

“PROVE ALL THINGS :”

An Answer

TO THE

“PROOFS OF THE SECOND COMING

OF

MESSIAH,

AT THE PASSOVER, (MARCH 31,) 1848.”

AND ALSO TO

“THE MIGHTY ANGELS MIDNIGHT ROAR,

TO BE HEARD UNIVERSALLY

ON THE NIGHT OF THE 31st OF MARCH, 1847.”

BY W. H. DORMAN.

READING :—

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AN ANSWER, &c.



If men would be contented to be the humble expositors of the prophecies of Scripture, the torch of truth might be lifted up; souls might be awakened and directed, and the cause of error find no advantage. But when they will turn prophets themselves they become a stumbling-block to the unwary, truth is not their object, and Satan is their master instead of Christ.

If it were the avowed aim to strengthen the natural infidelity of the human mind, and to bring the entire subject of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into contempt, it does not appear that a more effectual course could have been chosen than that which has been pursued, for the last few years, in Reading and elsewhere, by persons styling themselves "Adventists."

I do them no wrong when I say that the Adventists who have been known in this Town, whatever exceptions there may be amongst them in America or elsewhere, have been quite as much distinguished by their doctrinal errors, as by their unfounded calculations, and dogmatic assertions, about the period of our Lord's return.

The immortality of the soul, and the future eternal punishment of the wicked have been treated by them as exploded errors, and called "the strong delusion;" the efficacy of the blood of Christ, as "cleansing us from all sin," has been set aside for "baptism for the remission of sins," to be received at their hands: and the personality of the Holy Ghost, without whose teaching, the Scriptures declare a man cannot know the things of God, has been by them most plainly denied.

I mention these things at the first, in order to show that their assertions about the time of Christ's blessed coming (if ever so true) must be looked at with suspicion when found in such company; and, if proved to be unfounded, ought to

be retired from as something worse than mere speculations, and designed by the enemy for the perversion of souls.

Men's minds, for the most part, are sufficiently opposed to the truths of the gospel without being fenced against them by the introduction of positive error ; and the " scoffers of the last days," are sufficiently ready to say, " where is the promise of his coming," without the falsified dates of Miller in America, and his followers in England, to give a keener edge to their unbelieving question.

Nothing, I repeat it, is more calculated to produce an entire scepticism upon the whole subject of the Second Coming of Christ than these falsified dates, which men, in the folly of their minds, have fixed—and of which the two books I am answering are a current example.

It is unnecessary to enquire whether they are written by Adventists or not, since by their adoption and circulation of them, in this Town, at least, they have made them their own. It is enough to say of them here, that the purpose of one is to show, that the day of mercy closes on the night of the 31st of March, 1847 ; and of the other that, after " a year of vengeance," the Messiah will come on the night of the 31st of March, 1848.

Now the 31st of March is nigh at hand :—but I do not wait for the passing by of the time, in order to find a warrant for declaring it to be a *false prediction*, and unfounded in the word of God. Sad would be my heart, poor sinner as I am, if I could not, through the infinite grace of God, welcome the appearing of my blessed Lord, even before that time ; and all God's children have reason to rejoice that he has said, " surely, I come quickly." So that it is no part of my purpose, in writing this, to set aside the " pre-millennial advent," or the coming of the Lord Jesus before the Millennium ; nor even to say that he will not speedily come.

My object is to show that the fixing of the date of Christ's coming is no part of Scripture testimony ; and that it is a very evil thing to make the faulty and unfounded calculations of men of equal importance with the word of God. For though such things may rouse the fears of people, be-

fore the time, they are made much more careless by them afterwards; and are led by them to treat the true and solemn warnings of God's word with the same indifference as the false alarms of these men.

But there is another evil which distinguishes these speculations; which is the putting the *belief in the doctrine of the Second Advent*, in a great degree, in the place of *faith in the blood of Jesus Christ*, which is the only foundation of a sinner's salvation.

The object appears to be to get men, at any rate, to believe in the Coming of Christ, as if that were the truth to save their souls, instead of (as the Scriptures presents it) to bring the hope of glory into the hearts of those that are already "saved by grace."

In support of this, they allege such Scriptures as this, "We are saved by hope," where the subject is not the salvation of the soul, through grace, but the bringing in of the future glory. And also Heb. ix. 28. "to them that *look for him* shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation;" separating the latter part of the verse from the former, where it is said, "*Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many*, and to them that look for him," &c. And it is only those who believe in Christ, as "once offered to bear their sins," that can look for him with any other feelings than those of terror. An unrenewed man can no more be saved by believing, as a doctrine, that Christ is speedily coming, than he can be saved by trusting to the Virgin Mary, or by resting in his own good works.

