

**AN APOLOGY FOR
MILLENNIAL
DOCTRINE, PP. 3-47**

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An Apology for Millennial Doctrine, pp. 3-47 by William Anderson

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PREREQUISITES FOR THIS STUDY: SOURCE, NATURE, AND DEGREE OF THE EVIDENCE: OVERTHROW OF ANTICHRISTIAN KINGDOMS: AND ELEVATION OF THE CHURCH TO UNIVERSAL, AND PERPETUAL EXTERNAL POWER.

In a preceding department of this Apology I have vindicated the doctrine of the primitive church, on the subject of the Millennial Reign, from those objections of alleged *previous improbability*, which prevent an equitable treatment of the scriptural evidence. In no cause is the removal of such prejudices more necessary than in this, nor more profitable when effected.

In order, however, to a clear perception and full appreciation of the evidence, not only must the mind be dispossessed of prejudices which render it hostile to the truth; it is additionally requisite, that it be positively occupied with principles which generate a disposition in its favour. This maxim our Lord has stated, in reference to the reception of his religion in general, in these noticeable words, "if any man *willeth* [or *is willing*] to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—I shall, therefore, previously state and illustrate a few principles with which the mind must be thus pre-occupied, in order to perceive the justness of our conclusions;—principles not entirely peculiar to a millenarian spirit indeed, although characteristic of it in a superior degree.

1. The first is nothing more than the rudimental principle of all religion, the belief that this world is the property of

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God, and that he beholds with indignation, the conduct of all who defile and abuse it. Now, an acknowledgment of this, comparatively slight, will serve the purpose of the common faith, when it is only many hundreds or thousands of years hence, that he is imagined as interfering for judgment. A God "far off" may suffice for such views, but our system demands, at every point, the belief of a God "near at hand."—We proclaim the gate of Heaven already thrown open, and the Almighty coming out of his place to do a marvellous work among the children of men; that not long shall matters be permitted to proceed as they do at present; that the world is on the eve of being revolutionized to its centre; and so near, that some, if not many of the generation now living may survive to feel the shock of this earth, when smitten by the sceptre of God.* It is obvious—many must feel it—that for the belief of all this, there is requisite a much stronger conviction of the presiding government of the Most High than is common in the professedly religious community; the great multitude so thinking of Him, as if he concerned himself but little, if at all, about the methods of governments and trade, about the spirit of literature, or the tone of manners, but left all these things to statesmen and merchants, and men of learning and fashion, to dispose of them as they please,—observing men only in their individual capacities, and having no purpose to reckon with them, till, what they call, the end of time, when the world shall have in a manner died of itself through exhaustion and old age,—without coming down in the midst of its career, to confound its institutions of crime, and sweep their apostate and rebellious upholders away in his wrath, and make all the administration of the earth his own.—Among such circumscribers of the Sovereignty of God, if circumscribe it they could, there is no hope of our cause succeeding. There is not *that* in them of a reverence for Jehovah's Godhead to which we can appeal in our exposition of his word; and they must be delivered over to learn the truth in that great day, when the bursting forth of the gathered storm of his vengeance shall teach it them experimentally.—But with us men who do verily believe, that the Creator is interested in the world, as his own world,—interested in the whole of its management,

* "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return until he have done, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: IN THE LAST DAYS YE SHALL CONSIDER IT." "For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now, therefore, ye ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. For I have heard of the Lord God of Hosts a consumption, even determined on the whole earth." Jer. xxx. and Isaiah xxviii.

that he may have out of it his lawful revenue of glory; who believe, that because of sin he once deluged it above the mountains; and who treat it as no fabulous tradition, but as sound and authentic history, that he rained down a torrent of sulphurous fire on Sodom and Gomorrah;—with those inquirers who devoutly believe, that the Eternal is nationally an avenger of national wickedness, ever rebuking it in his anger as it again gathers strength, we shall not despair of proselytes, so far as the approach of desolating judgments forms a part of our system. We shall refer them to abominations,—to blasphemy, oppression, and licentiousness,—as impious, cruel, impure, and abounding—perpetrated and poured forth in a torrent by the nations of Europe, as can ever have been those, either of the Antediluvians, or of the inhabitants of the cities of the Plain, and deeply aggravated through defiance of the light of the Gospel. And then we shall appeal to them, If they suppose that the Lord is less concerned about his glory than he was in times of old; that he has relaxed in his holiness; and that his miracles of judgment are exhausted? Or, if it appear to them, that, after all the time during which Satan has had the Princeship, it would be *too soon* for God to arise, and scatter the rebellion of evil-doers?—In this manner we shall have them prepared for an honest treatment of the divine oracles, without any sceptical poetizing, and evaporating into smoke of their proclamation; or erroneous and self-contradictory dating of its fulfilment, when the earth stands threatened with unutterable woe, speedily to be inflicted.*

