

"The Prize of Our High Calling"

by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly

→ See note
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Such is the title of a tract in defense of the late R. Govett's endeavor to prove that many who receive life eternal fail to reign with Christ, and are kept in Hades all the thousand years of the kingdom, because they were not immersed and rose not up to the requisite mark of good works. "It is of great importance," says the author in his opening sentence, "to distinguish between (1) eternal life as the gift; and (2) the prize as a *reward according to works*."

What saith the scripture? Does not the Lord identify what this theory distinguishes? Take Luke 18:29, 30: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left home, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the age to come life everlasting." Do not both coalesce here? Only the Gospel of John among the Four treats of eternal life as a present gift of grace, the special known and enjoyed privilege of him who receives and follows the rejected Christ. So in Matt. 18 to "enter into life" is when saints inherit the kingdom; which surely overthrows the alleged distinction.

The alternative again is not a punitive or purgatorial Hades for so many years, but "to be cast into everlasting fire." Scripture nowhere anticipates for believers such a lot as Mr. G. imagined. The sheep on the King's right hand, or saved of all the nations at the end of the age (Matt. 25:31-46), were very defective in knowledge, but practically honored the King in His messengers. Those who will not are consigned to everlasting punishment, not to temporary suffering. So in Mark 9:42-50 it is either entering into the kingdom at whatever cost, or to be cast into hell-fire. There is no middle position between the kingdom and irretrievable ruin. Scripture nowhere speaks of crownless kings. The foolish virgins without oil in their vessels were but empty professors, who cry too late, Lord, Lord, open to us, whom He answers in the solemn words, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Without doubt the Lord knows those that are His (2 Tim. 2:19). These virgins were not His, save externally and therefore for responsibility and judgment, not for life.

It is in John's Gospel we hear Christ opening the Christian privilege of present known life eternal, far beyond the hope of the kingdom which was revealed in the OT and enjoyed by all saints. What lack of spiritual intelligence to treat the kingdom as the grand prize and life in the Son as the common portion, even of the unfaithful to be in Hades while the rest reign with Christ for the thousand years! Not so does the Lord anywhere speak. In John 5:19-28 He lays down that one of two things awaits men now that He the Eternal is the Rejected here: life everlasting as a present possession, of which no OT saint ever thought; or judgment executed by Him as Son of man. To hear the voice of the Son of God made the dead even now to live of His life; to despise and reject Him as but man was to be left in death for dread and sure judgment. For there are two resurrections of wholly distinct character: one of life for those who have life already for their souls in Him, and do good according to that new nature, as none else do; another and later at the close of the kingdom when they that have done evil according to their sinful nature come forth for inevitable and endless judgment. But not the least hint is here, or in Rev. 20 where the prophetic vision of both is given, of a class who had life eternal raised to be judged according to their works, and yet to enjoy a blissful eternity in God's presence, after being in Hades for a thousand years as the penalty of non-immersion and a careless walk. The dead raised in the resurrection of judgment are cast into the lake of fire.

Indeed an OT saint knew better than this strange dream. It is due to the blind unbelief of Christendom which talks of universal judgment for sinner and saint, though Mr. G. cleared himself in part from that error. But the psalmist knew better, saying (Psalm 143:2), "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Were God to enter into judgment even of His servant, there could be no justification for him; for judgment must deal inflexibly with sins. And what servant of His has not sinned since his confession of the Savior? No, salvation is by grace through faith, but impossible on the ground of judgment according to works, which is reserved for those who refused the Lord and rejected His "so great salvation." Only of the wicked Rev. 20:11-15 speaks. "The dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works." With this condemnation of each and all the book of life

agrees. For therein was the record of the objects of saving grace. "And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Not a word is here found of one written in that book. The books condemned them; the book of life had no such names written for grace.