Hence it is that in these books there is the absence of any reference to the "*grace of God which bringeth SALVATION*;" and also of any expressed anxiety that poor Christless, perishing, souls should betake themselves to a crucified Saviour, as Noah entered into the Ark, and thus be delivered from the judgments that are coming upon the earth.

But what are the grounds on which these men so peremptorily and so awfully declare that the day of mercy closes on the 31st of March, 1847; and that the day of vengeance continues from that period until the appearing of Christ on

the 31st of March, 1848 ; though they have no faith in their own predictions, and though the argument for watchfulness in Scripture is drawn entirely from the uncertainty as to the time. " 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." And again, as to the world, " the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night"—suddenly—unlooked for—at an hour when least expected !

I assert, that Scripture nowhere reveals the time of Christ's coming ; and that there is no subsequent revelation to set aside the declaration of our Lord Jesus Christ, " Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of heaven." " It is not for you *to know* the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." *

On what then do the confident assertions of these men rest ? Simply and alone on an unwarranted and unsustainable calculation ; and *not* on the word of God at all !

It will not be needful to go through many pages of this book in order to show the fallacy of these dates and chronology. For, as it generally occurs, in men's theories, (however complicated and elaborate) that they rest upon a very slender basis ; so, in this book, every statement of the author, and every calculation that he makes, is built upon one single point.

The whole ground on which his assertions rest is the assumption that the Book of Daniel is identical with the " little book " in the Fifth of Revelations.

* I quote this passage *again* notwithstanding the words of this writer, who says, " We well know that all who do not wish the event to happen in their day eagerly sieze the passage in Acts i. to console them (themselves ?) with the hope that their earthly enjoyments will not be disturbed by such an event." And then adds, as an explanation of the words, " ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be witnesses unto me," &c.—" That is, the power which the Father now reserveth to himself in respect to this matter, *you shall have* after the day of Pentecost, and so it was ! "

But he forgets that it is not the same word in the two passages ! The one is, " which the Father hath put in his own (*exousia*) Authority"—and the other is, " but ye shall receive (*dunamin*) Ability." Not " authority" about the times and seasons, but " *ability*" to witness for Christ," which was their commission : and ours too, if we have a heart for this blessed work.

Take this point away, and the whole theory miserably falls to pieces. Many other perversions of Scripture occur, which I may notice by the way, to guard the unwary ; but all that is necessary in the way of argument is connected with this single point.

The words of this writer are these, quoting from Rev. v. 9. "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof ; for thou wast slain," &c. he adds, "that the little book* here spoken of is the book of Daniel, is indisputable from the circumstance that this book is the only one "written within and without, and sealed with seven seals ;" no other book being sealed at all."

But where is it stated in Scripture that the book of Daniel was "written within and without"—and that it was "sealed with seven seals ?" I find no such statement in Scripture. But if it were so, it would not help the author in the least when he says the loosing of the seals enabled men to read the *inside* of the book of Daniel as well as the *outside*, which they could alone read before. He forgets that a parchment *roll* written on both sides, and sealed up, could no more be read on the *outside* than the *inside* (except in the last fold) until the seals were broke ! Which makes the *reason* of the sealing and the unsealing as worthless as the *proof* of the fact. But how could it be said of the book of Daniel, which had been in the hands of the Jews for many ages—that it was "in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne ?" And that "no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to *look* thereon," when the Jews had been looking at it for centuries ?

But what are the consequences into which this assumption of the identity of the book of Daniel, and the book of Rev. v. drives this author ?

* He first confounds "the *sealed* book" in the hand of Him who sat upon the throne which the Lord Jesus alone, as the Lamb slain could take, with "the *little, open* book" in the hand of the Angel which John was called to take and eat up," in Rev. x. And then afterwards confounds the book whose seals John tells us in the fifth chapter of Rev. he saw loosed, with the book of Rev. itself ; which he says is identical with the book of Daniel. But there is no end to the mistakes and confusion of this Author in his pretended reference to Scripture.

Why, first of all, the necessity of destroying *the order* of events presented in the ix. of Daniel and the 24th verse, and violently substituting an order of his own. The words of Daniel are these; "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."

At whatever period, or by whatever events, this passage may be explained as receiving its fulfilment, one thing is certain, that no man has a right to *break up* and *reverse* the order of its declarations to make it fit his theories. *God's word* demands a more submissive and reverential treatment, from those who study it, than this. But this author, in explaining the passage in question, makes the very *last* statement in the verse to be accomplished before the *first*; and introduces other arbitrary changes, (as also in verse 26,) without the slightest warrant, beyond making it square with his assumption.

