final glory, and the cautionary advice, found on so many of its pages, to watch and prepare for it,—are folding their hands in apathy on both this fact and this duty? where those who can see everything else in the Bible but the Lord's coming, and the duty to *watch* for that coming? where those who can so grossly outrage every principle of rational freedom and scripture truth, as to make it *heresy* worthy of church expulsion either to preach, exhort, pray, or sing about the Lord's coming, and who dare to demand *confessions* of those who have believed, from a prayerful study of God's word, that

Christ is coming immediately? *Where* are they? Not in the pope's chair, nor in the cardinal's office, nor in the bosom of the mother of harlots; but in our own free, indulgent, and kind-hearted Protestant churches, whose care first gave direction to our infant steps, and whose arms have so long enclosed us from the perils of the way. O, let maternal profession blush, and repent! her children have not lost all affection for the erring parent, nor all sensibility, reason, and religion.

But let us deduce a few *observations* from the parables and precepts which teach the duty of watchfulness with respect to Christ's second coming.

We observe, *first*, The grounds of our final acceptance with God are thus clearly seen to depend upon our watchfulness with reference to Christ's appearing. I would not introduce any forced inferences from these texts; but I ask if this is not one which is plainly and fairly inferable. We find in them no allusion made to former frames of mind or feeling; no allowance for past vigilance or service; no intimation of the "elect" as exonerated from this duty, or saved in its violation. Those alone are seen to gain admittance to the great wedding, who have made themselves *ready* for the entertainment. Not that a mere belief in 1843 will save any soul; but to love Christ's appearing, and to hold one's self in readiness for it, is certainly indispensable. Blame us not, then, if we put this matter on the same ground as did the great Teacher and his apostles; *we* do not aspire to the judgment seat; let God be the judge.

We observe, *second*, The sacredness of a strict and literal observance of the duty enjoined. Mark, it is watching with special reference to the coming of Christ bodily, visibly, gloriously. It is an *act*, and not a mere state of mind, which is required. Hence, he who amends or substitutes this duty for another is guilty of adding to and taking from the words of the books of this prophecy, and must hold himself answerable at the proper tribunal. Christ and his apostles have decided what shall be believed, regarded, and preached. They

undoubtedly selected the strongest motive that could be brought to bear upon the human conscience ; and reason as well as experience have proved the wisdom of their choice. The occurrence of death is but a single circumstance ; the advent brings with it all other events. Death does not lead us at once to the judgment ; the advent does. Death chills and terrifies ; but the advent warms, and inspires, and elates. When the mind contemplates death, it seizes hold of this particular event, and there measurably pauses ; from its very nature, it cannot be so intensely affected and convulsed by that which is remote as by that which is near. What says observation ? the question has been fairly tested. With the first stories of the nursery, to the very last teachings of the pulpit, we have been fed with cries of "Death ! death !" Our friends and neighbors have been swept off with pestilence, with the flames, and buried by hundreds in the angry deep ; and funeral prayers and sermons have been said over their lifeless bodies. But what has it all availed ? How few have had these visitations of heaven, or the warnings which have followed them, blessed to their conversion ! Not so with the proclamation of Christ's coming ; the possibility of his sudden coming has almost electrified the earth from pole to pole. Again : will the prospect of the grave comfort the saint under his present trials ? Never. But the Lord's coming will be a healing panacea for every affliction. But are those, who pretend that a preparation for death is all-sufficient, prepared themselves for *that* event ? are they *watching* for death ? Let their business, their cares, their conversation, their devotions, their life, make the answer. "But it is not essential to know about the Lord's coming." Well, satisfy yourselves with flying to this subterfuge, if you will ; obedience is essential. Essential ! but are we to contend for no truth, unless that truth involves an essential in religion ? How easy it would be, on this principle, to pare down the whole word of God to a system of non-essentials ! Some of us can appreciate this "not essential" doctrine. But hark : the objec-