Where then is there room for the distinction here thought of great importance? Where the intimation that any possessed of eternal life miss the prize of our high calling? Rom. 11:6 does not contradict Rom. 2. God will render to each according to his works: to those who, in patient continuance of good works, seek for glory and honor and incorruption, life eternal (that is, in God's kingdom as well as for all eternity too in God's grace: so little is the distinction found in scripture); but to those that are contentious and are disobedient to the truth, wrath and indignation [shall be], &c. But why set this against "grace"? For grace alone gave a new nature through faith of Christ, and works meanwhile in obedience and good fruit, so as to inherit life eternal for the body in the day of glory. Error dislocates the truth, puts one scripture into collision with another, and thus unwittingly makes a chaos.

No Christian doubts that 1 Cor. 9:25 tells us of an incorruptible crown as the prize. But the "disapproved" one at Christ's judgment-seat here spoken of is a worthless professor, and not a child of God. The apostle feared for some of the Corinthians in the church. Some were fleshly and party-spirited, making contentious badges, not merely of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but of Christ. They were morally loose, and so worldly-minded as to sue their brethren at law-courts. They sought ease and honor among men, and made light of heathen temples and sacrifices. Levity and shame had clouded even the Lord's table in their midst, and gross vanity their misuse of spiritual gifts. Nay some questioned (not the soul's immortality, but) the resurrection of the dead. Who can wonder that the apostle was deeply concerned? Yet in his delicate consideration he applies the danger to his own case (cp. 1 Cor. 4:6); as if he said, Supposing I were to walk without conscience and self-judgment before God, what must be the end of it? "I therefore thus run, as not uncertainly; so I combat, as not beating the air [as many there were doing]. But I buffet my body and lead it captive [his was no easygoing walk]; lest having preached to others I should be *myself* rejected."

The preaching might be zealous, powerful, and blessed; but if the preacher indulged his lusts instead of mortifying them, God is not mocked, and he himself must be "reprobate." The word which is softened down to "disapproved" is never used in the NT in any sense but the worst. If said of "land" (Heb. 6), it means "worthless," bearing thorns and briars, but no acceptable fruit. So it is employed in 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7, never for what is good though failing. Lack of perception that the apostle had no real fear as to himself, but was transferring the case to himself to make it all the stronger *if* he were to walk so wickedly, misled not a few to imagine that he meant works rejected but the preacher saved. It is precisely the contrary here. The preaching might be all right, but the preacher's life was offensive to God, and himself therefore rejected or as the A.V. says, "a castaway," which is quite sound, though it is a pity to multiply needlessly the rendering of the Greek word.

As to 2 Cor. 5:10, the true force is that "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." It is not the same as the "we all" in 2 Cor. 3:18. A different form distinguishes them. In the latter "we all" means all and only Christians; in the former it is so framed as to take in not only all saints but all sinners too. Hence it does not say "judged," but "manifested." For the believer does not come into judgment, as the Lord ruled in John 5:24. We shall be fully manifested and give account and receive accordingly. But how will it be with the ungodly? Their manifestation must be "judgment"; for they believe not on Christ, and went on in unremoved sins till death. The believer did repent and believe the gospel and was justified by faith. Nor will God reverse but stand to it; for "it is God that justifieth"; whereas His wrath abides on him who disowns the Son of God. And is not this truly righteous, however awful? The manifestation is therefore at different times, of distinct character, and with opposite results for those manifested. But it remains that we, the whole of us, shall be manifested, that each may receive the things in (or, through) the body according to those he did whether good or evil. Nothing more sweeping or precise; not a word to countenance failing believers shut out of the Kingdom, and judged with the wicked at the end according to their works.

It is ever wholesome and cheering to hear our Lord say, "I am coming quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). But this is far from implying that there will be crownless kings in Hades; and though we shall share the authority He will give us over the nations with Him who shall shepherd them with iron scepter, we shall be associated with Him who is the Morning Star which is far higher and better. This is before He dawns on the world as Sun of righteousness in both judgment and healing (Rev. 2:26-28; Mal. 4:2).