For example, he makes "the anointing of the Most Holy," explained by him as referring to the anointing of Christ after his baptism by John, to be accomplished *before* "finishing the transgression;" which he makes to be the Jews filling up the measure of their iniquity by the crucifixion of the Lord. And further, he makes the "sealing up the vision and prophecy" to follow the "anointing of the Most Holy," though in the order, it is spoken of as before. If, however, the writer had understood the meaning of the passage, he could not have changed its order; nor would he have confounded the anointing the Most Holy, with the anointing of our Lord. For in truth the passage has nothing to do with that, but points to a future anointing of "the Holy of Holies;" a title exclusively applied to the arrangements of the tabernacle and temple, or typically to heaven itself. And surely it is a strange explanation of the words, "to *seal up* the vision and prophecy," to say it means "*unfolding* the vision and pro-

phesy," and that it was accomplished by the loosing of the seals mentioned in the Apocalypse.

But I must notice some other consequences resulting from this theory, before taking up the fallacy of its dates.

It has been necessary to make an extraordinary and most unfounded change in the date of the book of the Revelations; and to assert that it was the *first* written book of the New Testament instead of the *last*. Assuming it to have been given (without the least proof) just *four* years after the Lord's ascension, instead of (as is generally believed) about *sixty-three* or *sixty-four*! And if any one ask why this change in the received chronology of the books of Scripture is made, the only answer to be given is, that it is necessary to make *these "PROOFS,"* and to establish this theory.

But this is not all: Paul's "visions and revelations,"* which he tells us he was caught up into the third heavens to receive (if we are to believe this writer) were John's Revelations, which he had in "the isle that is called Patmos." And the person he means, when he says, "of such an one will I glory," is the apostle John; though of himself he would not glory. But how does this agree with what the Apostle says in Gal. i. 11, 12. "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation of Jesus Christ.*" And again, "they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrariwise." How could Paul say this about "Peter, James and John," when fourteen years before, he had received from John (I suppose, through Peter or James, for he did not see John then) those visions and revelations, which were so abundant, that this man of God required to be buffeted by a messenger of Satan to keep him from being exalted above measure by them?

But even this is not all. In order to establish the date fixed for the giving of the Revelations it is necessary to declare that the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia, were not written to these Churches at all, but are "parables;"

* II Cor. xii. 1-10.

and that the churches are but *allegorical Churches*, and not existent when the Apocalypse was given! For it is plain they were not planted then.

But why is this? Just in order to make out the dates of this writer; who, for a special purpose, has been pleased to say that the book of Revelations is identical with the book of Daniel; and that the "*loosing the seals*" in Revelations is the "*sealing up of the vision and prophecy*" in Daniel. And that the Revelations therefore must have been given the fourth year after the ascension, instead of the sixty-fourth:—or else—his calculations about the 70 weeks and the 2300 days would not come right!

But thus it is, when a theory is to be established, instead of God's order to be learned, men will run headlong in their folly, and would evert, in their blind zeal, the very foundations of God's truth.

It would, I believe, be wrong to attempt a serious refutation of these things. The mere statement of them will be their best refutation in every serious Christian's mind. Though one is grieved to think how many there are, who do not read the Scriptures with sufficient intelligence to see, that the wildest errors may be maintained by bringing detached texts of Scripture together, without regard to their connexion and meaning in the mind of God's Spirit.

It remains now to examine the prophetic dates, on which this prediction of the time of our Lord's coming is founded. I notice first, the period of "2300 days," mentioned in Daniel viii. 14, which this author says are "*solar years*," and commenced in the year 453 before Christ, and find their close in the year 1848.

I mention then, first of all, that, if it be granted, a day stands for a year, in some prophecies of Scripture, the principle fails here. For first the term "day" does not occur in the passage, but simply, "evening and morning," as in the first of Genesis; marking it to be the revolution of a natural day. Next, the date of the commencement of this period is certainly not connected with "the zenith of the Persian power," or "the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward," but with the "taking away of the daily sacrifice,"

and "the treading down of the sanctuary;" (which the verse itself shows,) and these are the actings of "the fourth beast," or the Roman power, and not of the "second beast," or the Persian power. This, therefore, destroys the calculation.