tor's words indicate a bad heart; he is certainly striving "to climb up some other way." Let him beware, lest his non-essentials land him where hope and mercy can never reach him. Friends, if you go contrary to your convictions of duty, and to the plain declarations of God's word,—if you resist the light which is flashing into your mind on this or any other doctrine of Scripture,—you are entirely welcome to your prospects for eternity; for one, I would not hazard my soul where you lodge yours so quietly. The ground of safety is in a strict and literal observance of *all* that God requires. You *must* tremble at God's word, or abandon all thought of heaven for yourselves; you *must* run at your Father's call, or be forsaken of him when *you* shall call. May God's Spirit incline you to a full and hearty obedience, while obedience may come up before him as a sweet-smelling incense.

Observe, *third*, The importance of using every means for ascertaining Christ's second coming. The frequent admonitions to watch imply not only a preparation to meet it, but the importance of trying to ascertain about the time of its occurrence. A knowledge of the event will be intimately associated with efforts to meet it; indeed, we can hardly suppose how one can be prepared for that which is not expected. It is by bringing an event nigh to us that invests it with its reality; for example, we may think much of our own dissolution when there are no prospects of death before us; but it is only when we find ourselves actually on the confines of the eternal world, that all our powers are awakened to meet the solemn crisis. So, unless we can believe the advent and the judgment to be just at the door, instead of far down the stream of time, through successive ages and numberless events, they cannot affect us as when, by seizing the great telescope of truth, we observe that these sublime events are the first to strike the vision, and the next in order to be ushered on to the stage. "The apostles preached these things as nigh in *their* day." Then can we do less than this in these last days? Were these inspired men, however, mis-



taken, as many would seem to insinuate by this objection? Is the event never to occur because they did not witness it? Our opponents will not dispute but that the chronological prophecies, to say the least of them, were designed to awaken a spirit of inquiry and watchfulness as their fulfilment draws nigh. Nor will they, I judge, dispute but that such prophecies will have expired with the present year. Hence, on their own assumption, they can no longer be indifferent to the times, or blame us if now we place ourselves in an expecting attitude for Christ's appearing. But few, excepting those whose prejudices against the doctrine are so deep-rooted as to reject all proof of the Lord's appearing, will dispute but that the signs of the advent, as rehearsed by Christ himself, have already been hung out from the heavens. As the signs, then, justify our expectations of the coming of our lovely Lord, neither they nor ourselves should be asleep at this moment. But few, unless skeptics, and those who are obstinately blind to all light that is shed before us from prophecy, will contend that the Bible is perfectly silent in regard to everything which would serve as a clue to this looked-for event. With this admission, therefore, it becomes our imperious duty to search the Scriptures with diligence, to see if it be not high time to make preparations for earth's last drama. That some unusual convulsion is just ahead, all seem ready to allow; therefore, none can be indifferent to its character. None but the scorner will pronounce our efforts to alarm our fellow-men idle and visionary. Within a few years past, the coming of Christ has gone forth like a whirlwind into the four quarters of the globe, and the world, to some extent, has been fairly rocked on this subject. The doctrine of Christ's speedy coming is either true or false: in either case, we cannot be idle spectators. If a lie has been so extensively propagated, and the doctrine be, as some hold, of the devil, then such can have no real interest for the cause of truth, unless they are up at once, and begin, with fasting and much prayer, and a fresh examination of

God's word, to neutralize the effect of such a falsehood. Why have they not done this long since? But, if our doctrine be of God, we call upon all to start from their downy pillows; to lay off their Babylonish garments; to abandon their sumptuous feasts; to cast their honors under their feet; to forsake their carnal pleasures; to renounce the maxims of this wicked world; and, like the men of Nineveh, to robe themselves in sackcloth, and sit in ashes before God, if peradventure the Almighty may have mercy on them. *Watch!* The injunction itself implies that we may foresee Christ's coming if we will. The particularity with which Christ spoke of the events and signs which should precede his second advent, all go to the same effect. Now, have we, before God, used our best efforts for informing ourselves respecting this momentous event? If we will persist in our ignorance and opposition to all warnings from scripture and from the signs of the times,—if we will suffer ourselves to be laughed out of all concern, and frowned down from all sober investigation of God's word relative to approaching scenes,—then do we betray the most consummate weakness, folly, and madness, and must abide the heavy consequences of such a course of procedure.