Christendom seeks to reign now, a heartless reign hollow and faithless. This, with error of all sorts, is what has been "garnered" during the centuries of insubjection to the word and Spirit of God. The only true place of the bride is to suffer here and now where He suffered to the utmost, awaiting the day when we shall be glorified on high and reign together with Him. Some of the Corinthians in their light-heartedness forgot the truth, and as the apostle said "reigned without us." But with his large heart he added, "I would that ye did reign [for as yet it was a delusion and a wrong to Christ], that *we* also might reign with you." He was far from menacing them with being kept away in Hades, though he did not hide the apostolic path of present reproach and shame for Christ's sake in which so few are ambitious to be their successors. They prefer to be enthroned as bishops and archbishops, patriarchs or popes, from which earthly glory the apostles were wholly apart. Nor are the so-called Free Churches a whit less covetous of money, ease, and honor, as far as they can compass it. But in Luke 17, the Lord points two aspects of the kingdom: one present in the midst of men, which does not come with observation but is known in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; whilst we await one manifested in power. "For as the lightning shines which lighteneth from the [one end under] heaven to the [other end] under heaven, thus shall the Son of man be in his day." "Every eye shall see him"; and "where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." God's judgments shall not fail to light upon the objects of His displeasure.

Yet the apostle did not put off the spirit of the kingdom till that day. He sought and exercised it not in word but in power by the Spirit, even now and here.

To speak of "*imputed* sanctification" is to diverge from scriptural truth. But sanctification is not merely in practice, which is always imperfect and admits of varying degrees. Mr. G. and his defender were not aware that the word of God speaks of a sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness *but* even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with saintship. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The order stated is exact, but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture. 1 Peter 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: "elect according to foreknowledge of a Father God, by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ." Here too the ordinary teaching is at sea. Yet the truth revealed is certain and plain. Election as God's children is shown in sanctification of the Spirit for obeying as (not the Jews, but) Christ obeyed, and His blood-sprinkling which cleanses from all sin, that is, for justification. There is a real and vital sanctifying by the Spirit when we are converted to God before we obey as God's sons and know ourselves justified. It is a life setting-apart to God, which precedes acceptance, and is overlooked by universal theology, Arminian and Calvinistic; but scripture, as here shown, makes much of it.

No serious person doubts that real Christians may be "carnal, walking as men," as many Corinthian saints were; but those with whom they were not even to eat were under discipline and put away from among them, as "wicked" persons, no longer in the assembly, nor called a brother though he had been, and might be again if or when restored. But to be regarded as at the same time a saint and a wicked person is merely human theory, unscriptural and pernicious. The old leaven was to be purged out, that they might be a new lump, according as they were unleavened. Therefore, Christ having been sacrificed, we are to celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth. If leaven enters, the church is bound to cast it out when seen, never to sanction its presence, being directly inconsistent; as the form was in Israel, so its reality is in us. Some in the church might turn out unjust, but they were not to be tolerated but put away, and should not inherit God's kingdom, any more than they had life eternal. None were to be deceived, as they had been. They had

been baptized and eaten the Lord's supper, and were none the better but the worse, as ch. 10 warns. Evils such as these involve everlasting ruin no less than loss of the kingdom, though 1 Cor. 5, 11 leave room for repentance in the wondrous grace of God, and if restored, not only for renewed fellowship but for inheriting the kingdom; contrary to this singular theory.

The remark under 4 (p. 3) is quite inept, as far as Rev. 20:4 is concerned; and it is decisive on the point. "Notice the *Church* is not spoken of as reigning with Christ; but blessed and holy (practical sanctification) is *he* that hath part in the first resurrection. *Unholiness* excludes from the first resurrection." Now it is certain that of no class of believers is holiness so strongly predicated as of the church in Eph. 5:25-27: "The Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the church to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless." Where is anything said so deep and full of any other object of grace?