2. The second principle requisite for an appreciation of millenarian exposition, is, an enlarged view of the Redeemer's purchase and work.—It is consolatory to find that there are now so many, who believe that Christ was substituted and died in the room of the whole of the human race, in such a manner, that the church, as the depositary of the proclamation of mercy, is bound to go forth, and, in the name of her Lord, offer for acceptance the Redemption of our Faith to all without exception. But it is not this species of the extent of the

* Wherever there is a threatening of calamity in the prophetic oracles, there are many, saying, Peace, Peace, when yet the fact is, that all is war and its rumours, who would either mollify it into a promise of the destruction of Antichristian principles merely; or, who so misapply the chronology, that, according to their reckoning, there are three or four thousand years, for which there is no note of warning in the revelation of God's purposes, concerning judgments to be inflicted on the nations, though partly the period of their most violent iniquity. First, by antedating the fulfilment, they cast the greater part back on the Babylonish captivity, the tyranny of Antiochus, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the wars of Constantine; And then, by post-dating, they remove the remaining part forward to, what they call, the end of the earth. So that, from Constantine's time, to the final judgment, prophecy is clear of a threat, and the wicked rejoice in security.

object of his death and work to which I at present refer. The views of many, so far as this point is concerned, are full and scriptural, while yet they have no capacity for receiving millennial doctrine, through limited views of the *various particulars* of the object of his redemption, and in consequence of not reckoning, that this redemption is commensurate with the curse of the Fall, and will take universal effect, except where the obstinate unbelief of men renders their personal salvation, as accountable beings, a moral impossibility.—The system demands, (and no one need attempt to learn it who does not willingly concede the point,) that the blood of Christ be reckoned not only as justly sufficient, but designed, for the purchase of this earth, and all that it contains; that appointed to the office of destroying the work of the Devil, he must meet him with restoration in every particular of destruction; that as the Second Adam he has secured the right to the Patriarchal rule of all the inhabitants of this globe, yea, even to the proprietorship of its soil, its plants, and irrational tribes;* that he holds the title of all in his hand, signeted by the seal of God, and that he shall come to put his right into such sovereign execution, that, in looking back from eternity on the history of this world, there shall be nothing discernible of which it can be said, that the Son of Man possessed it not.—To enlarge on this interesting subject at present, would be an improper anticipation of our argument. I have said enough for explaining how it is that larger views than are common, respecting the extent of the Redeemer's purchase, are requisite for this study.

3. In like manner it demands more enlarged views of the Agency of the Holy Ghost.—Besides inculcating all that the system of our opponents embraces respecting operations on the soul of man, ours comprehends much of material restitution and transformation.—'Now,' say many, as if it were a sufficient objection to our views, 'the millennium shall be specially a dispensation of the Spirit;' and they quote, with an emphasis of conclusive argument, such Scriptures as this, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Those who make such objections have need to be taught the very rudiments of theology,—the difference between a work of the Spirit of God, and a work on the spirit of man. Know they not that the Holy Ghost works in various ways, being ever attendant on the Father and Son, as the Executor of their purposes, whatever these purposes may be? And, accordingly, have they not read that it was the Spirit who performed the material work of agitating into life the dead elements of

* Compare Psalm viii., with Hebrews chap. ii.

the chaos; of garnishing the Heavens; of incarnating our Lord; of curing the deaf, the dumb, the halt, and the blind; of magnifying the loaves and fishes for the hungry; and of raising Lazarus, yea, our Lord himself, from the grave? Do they expect their own Resurrection to be effected by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? Or do they expect a resurrection of the body at all? I ask not this in the way of taunt, but in sober earnest. The pharisees were not more unbelieving in carnalizing all, than are many at the present day in spiritualizing all; and we had need be zealous in declaring for God, that he is Lord of matter as well as of mind.