Observe, *lastly*, The guilt of interposing obstacles in the way of the preparation of any for Christ's appearing. If, as many contend, we can know absolutely nothing about the time of his coming, then why is he not as liable to come now as at any future time? and how do such justify their present indifference? Why take such a course as will necessarily lead to quieting the fears of the wicked? and why provoked with those who are now disposed to watch, inasmuch as the duty now begun, should time continue, will not be abandoned? If we know not absolutely at what watch Christ may come, then no soul, unless speaking by new inspiration, ought to have the audacity to countermand Heaven's standing orders to watch, or to interpose obstacles that might seem to put that event far in the future. "Prophecy is to be understood only with its

fulfilment." This is about as convenient an argument against the advent as that which is so commonly employed by some of our opponents, for the purpose of getting away from all implied consequences that might result from final indifference to the coming of Christ. They can easily silence all concern, by the soothing doctrine of the saints' final perseverance; but the same individuals would sit very uneasily on their cushioned seats to listen to more than a single sermon a year, on the abstract doctrine of God's decrees, or sovereignty. All views of election which interfere with the duty of watchfulness, must be defective. But do those who urge the above objection profess themselves to be in entire ignorance on all prophetic events? I trow not. That prophecy is to be understood only with its fulfilment, is both unscriptural and unreasonable. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Rev. i. 3. Now, here is a blessing promised on those who should study prophecy long before its fulfilment, and govern themselves accordingly. Again: on the ground assumed, we can suppose of but a single motive which could prompt the divine mind in causing prophecy to be revealed; and that is, to convince an infidel world of his own existence and of the divine authenticity of the Scriptures. But where is his regard, all this time, for his covenant-keeping people?

This doctrine naturally leads to another, viz., that it is difficult to know when prophecy is fulfilled at all; since events frequently resemble each other, and history is so poor a source from whence to gather facts on which to rely with confidence. Yes, says the infidel, that is true, and hence the argument for the inspiration of the Scriptures, by comparing scriptural events with events which the profane historian has already recorded, is utterly worthless. So that the grand motive of God in causing the future to be made a subject of prophecy is all lost on the skeptic; while the humble believer is left to grope his way in impenetrable confusion and darkness, with no

sure guide for his feet. To say that this is the Bible of the Christian, is to provoke the jeers of the infidel ; to tantalize the anxious disciple of Christ, and to cast insult upon the professed Author of revelation.

To interpose obstacles in the way of Christ's coming, is to occasion a violation of the duty of watchfulness. This duty is always binding, independent of what we may think is yet to occur. Now to enumerate events which are yet in the future, and which in the nature of things can occur only with the expiration of centuries, is certainly to cause the infraction of the duty enjoined. No one can pursue this course without casting in the back ground and entirely invalidating all confidence in the prophetic periods, the signs and other aids which Jehovah has employed for the purpose of awakening our faith in relation to the conclusion of all things earthly ; or, which is the same thing, without causing a portion of God's word to be discredited, and forestalling all investigations that might lead to a knowledge of an approaching judgment. Such do the souls of those who confide in their fidelity, a flagrant wrong, by preparing them to be surprised by the terrors of the great day of God ; they will be sure to ruin far more than they have ever been instrumental in saving from final wo. Such an one, if he be a preacher of the gospel, cannot honestly proclaim the doctrines of a temporal millennium, and of the return and conversion of the Jews, &c., and at the same time urge upon his hearers the importance of watching for Christ's return. The most unthinking of his congregation would detect his inconsistency and hypocrisy. With the doctrine of the advent nigh for his theme, as the apostles taught it, he would find full employment for his best powers, full range for his choicest thoughts, warmth and energy kindled up in his own breast, and nourishment and life administered to the souls of his hearers. For example : could he come to the poor, pining object of man's extortion and oppression, with the soothing words of an apostle, " Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ; stablish your hearts, for