The real bearing of Rev. 20:4 is most comprehensive; for three classes are included. "And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and [instead of being judged according to their works] judgment was given to them." These are the saints of the O.T. as well as the church caught up to meet the Lord at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 2 Thess. 2:1), and seen glorified above from Rev. 4 onward. Secondly, the early martyrs of the Apocalyptic time, Rev. 6:9-11. Thirdly, those later and more severely persecuted by the Beast and the False Prophet before the Lord appears in glory. These two are distinguished in the subsequent clause, as "the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and on account of the word of God"; and "those that did not worship the beast or his image, and received not the mark on their forehead and hand."

As these witnesses for God were only raised after the translation to heaven of the first general class, and suffered to death for the truth as far as they knew it, they are here clearly described as seen by the apostle in their disembodied state, and raised from the dead to join the first great class after the Lord appears for the destruction of the Beast, the False prophet, and their armies, as well as for consignment of Satan to the abyss. Hence the announcement of the first resurrection here, in order to include in it these two classes of Apocalyptic sufferers, who might have been hastily thought too late to share the thousand years' reign with the Christ, as well as perhaps spiritually inferior, because their intelligence was small as the Rev. shows. But "Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection"; and as they were slain by hostile authority, it is said "over these the second death hath no power." But to infer that any living members of Christ's body, the church, do not share the rising to reign is wholly incongruous, unintelligent, and wild to the highest degree.

An attempt however is made to find a basis in Phil. 3, a chapter specially setting aside every dependence and boast but Christ, on whose account, says the apostle, "I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ, and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness which is [or, would be] of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God through faith; to know him, and the power of his sufferings, being conformed to his death if any how I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I already obtained the prize or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession, since also I have been possessed by Christ. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself, but one thing -- forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to those before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the calling above of God in Christ Jesus." It is really the power of life in faith of Christ glorified which fills the apostle's heart to run the race with that prize in view; as far as possible from the notion of a reward according to works, which is essentially law, sterile and deadly. He utterly repudiates his own righteousness for that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

This agrees with what the Lord made of the resurrection of His own in John 5, the issue of what He gives the believer now -- life eternal, which loves good, hates evil, and produces good fruit, according to (not law, but) sovereign grace, its opposite. Hence we hear of those that are counted worthy to have part in that age, which is the reverse of the present evil age, and the resurrection that is from among the dead. But

He nowhere speaks of it as a reward of our good works (though good works there surely are), but the fruit of His life in power according to divine grace and its counsels.

No doubt it is a manifest token of God's righteous judgment that the saints should be counted worthy of His kingdom, as their wicked troublers deserve the penalty which awaits them. But this strange doctrine looks at the surface of things, overlooking the spring of grace and the power of the Spirit working in the heart by faith. Yet even while page 4 says that the incorruptible crown, the resurrection from among the dead, and the kingdom of God are different aspects of the prize, it adds that thus all may be lost through disobedience and consequent unholiness, and concludes that none of these is a question of pure grace. Yet the very next paragraph owns that grace is indeed needed every hour to insure them. Is not this to say and unsay? It is to confound those begotten of God with such as are not, in order to countenance the fable of saints left to unholiness, and hence to punishment for the thousand years when other saints shall reign. The simple truth is that the Lord prepares us for unreal professors, for those that say and do not, whom He declines to own, while Mr. Govett and his followers declare that they are His to the great dishonor of His word, the grief of the faithful, and the false hope of the fruitless.

As to failure and sin on the part of true saints through unwatchfulness, there is the plain duty of the church to exercise discipline; and the Lord acts as we read in 1 Cor. 11, dealing even to death of the body; just as the Father judges in loving care, as 1 Pet. 1: 17 says no less than John 15. They are thus chastened in this life. Nowhere is there a hint of saints detained in Hades while their brethren reign. Saints by call are disciplined now that they may be saints practically. If all these fail, they are not of God, and only false professors.