Thirdly, there is a mistake in the time of the 70 weeks of Daniel ix. 26, 27, from which the author deduces the commencement of his 2300 days. For plainly there are only 69 weeks "to the cutting off of Messiah,"* while the following week is altogether connected with "the Prince that shall come and shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." It is ~~the~~ Prince that "shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," (expressed in chap. viii. by "taking away the daily sacrifice") and shall set up "the abomination of desolation," or plant "upon the battlements the idols of the desolator." In a word, between the cutting off of Messiah at the end of 69 weeks, "desolations are determined" on Jerusalem, until the close of this dispensation; when Antichrist, (as "one coming in his own name," and received by the Jews,) connects the thread of their national history with their last act in cutting off Messiah, and brings down the period to the "sealing up (or completion) of the vision and the prophecy, and the anointing of the Holy of Holies."

But further, as to the point of "*solar years*," it will be seen that there is a mistake. For "the time, and times, and the dividing of time" of Daniel vii. 25, or three years and a half, are taken up in Rev. xi. and xii. and are explained as being "forty and two months," "and one thousand two hundred and threescore days." Now this first of all takes away the famous period of 1260 years of "the little horn;" and in the next place destroys the principle of calculating by "*solar years*." For it is plain that there are only 360 days in a year, according to Scripture reckoning, instead of 365 in our solar year. And this again destroys the calculation, whether a day is used to signify a year or not.

* Which are 483 years, instead of 490, and this would make his calculation wrong by seven years:—even if it were otherwise correct.

But lastly, upon the *time*, and especially upon the period of 2300 days of Daniel viii. 14. I transcribe the following note :—

“ Dr. Wolff, in the narrative of his recent mission to Bokhara in the years 1843—1845, says, Vol. ii. p. 2. The Jews in Bokhara have in the synagogue “ an ancient manuscript of Daniel, and in Chap. viii. is the number two thousand *four* hundred, instead of two thousand three hundred.” Again p. 240, he says of the Armenian Convent of Ulsh-Kelesia, “ In that convent I found an ancient manuscript of the Bible in the Armenian tongue : and my friend J. H. FERRÉ will be glad to learn that on his account I looked particularly at Daniel viii. 14, in which the number 2400 is found. Thus the Hebrew manuscripts at Bokhara, at Adrianople, and at Ulsh-Kelesia, confirm this hypothesis.

To these manuscripts are to be added a second mentioned by Dr. Wolff, as found by him at Bokhara, one in Chaldea, one at Meshed, and another (mentioned in his letter of 14th May, 1835, as esteemed to be of the fifth century) found by him at Ispahan, “ seven copies in the whole, containing the same reading of “ 2400.”

On the falseness and folly of these calculations, I think I may be spared the weariness of adding any more. Enough has been presented to enable others to judge of the credit that belongs to such perversions of the blessed word of God. In truth there is in the act of exposing error, so little that is congenial to a simple christian’s mind, that he might well refuse to have to do with it on any ground but for the care of souls.

I had purposed noticing many other perversions of Scripture and false statements, but I only mention one or two as examples ; such as confounding “ the manchild ” in the Revelations, whom “ the Dragon stood ready to devour ; ” and who was “ caught up to God and to his throne,” with “ the man of sin,” in Thessalonians, “ whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming ! ” The declaration that the parable of the “ ten virgins ” is *not a parable* ; but simple

history : the statement that “ the flood was upon the earth exactly *one year* :” which is not true ; as a simple reference to the seventh and eighth of Genesis will prove :—that “ the plagues of Egypt were of precisely the same duration !” which is said entirely without proof :—and lastly, the following remarks on the passage, “ it is the *day* of the Lord’s vengeance, *and* the *year* of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.” “ The copulative conjunction, “ and,” employed in this passage determines the *day* and the *year* to be one and the same.” Unhappily, in the passage, the copulative conjunction does not exist, as indicated by being printed in italics. I might have passed over these things, and many others of a like kind, but as they are connected with the blessed word of God, I am reminded of Luther’s principle, “ we ought not to suffer men to treat the Scriptures, as a sow does a sack of oats.”

I do not enter into a great deal, in these books, about the progress and actings of Popery ; and the application of prophecy to the scenes of the French revolution, and the career of Napoleon ; because I do not regard it as the *interpretation* of prophecy, but the mere accommodation of the words of Scripture to events which have great importance in the judgment of man, but which do not figure so largely in the blessed revelations of God.

The mischief of such a system is especially manifest in the temptation it brings to *invent* or to *fancy* facts, in order to fit one’s theory : and thus both Scripture and history are falsified. An instance of this occurs in this author’s *imaginative* “ liberty of conscience,” as extended through the various countries of the Continent of Europe ; not excepting even the Papal states. All who know any thing of the religious state of these countries know too well the contrast they present to the happy toleration enjoyed by christians, in the worship of God, and the preaching of the Gospel in Great Britain.