the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ;” or could he, like another apostle, while surrounded by hearts smitten with anguish in view of the loss of dear ones on earth, comfort and console the weeping mourners, with an assurance that the grave must speedily deliver up its captives, and restore them, all adorned with immortal glories, to the embrace of those who now mourn their brief absence ; what a healing balm would this be to suffering humanity. Or, like another apostle still, could he draw upon the terrific realities of a burning day just at hand, as a powerful motive to all “ holy conversation and godliness,” why, religion would suddenly assume a new aspect in his midst ; the dull and the careless would never be satisfied but with a piety that would shine and glow and burn. As it is, however, he stands in his own light ; his preaching must be confined to the consideration of a few practical duties, without being supplied with motives sufficiently strong by which to enforce them ; it must be a powerless gospel.

Says the learned Dr. Breckenridge, “ The watchword of the church in the days of the apostles, was, *Dominus noster venit*—our Lord is coming : it was this that made them missionaries in the true sense of the word. So, if it were preached now, it would give life and power to the whole body. The Lord’s treasury would be in the pockets of his people, and not in funded revenues ; it would be forthcoming when and wherever and in whatever amount it should be wanted. The mental, moral, and physical energies of the church, its men and women and children and money and goods and lands, would be forthcoming.” Such, we might add, has been the result of this experiment as already tried. The doctrine of Christ’s speedy coming has inspired the hearts of its believers with new life and fresh devotion to the cause of Christ, such as has rarely been known since the days of the apostles. And with all the disparaging and reproachful remarks which such sacrifices have elicited from the lips of the professing church, she can never see the palmy days which she has pictured for herself, until she drinks into a

similar spirit and goes heroically and perseveringly to work, as if she really believed her own creed. But the church is effectually defeating her own professed ends ; she is proclaiming doctrines that will naturally influence her members to continue to amass property for themselves and their children, and to stint out only an occasional farthing for the heathen ; leaving the vast work of evangelizing the world to their equally as prosperous and able successors. Time enough yet, will be the secret preaching of all her sons and daughters. Certainly she cannot expect to achieve her triumphs by a miraculous agency ; her present inefficiency, however, would seem to indicate to the contrary ; then how vain must be her hopes ! Will she never see that she is her worst enemy—that she is casting obstructions in her own pathway, and rolling backward the mighty wheels of her triumphant car ? If God never blesses a falsehood, surely her doctrine of a temporal millennium is destined to destruction—and though proclaimed year in and year out, it can never effect the world's conversion. Let the church come back to her original ground ; let her ministers renounce her fables and cherish again the good old scriptural views of the reformers and godly men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Let them believe and preach the near approach of the judgment, as did such learned and sober Christians as Calvin, Latimer, Knox, Sandys, Ridley, Bradford, Davenant, the divines of the Westminster Assembly, Watson, Thomas Adams, the framers of the Saybrook Platform, St. Romance, and many others, of distinguished note in the church. Let them not go to the judgment with falsehoods in their hands.