It is not exact to say that "all saints will share in the Kingdom" or the millennial reign with Christ, but for a plain reason wholly different from the misteaching. The fact is that there will be a harvest of saints possessed of life eternal during the kingdom, who are (whether Israel or the nations) reigned over instead of reigning. These, like all those glorified before them, reign in life through the one Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17); they and we shall reign to the ages of the ages (Rev. 22:5). This will be the eternal state to the exclusion of time or any other characteristic of a dispensation. But that saints by call are not saints by practice also is not apostolic doctrine; for the notion is directly denied in Rom. 8:30 and many other scriptures. When our Lord tells us that many are called but few chosen, it is clearly the public call in the kingdom of heaven, and distinct from the work of grace according to His counsels, whereby all that have life in Him are described as having done good, and rise to a resurrection of life, in contrast with a resurrection of judgment which is only for the unbelieving, unholy and unblessed.

But we come next to what in the same page 4 are called proof-texts, and first John 17:22. This is said to "refer to present union with Christ." Its terms declare the contrary. "And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they also may be one even as we [are] one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me and lovedst them as Thou lovedst Me." It is clear that the glory is not actually ours till He comes again, and that there can be no perfecting for us into one till then. But it is now for the world to "believe," as in v. 21. When the glory is revealed, and not before, the world shall "know"; because it is a fact before their eyes and impossible to deny; and such is the distinction of vs. 22, 23 from what had been already presented by our Lord. The oneness "perfected" will be in the day of glory (as the oneness in v. 21 is during the day of grace in order to act on faith now), and will only be matter of fact when the Lord appears and we with Him in the same glory (Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:13).

We have already shown that Rev. 20:13 is the resurrection of judgment, in contrast with that of life, the one of the unjust only as the "first" is of none but the just. Neither Eph. 1:21 nor Eph. 2:6 applies save to our portion as in Christ. Thus the "age to come" is the millennial one, and our state is everlasting, as reigning in life (Rom. 5:17) is unlimited.

Then too Luke 22:29, 30 is no less misunderstood and misapplied. The Lord speaks of His own in a grace which secures from all their slips and follies. To construe His words here or anywhere else as a

reward of their righteousness is distressing error and real self-righteousness. As a fact, they grievously failed, and Peter in particular. How can saints be so blind as to argue the contrary? Besides, glorious as "the kingdom" may be, it is not so deep or precious, as life eternal or union with Christ. The kingdom will be a magnificent display of honor; but eternal life and union with Christ suppose communion with God and enjoyment of His love which is intrinsic and far beyond any display. The scheme spiritually is thus a total fallacy.

Again, Rom. 8:17 draws out the mistaken comment that the Greek particles "always signify contrast." They may mean no more than distinction, like our "on the one hand" and "on the other." All depends on the nature of the case intrinsically. Thus in 1 Cor. 12: 8 to one (men) a word of wisdom to another (de) a word of knowledge, though here of different persons, were varieties rather than contrasts; and in Eph. 4:11 (men) apostles, and those (de) prophets, were so far from being in contrast that they form a joint class in 2:20 and 3:5. But we need not go so far from here. Take for instance Rom. 6:11, "dead indeed to sin (men) and (or, but) (de) alive to God in Christ Jesus." To make one grace, and the other conditional, is not only error but absurdity. And so it is [to] separate heirship of God from being joint-heirs with Christ, though it is expressly a gift of grace (as in Phil. 1:29) to suffer for Him as well as with Him. He who does not suffer with Him now has not His Spirit and is none of His. It is perversion to make such a contrast in Rom. 8: 17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. The contrast, if any such thing were intended, would be with the millennial saints who enjoy entire exemption from such suffering, and therefore do not reign with Christ during the thousand years. But to make this of works is utterly unscriptural; for good works characterize all saints as born of God."

