

of sin must occur before the Day of Christ. <sup>?</sup> Some commentators say that Paul simply is inconsistent. George Milligan speaks of "the want of system which characterizes so much of his (Paul's) eschatology both here and elsewhere" and quotes from the German professor Deissman: "One must be prepared for a surging hither and thither of great thoughts, feelings, expectations." But for the believing Christian the problem cannot simply be pushed aside with a remark that Paul is inconsistent. We do not expect inconsistency in a great apostle, writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

So we must examine the passage more carefully and see if we can discover what Paul really meant. First, we notice that he did not say that these events must precede the rapture of the church and its meeting with Christ, but simply that they must precede the day of Christ. What does he mean by "the day of Christ"? Possible the phrase refers to something which begins, not when the believers meet the Lord in the air, but when the Lord and the believers return together to this earth. From any viewpoint this latter event must be later than the former, since I Thess. 4:17 clearly states that it is in the air and not upon this earth, that the church meets the Lord.

Paul, then, tells the Thessalonians not to be troubled by the idea that the day of Christ has already come. Before that day comes, two events will occur: first, there will be "the falling away"; then the man of sin will be revealed. As the English version stands this flatly contradicts the teaching of many other N. T. passages, including one by Paul himself, and in addition, it gives as a clear sign, something which might be said already to have occurred when the Christian era was hardly more than well started. How would one know which apostasy was really the apostasy referred to? After all, no apostasy has been mentioned at all in the Thessalonian epistles up to this point.

The problem of II Thess. 2 was one which baffled me, until quite recently. I did not believe that Paul here contradicted the rest of the New Testament, but I was quite uncertain how to deal with it. Recently a letter came to me