But I have quite exhausted your patience. A word more, and I am done. Brethren,—the admonition of the text addresses itself forcibly to us. If we have correctly interpreted God's word, Jesus is just ready to withdraw the great curtain which conceals him within the inner vail, and to come forth to bless his people. It is the service of our day to make preparations for his coronation as the son of David, and to prepare hallelu-

jahs when he shall ascend his everlasting throne. To the discharge of this duty, the clearest light from prophecy, and the general tenor of God's word, direct and encourage. But let us not forget that we are liable again to be lulled to repose by business, by pleasure, by novelties, by vain conversation, and by the prevailing and all-contaminating unbelief of the professing church. We are only secure while, with a deep sense of our weakness and dependence, we keep our eye steadily fixed on the great chart—the dauntless Captain of our salvation, and the promised port of everlasting rest. How rich the prize for which we struggle—how the prospects of victory brighten—how comforting and animating the promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Professor of religion,—deceive not yourselves by relying on past experience, or by abusing to your purposes any precious doctrine of God's word. Beware of Satan's subtle and deep-laid plots for ruining your souls. It is high time you should awake out of sleep. I know you are not prepared either for this or for an event less serious. What says your closet in your behalf? What proof have you of being accepted, should Christ now burst from his mediatorial throne? What chance of salvation would there be for the majority of the professing church? Some have been known to confess that should this event occur as expected by us they must certainly be lost. Oh, that dreadful storm, it will thoroughly test every hope;—will it find you all ready?

Sinner,—that will also be a terrible time for you. Mountains and rocks will be invoked to fall on you and to hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? Now, there is hope of your salvation; another hour squandered, and all may be forever lost! O, sinner; as your friend, heed this counsel. Say not the advice is unseasonable. Say not the judgment is not expected by a majority of the church and of the ministry. All that may be true; and yet they are as

liable to be sleeping over the truth, as we are liable to be cherishing an error. Their silence may be the very means which God has allowed for the purpose of having that day come upon the wicked as a snare, or unawares, as upon the inhabitants of the old world, and of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. How can you meet your Judge, with his government insulted, his providences abused, his judgments slighted, his Spirit grieved and his Son rejected! Pause, then, and propitiate his favor, while mercy is in store, while the flaming sword of Divine justice is yet undrawn, and let me meet you on the fair shores of an ever-blooming paradise!



## THE WARNING.

TOIL on, ye grovelling worms of earth,  
Scorn and forget your heavenly birth;  
Gather your heaps of shining dust,  
And die—as soon, right soon, ye must!  
Or, if your spirit thirsts for fame,  
Make haste, nor rest, until your name  
Stands among those accounted great,  
From battle-fields, or halls of state;  
Put on your laurels for a day,—  
You'll soon be swept from earth away.  
If all you ask is pleasure's cup,  
Haste, fill it, drink its contents up;  
Fill it, if life is spared, again,  
And from the brim to bottom drain,  
Then drop it from your palsied hand,  
And in your Maker's presence stand!  
Receive your doom, and haste accursed  
To dwell where your tormenting thirst  
No drop of water can allay,  
While endless ages pass away!  
No prayers, nor tears, will then avail;  
Your lost and suffering spirit's wail,  
Forever o'er hell's burning sea,  
Must break in tones of agony!  
But let His glorious Name be praised  
Who has my deathless spirit raised,  
To seek in high and holy things,  
Above earth's filthy grovellings,  
A portion and a bright abode.  
With Christ, my Savior, and my God. C. F.

## THE SECOND ADVENT.

The chariot! the chariot! its wheels roll on fire,  
As the Lord cometh down in the pomp of his ire;  
Self-moving it drives on its pathway of cloud,  
And the heavens with the burthen of Godhead are bowed.

The glory! the glory! by myriads are poured  
The hosts of the angels to wait on the Lord;  
And the glorified saints and the martyrs are there,  
And all who the palm-wreath of victory wear.

The trumpet! the trumpet! the dead have all heard;  
Lo, the depths of the stone-covered charnel are stirred;  
From the sea, from the land, from the south and the north.  
The vast generations of man are come forth.

The judgment! the judgment! the thrones are all set,  
Where the Lamb and the white-vested elders are met!  
All flesh is at once in the sight of the Lord,  
And the doom of eternity hangs on his word!

O mercy! O mercy! look down from above,  
Creator, on us, thy sad children, with love:  
When beneath to their darkness the wicked are driven,  
May our sanctified souls find a mansion in heaven.