So with James 2:5. Loving God and one's brother is shown in 1 John 5:1 to be inseparable from being begotten of God. It is essential to the new nature. How dreadful to conceive a saint without loving God or obeying Him! Extremes meet when those who profess sovereign grace can thus talk like the lowest latitudinarians. It is precious to know that God has chosen the poor as to the world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; but when it is added "which He promised to those that love Him," who but the legal would confine the latter clause to the poor and refuse it to a Nicodemus or a Joseph of Arimathea? This not to read the scriptures in the Spirit; nor should we deny practical holiness to any one born of God, though he may fail here or there through lack of intelligence. Not a few who are correct in outward points easily apprehended by the mind may be far behind in the faith that worketh by love, which is characteristic of all who have passed from death into life, and will assuredly share the resurrection of life. One can believe in utterly "disobedient" profession of Christ, but hardly in a "most disobedient child of God." Every true Christian is watched over by our God and Father in order to the partaking of His holiness. Does He not scourge every son whom He receiveth? (Heb. 12:5-11). See also 1 Cor. 11:31, 32. Why overlook such plain scriptures as preclude and deny the extravagant theory before us? Gal. 6:8 is quite in harmony with the truth generally. But the word is akin everywhere.

The rapture of the saints is the crowning act of sovereign grace instead of being when the day of grace is past. The throne of judgment only comes into view when the heavenly saints are seated on their thrones around it above. And "who is worthy?" is answered by the Lamb alone, not by them (Rev. 4, 5). Can anything be more certain?

It is impossible to allow the correctness of the thoughts on the two letters to the Thessalonians, as *not* touching on the standing and privileges of the church, but on faithful service in waiting for Christ. The opening words refute this. What grace can be plainer than addressing them in both as "the church of Thessalonians in God the (or, our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"? and in the first saying, "Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election"? Their awaiting His Son from the heavens in 1 Thess. 1:10 the apostle treats as part of their conversion to God from idols, no less than serving a living and true God. "The church in God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ" is a unique expression of the grace in which that infant assembly stood, conveying the strongest assurance of divine security in love, just because they were so young and had to face persecution from the first. Nor is such a beginning more than a sample of the privileges of grace of which these two Epistles are full, though no doubt there is not the unfolding of the body as in that to the Ephesians or of the Head as to the Colossians, written when the apostle was a

prisoner of Christ in Rome so many years after. But they are the Epistles wherein is found the brightest communication of our heavenly hope, and the triumph of grace in our association with Christ far more intimately and profoundly than in the display of the kingdom in which He vindicates us before the world, and rewards some specially.

To say as p. 7 does, that "some of the Church will not be accounted worthy of the kingdom at the judgment-seat of Christ," is to assert the strange doctrine without one word of proof. The exhortation to walk worthily is valid; the deduction of harsh dealing with failing saints is a fable. The idea that the question of reigning is decided at the judgment-seat is inconsistent with the likeness to Christ consummated in a moment at His coming to present the church glorious to Himself (not a part but the whole), and then bringing us into the Father's house, is a monstrous one. So in the Revelation the glorified are seen as at home in heaven from ch. 4 which gives the first view of them there after their translation. And very striking it is that grace so deals: for we naturally might have thought of a judicial inquiry first of all. But nothing of the kind is implied till the close of their presence before the Lamb's marriage and the world-kingdom of our Lord is about to begin, when He and the glorified appear in glory and judgments. Only then is it said that His wife made herself ready; and I know nothing else that answers to such a phrase but our each giving account to Him of the things done through the body when we shall know as we are known. For we must all be manifested before His tribunal that we may each receive according to what he shall have done whether good or evil. This affects his particular place in the kingdom, but all reign without doubt if scripture decide.

What a solemn but withal joyful fact to those taught of God that we are already reconciled, justified, saved by the grace as fully as God could through and in Christ our Lord, the last to question His own perfect and perfecting work! No longer a mistake in anything; no hasty thought to mislead; no prepossession or prejudice to warp, to which all here and now are liable. All will be in perfect light and perfect love. Even now we do not fear but delight in what manifests all as it really is. Then it will be without alloy, and ourselves like Christ to enjoy it to the uttermost, without an atom of the old man to darken or excuse; so that it would be real loss not to be thus manifested perfectly, if this could be. And we can understand why it should be just before we come in His kingdom where our particular place will depend on that which shall have been manifested of fidelity and devotedness, or lack of it (Luke 19:15-26; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Thess. 2:19, &c.).