I think it right, however, to give the passage. “ In 1802, Napoleon, as already noticed, restored the accursed thing (Popery,) without, however, diminishing, in the slight-

est degree, the full liberty of conscience which the republicans had acknowledged, and caused to be respected. From this period liberty of conscience was extended, in a greater or less degree, in all countries, even in the papal dominions; so that "they of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Christians, and are not, but do lie," are compelled to acknowledge a natural right, or, in other words, to "come and worship before the feet of the church of Christ, and to know that he has loved them." In a national point of view, the granting of liberty of conscience, is an act of "brotherly love;" it is loving our neighbour as ourselves—doing as we would be done by. The door thus opened, will never be shut again. All the powers of the cesspool of impurity can never effect this; though they would if they could. The school-master has mastered the devil of this cesspool and all his legion, whether they spring from Oxford, Cambridge, or Maynooth, or from any of the other "dark places of the earth;" and now, through the progress of intelligence, they have, from their past deeds, every where become "a taunt, and a hissing, and a reproach." The doctrine of "equal rights to all," now forms part of the creed of all countries, and he that preaches the opposite is regarded as a monster.

There is one other thing which I must point out as characterising these books, and every other publication of the "Millerites," or "Adventists;" and which renders them quite unworthy of the attention of Christians, as expositions of the prophetic word.

It is the disregard which is manifested towards the peculiarities which, in scripture, distinguish God's dispensational dealings. But no one can, by possibility, "rightly divide the word of truth," who overlooks that division which is made by God's spirit of "Jews and Gentiles and the Church of God;"* for it is about these three divisions that the Scriptures especially treat: and it may be affirmed, that they are never confounded in the word of God.

The overlooking of this principle has necessitated, as a

* I Cor. x. 32.

consequence, the denial of Israel's restoration and glory, in the coming dispensation, "beloved for the Father's sakes."—As also the distinctive character and time of "the first and second resurrection;" and also the personal millennial reign of Christ with his saints on earth, when Satan is bound for a thousand years, and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." Thus the peculiar "heavenly calling" of the Church is lost; and the various glories of Christ, as the "Messiah" of Israel, and "the second Adam," and "the head of his body the Church," are annihilated; and in their place we get a laboured attempt to prove that all Christians are Jews—that the millennium means eternity; and that the restoration of Israel is the resurrection of the righteous. Thus even the measure of truth that is presented, in directing the thoughts of men to the second coming of Christ, is neutralized, by its association with unscriptural error.

But let not any one suppose that in seeking to disprove the unfounded assertions of men, my object is to set at a distance "that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." My full belief is, that Scripture declares, Christ will come again before the millennium, to take away his Church—both the living and the sleeping saints; and that he will be manifested in judgment—especially upon the living nations of Christendom, who have had the Gospel, and have rejected it; and also upon the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation: while on a remnant he will "pour out the spirit of grace and supplications" and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced and shall mourn; and through these, as converted to God, a testimony will go forth to those other nations of the earth—"who have not heard his fame nor seen his glory."

So that I am not thrown upon the difficulty of intervening events, before I am at liberty to expect my Lord's return. Certainly, the Corinthians, who "came behind in no gift," and who were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," were not looking onward until after the accomplishment of the prophetic dates of Daniel!—

Nor were the Thessalonians indebted to the calculations of men, to "turn them to God from idols; to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven."

It is the word of Christ—and not man's calculations—that calls his disciples to "let their loins be girded about, and their lights burning: and themselves like unto men that wait for their Lord!" And the very uncertainty of the time of his return is the divine argument for our being always ready.

Finally, it may be that many into whose hands these books have fallen, or who have heard of their purport, as expressed in the title-page, have had their fears awakened at the possibility of such an event, as the Lord's coming being so near at hand. I would be far from saying that these fears are groundless. Surely, the Coming of Christ to a soul that has "neglected his great salvation," can only be a subject of terror! But it is an event which the calculations of men cannot hasten, nor the fears of the unprepared hinder—while the very words of Christ indicate the surprise with which it will overtake thousands; "behold, I come as a thief!" And "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh!"

I cannot but think, if these men had believed their own prediction, that in a few days the door of mercy is to be shut for ever, we should have found some appeals of tenderness and pity to poor unconverted souls about their desperate condition—instead of an unfeeling gibe about their being made April fools! *

But there is nothing of *grace*; nothing of the tender heart of Jesus, in either pamphlet; nothing that would indicate them to be the work of men who had *faith* in their own assertions; much less of men under the guidance of God's spirit. I am not called to judge their state: "the Lord knoweth them that are his:" but a hard spirit, in speaking of the glory of Christ, and of the world's coming judgment is most painful to a godly mind.

* See Advertisement in p. 8 of "Midnight Roar."