

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

PREACHER VS. SCRIPTURE.

A student of the New Testament cannot but be struck by the variations therefrom in doctrine that are taught by many men who profess to be preachers of Christianity. The clergy of this class, represented in the various denominations, pretend to elucidate and maintain the teachings of the Scriptures, yet vary from the expressions of that word and endeavor to explain away statements of historical fact contained therein in a manner that is truly amazing to a thoughtful and observing person, and that would lead one to believe they had a much higher opinion of the credulity of their congregations than of their discrimination and intelligence, or than of their knowledge of the contents of the sacred record. An instance of this class of preaching in a line that is quite common is that of the Rev. J. S. David, of the San Francisco New Jerusalem church. Last Sunday evening he spoke on the Lord's second advent and the resurrection. Regarding the first division of the subject he said:

The second advent is not a descent of the personal Christ out of the visible sky to Jerusalem, to reign on a local and perishable throne. It is the Lord's descent out of the illimitable sky-depths of the spiritual universe and His entrance into the hearts and understandings of men, to reign there. The fashionable Pharisees of the church will not know of His presence, for He "cometh without observation" and "as a thief in the night."

The "illimitable sky-depths of the spiritual universe" is a rather unique way, to say the least, of describing the place into which Jesus ascended when He departed from His Apostles. Upon that occasion He was taken up from the earth, and the holy messengers declared that he had ascended "into heaven." The messengers further called the attention of the disciples to the fact that they had seen the Lord ascend and beheld that "the cloud received Him out of their sight." The promise was that he should "come in like manner" as they had seen Him go. There was nothing about the "illimitable sky depths of the spiritual universe" at that place, but among other earthly appearing things there was the actual, ordinary, temporal-looking cloud that hid the Lord from the disciples' view.

But the reverend gentleman's imaginative fallacy does not end here. He says the Lord's descent is His "entrance into the hearts and understandings of men." If that be true, and the statement of the angels be also true that His descent will be "in like manner" with His ascent, then His disappearance was going out from the "hearts and understandings of men," and not a mere departure from this terrestrial field of His labors to the celestial globe on which His Father dwelt. Yet the Apostles sustained no loss like such a going out would bring; on the contrary their hearts were still so full of the Christ whom they recognized as their Re-

deemer, and He was so deeply engrafted in their understandings that they hesitated not to lay down their lives for His sake. As the clergyman and the angels differ regarding the place where Jesus ascended from and where He will descend to, believers in the Bible must conclude that the heavenly beings spoke the truth.

Again: "It is not a descent of the personal Christ?" Who is it then? The angel said it would be "this same Jesus." Paul says it is the Christ who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" who should "appear the second time," and the other Apostles bear similar witness. Jesus Himself declared that He, the Son of man as He was wont to call Himself, "shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." The Prophets also assert that He shall stand "on the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." Thus the Scriptures proclaim that the second advent of the Lord is a personal descent of the Christ who was crucified, and that He should come to Jerusalem. But that is not the Lord which the Rev. David is looking for; he tells us that the being to whom he gives his worship and adoration proceeds on wholly different lines.

The preacher further says "the fashionable Pharisees of the church will not know of His presence, for He 'cometh without observation' and 'as a thief in the night.'" Now the Scriptures do not say that the second advent is without observation; the Lord said the kingdom "cometh not with observation," or "with outward show," and immediately goes on to say that His own second coming shall be so thoroughly with "observation" that it shall be "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth to the other part under heaven." He is to "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." The "Pharisees of the church" knew of His presence at His former visit, and were not pleased therewith; so at His next coming they will be thoroughly apprised of the fact, if not by the light that shall envelop the earth or the archangel's voice that shall wake the dead, at least by the "flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God," and probably will not enjoy it any more than did their prototypes of old. His coming will be as "a thief in the night," that "sudden destruction" shall come upon the wicked; and "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." So far as the second advent is concerned it is plain from the Scriptures that the Rev. Mr. David and all who figure out an exclusively spiritual and noiseless coming are as far from the truth as Satan is from salvation.

As the Lord has nowhere expressed an intention "to reign on a local and perishable throne," but is coming to exercise dominion "eternally," that part may be regarded as a figure of speech introduced merely for

effect. Regarding the other branch of his subject the reverend speaker said:

The resurrection that shall attend the second coming is the emerging or evolution of spiritual thought out of the illusion of matter.

Laying aside any question as to the absurdity of "the illusion of matter" in this connection, it may be said that, as Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection and that He brought that great law into operation on this earth, then if His resurrection was an "evolution of spiritual thought," so that of all others must be, for all must go the same way. As by the unvarying operations of universal law all men enter mortality, so they emerge from it in the resurrection by a uniform process which the Redeemer wrought out. The resurrection of Christ was a physical operation. His body was laid in the tomb, and when He arose the visitors to the sepulchre beheld the vacant place and exclaimed, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." There was no "evolution of spiritual thought" about it. The Lord arose in the same body in which He had before been with the disciples, and on appearing to them said: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Those who deny the resurrection or seek to make it spiritual, that is, without the raising of the body of flesh and bones, not only antagonize the Scriptures but controvert a plain principle of philosophy. Resurrection means a raising or revival to life. By the death of Christ there was not a death of the spirit, for during the time His body was in the tomb He went and "preached to the spirits in prison." It was the physical body that was affected by death; the flesh and bones that were laid down. If this body was not revived, or raised to life, then there could not have been a resurrection of any kind. This is the teaching of science, of common sense, of Scripture.

The proof is positive that such professed expounders of Bible truths as the reverend gentleman who has been quoted are proclaiming to the world a false theology and a false philosophy. It is no wonder that the condition of mankind is so far from purity and happiness, when their instruction has been so antagonistic to Christian truth.

WHERE THE CHURCH STANDS.

The position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among the religious denominations of the world has always been well defined. From the beginning the Lord told Joseph the Prophet that none of the existing churches was the true Church, but that if he would remain faithful, he should be instrumental in restoring the Gospel and build the Church anew, never to be overthrown but to remain as the foundation of the Millennial kingdom. In accordance with this revelation the Saints claim that the primitive churches were overthrown, that the true Gospel was not known for centuries and that it has again been proclaimed in this age by inspired Prophets of God.

To these statements substantially but