Hence it is not with His "coming" to take us on high, but with His "appearing and kingdom" that scripture connects the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award in that day; but this, says the blessed apostle, not only to me but also to all that have loved and do love His appearing. Thus in sovereign grace reconciled with the nicest righteousness, His coming to receive us to Himself and for the Father's house being as evident for the one, as His appearing and kingdom will manifest the other. Nor can one conceive a sadder wound to this harmony, for all the elect children of God whom He justifies, than the notion without any solid ground for it, that the great mass of saints are to be shut up away in Hades for a thousand years, say for not being duly immersed or some other point of difference, which multitudes glory in without the least fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Can there be a dream more distant from the general analogy of the faith? or more decidedly set aside by revealed statements as here shown?

It is a fundamental mistake, then, to conceive the rapture of the saints "to be when this day of grace is past, and the throne of judgment set up" (p.6). On the contrary, that the once lost sinners and children of wrath should be caught up and set before the Father, in the closest association with Christ above, is the highest expression of sovereign grace. Instead of being display when this day is past, it is its triumph without an atom of judgment in it any more than in our Lord's ascension which did not touch a single sinner in this world. "The appearing" on the contrary is the beginning of the Lord's action in personal judgment after God's providential inflictions close.

Again, how short and shallow is the view this system imposes on "worthiness of walk for the Kingdom of glory" (p.7)! It supplants the love and holiness proper to every Christian for a rather mercenary motive. The apostle comforts the Thessalonian saints in their endurance of persecution as a manifest token of God's

righteous judgment, "to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer." Christ was the object and spring of power; the kingdom, as the glorious day when the tables should be for ever turned into rest for the suffering righteous, and trouble for their troublers, was but the consoling recompense. And this is so true, that every discerning eye can see how these very scriptures are stripped of their fullness by this narrow and withering hypothesis. "That ye would walk worthily *of God* that calleth you unto His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). How incomparably richer and holier His word than reducing it to the millennial kingdom, true as this may be! But why overlook that this is but one of three such appeals? "To walk worthily *of the Lord* unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge (*epignwsei*) of God." Here is yet more than the young Thessalonian saints had put before them. And Eph. 4:1 is larger and higher still than Col. 1:10, "Walk worthily *of the calling* wherewith ye are called": a calling which embraces God's dwelling-place, and Christ's body in union with the Head over all things, immeasurably beyond the kingdom.

Thus we are throughout on the ground of grace which alone produces an answer in practical righteousness, which it does in those begotten of God, as 1 John elaborately states. Undoubtedly the difficulties are so great that to unbelief they seem insurmountable; but faith is entitled to count on being guarded by God's power for salvation complete, and is in no way disturbed by judgment beginning, now as of old, from God's house (1 Pet. 4:17). But the apostle gives no hint of believers suffering as an example, only "those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus"; as it is in 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. The second sight of Hades which the scheme claims as a delusion.

So it is to deny "that all the dead in Christ will have part in the first resurrection." Take Rom. 5-8. All points from "reigning in life" (Rom. 5:17); "so also we (not some only) shall be of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5); "to be conformed to the image of His Son," and if justified, also glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30). How preposterous not to be raised and glorified but kept in Hades even then!

Take again I Cor. 15, the capital seat of the resurrection: "For since through man death, through man also resurrection of dead. For as in the Adam all die, so also in the Christ all shall be made alive" (that is, simply Adam family in its universality, and the Christ family in its completeness) (vs. 21, 22). Is not this last categorically all the dead sharing Christ's resurrection? So it is repeated in v. 23, "But each in his own order (or, rank): "Christ, first-fruits; after that, those of Christ at His presence" (or, coming). Can any scholar question that *oi Cristou* comprehends all the dead in Christ thus to rise? "Then the end" at once carries us, not to the resurrection of the unjust (for the chapter is occupied with that of Christ and His own), but to His giving up the conferred kingdom to Him that is God and Father after all such government is over. Again in vs. 49, 50, as we bore the image of the dusty man, we shall bear also the image of the Heavenly One; and this in connection with inheriting the kingdom with Christ, while those converted then in their natural bodies enjoy its blessed effects, as in both O. and N.T. But not a hint of some of the sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:36) falling short of their inheritance! And when from v. 51 he opens the "mystery" of the living saints changed without death, the modern legend of excluding many real saints, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (else they are not properly Christian), is itself excluded as an unscriptural invention. For though we shall not all die, "we shall all be changed." For (v. 52) "the trumpet shall sound: and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the then living saints) shall be changed." Had the *nekroi* been anarthrous, it might have left room for exceptions; but the article denotes the whole class, as the "we" does the survivors of God's family without exception, with a destiny as far from Hades as can be.