4. The nobility of the Christian church, is the fourth circumstance which I notice, as necessarily to be well appreciated by those who would study this system successfully.—Our prospect is, that this church, from her present state of contempt and depression, shall yet rise ascendant over every institution of man, to wield, under the guidance of her Lord, the sceptre of universal empire.—Now, it is obvious, that there are few who have formed such an estimate of her excellence as to perceive any fitness and propriety in her being thus exalted. I need not here insist on the views which kings and nobles, and merchants and philosophers, take of that spiritual establishment of faith, and prayer, and contrition of heart, the majority of whose members are reared in cottage obscurity, and disciplined in conventicles,—amid poverty, and in ignorance of all but the politics, the science, and the poetry of the Bible;—the most piteous and painful circumstance in the whole of the matter, is, that many of these poor ones themselves apparently allow, that the great, the wealthy, and the learned, are warranted to undervalue them. They somewhat feel, that, being low-born and poor, the church of Christ is enough for them; whereas, were they rich, and of elevated birth, and versed in human learning, a place might be needed for them in the courts of kings, and in the legislature of nations;—so they go a-wondering after the great ones of this earth, and are abashed in their presence.—It is impossible that such persons as these can enter into our millenarian hopes, or even refrain from condemning us for our presumption. But, with men of discernment, who can look through the veil of humiliation which is at present cast over the Christian, and perceive what he truly is in grandeur and consequence; that however vulgar, poor, and illiterate he be, in the estimation of a carnal and infidel world, he is yet of royal birth,—a prince in disguise, a brother of Christ, a son and an heir of God; and that placed by the side of an irreligious man, howsoever high in rank or famed for learning, he is incomparably the more noble of the two,

and the more worthy to be sought after for the honour and profit of his acquaintance:—With men of devotional contemplation, we have lively hopes of the success of our instructions, who having first raised their eyes to admire and adore the majesty of the Redeemer as King of kings, will then survey the church in the character of his Bride. How noble must she be, to whom the Son of God is related as a Bridegroom! Her prerogatives are in truth divine. Who that discerns this in the church shall wonder at our description of the magnificence of her prospects, that we should sing of her the Lord shall come, and, to the confusion of all her scorners, acknowledge her his Own, and exalt her and magnify her above every human institution?—above all their schools, and colleges, and parliaments, and royal families, and place her by his side on his throne as his well beloved Queen whom he delighteth to honour. Bethink yourself, reader, and try yourself by this test. A consciousness of nobility is characteristic of the discipleship of Christ. Look with pity on an ungodly man, howsoever eminent he may otherwise be for station, learning, and wealth. There is a mystery of greatness in God, and there is also a mystery in the Saint whom he has redeemed.

5. I observe in the fifth place, that a conviction of God's having a peculiar favour for the Hebrew nation, is a necessary principle for pursuing millenarian study with success. There are many who associate nothing with the name of a Jew but avarice and knavery. And there are others who take credit to themselves for being exceedingly liberal, when they grant him toleration, to be spiritually converted. From such persons we can expect no favour, but rather to be stigmatized and denounced, as guilty of carnal Judaizing. But with men who reflect what an object of divine favour Abraham must have been, when the Lord looking down from Heaven could descry on all the earth none faithful but himself:—with men who have thoroughly examined the terms of that covenant which was sworn to him concerning his offspring;—who have noted its renewal to Isaac, and its confirmation to Jacob;—who have traced its forthgoings in the redemption from Egypt, the recovery from Babylon, and their preservation till the present hour:—in a word, who have pondered the Apostolic doctrine, that "they are beloved for the Fathers' sakes"—with such men as these we doubt not we shall obtain credit, when we anticipate of Israel that he shall arise and break the strength of his persecutors, and that re-established in the land of his fathers, all their proud kingdoms shall be the tributaries of his national sceptre. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, even thy Re-

deemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: but thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off his neck, and will burst his bands, and *strangers shall no more serve themselves of him*, but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king whom I will raise up for them. He shall have dominion also, from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth: They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Seba and Sheba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things!¹³

6. The last principle, of which I take notice, as essential to a successful study of the millenarian scheme, is reverence of the Bible, as the inspired testimony of God.—There are many who are possessed of so much of this reverence for these scriptures as implicitly to bow to their authority, when they record the History of the past; but who are yet lamentably deficient of it, in the treatment of their Prediction of what shall be in future; and, hence, can tamper most unwarrantably with the majesty of their expressions and descriptions, in an endeavour to resolve all their mystery into matters which human sagacity might have calculated would eventually happen. It is not among the demi-infidels of Germany alone that the neologian spirit prevails; it is prevalent in the churches of Britain also;—the only difference being, that, when the former *naturalize* away the divine testimony respecting wonders done of old; the latter *spiritualize* it away respecting wonders yet to be performed. The test of a man's reverence for the Bible is, the treatment he gives its prophecies. He might rationally believe in a miracle already wrought, on testimony merely human, but, for dependence on what shall happen hereafter, he must have the testimony of God. Accordingly, I am persuaded that experience and observation will largely prove, that a study and reception of unfulfilled prophecy in its literal sense, has ever had the effect of increasing veneration for all Scripture; whereas the spiritualizing system has had the effect of undermining and diminishing that veneration athwart the whole of its contents. I must be allowed, at least, to declare my own experience. Whatever be the subject, the expressions, the