It is exactly similar with 1 Thess. 4:14-17. And 1 Thess. 3:13 is the more striking, as we are therein assured, not merely of the raising of all that are Christ's for the first resurrection and reign with Him when He comes *for* them, but here we read of His coming "*with all His saints*," which is when He appears in His kingdom. Can one ask a more overwhelming disproof of this strange doctrine? No less destructive is Rev. 20:4-6. "Me first resurrection" here is for the purpose of supplementing the earlier and later martyrs of the Apocalyptic times. They were witnesses *after* the rapture of the saints generally who were already seen seated on thrones; and those two classes are raised after the Lord appears to the destruction of both the Beasts, etc., and added to the enthroned. This is styled "the first resurrection," embracing all who have part

in it, in contrast with that of the unjust before "the end" for "the second death." But here is not a whisper of one emerging from Hades to join the rest of the risen saints when the thousand years are over.

We may add, that nowhere does scripture teach that the first resurrection is a judicial question; or as it is said in the tract, "This will depend on the decision of the 'Righteous Judge.'" It exclusively depends for us on the grace which has given the Christian life eternal in Christ. Such a one cometh not into judgment, but has already passed from death unto life; and He will raise him up at the last day, as He repeatedly declared (John 6). It is decided already by grace; and the believer will have been glorified before he stands before the Bema of Christ to give account of all done in the body: a process of solemn interest for the saint and affecting his particular position in the kingdom. Only perdition awaits the unbeliever when he is raised for judgment before the end. These things essentially distinct are here confused.

Further, as it is admitted (p. 8) that "all the church are called to this glory of the first resurrection," let it not be forgotten that "ye were also called in hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4) is not declarative merely or dispensational but of effectual grace, like "one body and one Spirit" with which it is bound up. "One baptism" attaches to "one Lord" and "one faith" too, which belong to the sphere of profession, and might fail of effect in one way or another. "One God and Father of all" is wider than either, but expresses that closest intimacy in the case of all Christians -- "in us all."

Holiness, we all agree, as divine life goes with the word, is so imperative that without it no one shall see the Lord; and the professing Christian who does not pursue it only deceives himself. It is false and misleading to let people fancy that they may be real saints, yet unholy. "Every one" that has the grace-given hope resting on Him purifies himself as He is pure; others that have not are self-deceived. Because of iniquities the wrath of God cometh upon the sons of disobedience; but believers are essentially sons of obedience, and His love rests on them. If one sin, it is a grievous inconsistency. But grace does not fail to awaken self-judgment through our blessed Advocate with the Father, and restoration ensues. Those who do the wicked works of the flesh, and abide impenitent and indifferent have no part or lot with Christ, shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and in no way share the portion of the saints in light.

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This article was written by William Kelly, the Plymouth Brethren Scholar. I share this article, not that I necessarily agree with everything Kelly shares, but to show that even in the 19th century, Kelly was combating a false teaching very similar to that which today is being spread by the likes of Hodges, Wilkin, Dillow, Faust, etc. It is the teaching that during the kingdom age, the body of Christ will radically be divided into two, with disobedient, non-persevering Christians being punished for a thousand years, where (they say) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a revival of the teaching of Robert Govett, a man mentioned by Kelly in the first paragraph. Others who teach this form of doctrine (and often they are partial rapturists) would be G.H.Lang, D.M. Panton, G.H.Pember and Witness Lee. --G.Zeller