

**A CRITICAL AND
HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION OF THE
PROPHECIES OF DANIEL**

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BY

NATHANIEL S. FOLSOM.

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PREFACE.

THE following work contains not a commentary on the entire Book of Daniel, but an interpretation of the prophetic parts found in chapters ii, vii, viii, ix, xi, xii, with particular regard to those passages which are supposed by many to predict the personal advent of our Savior A. D. 1843. There are also prophecies in chapters iv, v, pertaining to the kings of Babylon alone, but they need no explanation. The narrative portions which occupy the remainder of the Book, require little or no aid to be readily understood; and what difficulties exist in them, will generally be found solved in those allusions to the narrative parts, which an interpretation of the prophetic has made necessary.

It may appear to some a foolish and to others an unnecessary matter, to notice what is technically called "Millerism;" for the time is at hand which will effectually test its truth or its falsehood. But surely no Christian, no serious man should look on with indifference, when any portion of the popular mind is agitated throughout, and swells and heaves tumultuously, to create what evil it may, and then die away as it may. The admonition given of old, "Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this work be of men, it will come to nought,"—is of value so far as the duty to refrain from acts of violence is concerned, but ill applies to the discussion of any truth, or the arrest of any evil. Not a few have adopted Mr. Miller's views who are sober-minded and discerning on every other subject, and many more are searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so, and they ask for light. They have not been accustomed to study the prophecies, and they see not why A. D.

1843 may not be the date as well as 1866, etc. which have been fixed on by others. They also feel that one great element of truth is in the doctrine of the second advent, as advocated by Mr. Miller—

"The Lord will come! but not the same
As once in lowly form he came,
A silent lamb to slaughter led,
The bruised, the suffering and the dead.

The Lord will come! a dreadful form
With wreath of flame, and robe of storm,
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Anointed Judge of human kind."

To this truth Mr. Miller owes the greater part of his success. Possibly also this element of truth has not received the attention in modern preaching it did in the primitive age, and it comes to the people now as something comparatively new to them. For *inquirers* on this subject, it will not be a thankless or useless task to have written.

Only small portions, however, of this work will be found devoted to the modern doctrines of the personal advent of our Lord, A. D. 1843. What is said, is said plainly, and he who runs may read that whatever else may be derived from Daniel, the doctrines above mentioned cannot. Whoever wishes to turn to those portions at once will find them chiefly on pages 29, 30, 42—44, 72, 73, 78—80, 84, 85, 140, 160, 161, 166, 167, 173, 212—215, 229. The general scope of the Interpretation will throw more light than any particular parts of it. But the prophecies of Daniel contain vastly more than can be interesting only to those who wish to see it satisfactorily shown that he does not predict the end of the world, A. D. 1843. The study of them makes it necessary to introduce much historical matter of great practical value and of the deepest interest. A higher end still, and one which it is the object of this Interpretation to promote more than any other, is the impression which

these prophecies make, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world—an impression which the writer has himself experienced more deeply than before, unless he is deceived, and which he would impart to others. Prophecy and miracle have not yet done all they were designed to do, and can do, in working with the teachings of our Lord and his apostles to produce a tranquil, firm faith, and a righteous life.

The order of study pursued has been from the more full, and expanded, and clear prophecies to the more brief, and comprehensive and difficult. It is obvious on a general perusal, and it is acknowledged by all who have studied these prophecies, that the general scope of each prophecy or vision is the same, or that they all tend to the same events. It would appear therefore most proper to investigate the latter prophecies first, and especially chap. xi. The prophecy next in clearness is chap. viii, and no one disputes that it is entirely parallel with chap. xi. Having studied and closely ascertained the meaning of these two chapters, the next in order is seen at once to be chap. vii, which is parallel with chap. viii, through the series of kingdoms as far as to the announcement of a new one to be set up by the God of heaven, which seems to be its own unfolding; and parallel entirely with chap. vii, is chap. ii, at least in its events, though different in description. From these the way is open to chaps. ix. and xii, which contain the remainder of the prophetic portions. The appearance of order in Commentary, beginning with the first of the book to be interpreted and proceeding through to the last, has been sacrificed to what has been judged to be at least in this instance the true and philosophical mode of investigation. The path by which the author has reached his results, is one by which he has chosen to lead others.

Those familiar with the history of Commentary, will see that the general current of interpretation, which designates the fourth kingdom as the Roman, has not been pursued. The author must refer for all his reasons to his book, and would only here say

that he could not find the Roman kingdom, except incidentally, in chap. xi, which is parallel with chap. viii, and with the first part of the prophecies in chapters ii, vii. But in his interpretation, though he came to it unaided by what others had said, he finds himself sustained by some who have written on the subject with much ability, as for instance in the *Christian Review*, March Number, for this present year. The continuance of the opinion that the fourth kingdom is the Roman, is humbly conceived to be the use it has served in the controversy of Protestants with Roman Catholics, and the influence of great names like Sir Isaac Newton, and perhaps the manner in which so good a man as Bishop Newton has spoken of those who have embraced the opposite opinion, as being only influenced by a "fondness of disputing about the plainest points," and as maintaining the "strange wild conceit of Grotius," or taking part with the infidel Porphyry. There is also the coincidence between the language of Daniel on the fourth kingdom, and of John on persecutions after Christ; which has seemed to identify them. But most certainly many events different in the New Testament from the Old, are yet described in the same language. And it is natural that great oppressors and persecutors, who must in so many general points resemble each other, should be described in nearly the same language. Great bad men are much alike, and hence so many very diverse applications of the prophecies. But the prophecies cannot describe all the great bad men in the world, all the persecutors of the saints. The *context* must guide to the particular individuals designated; and the context of Daniel by its specifications and dates, shows that he had *particular* individuals in view, and not a class. It is the aim of this Interpretation, scrupulously and faithfully to obey this guide.

It remains to make a few remarks on the Book of Daniel itself. The history of the holy man whose name it bears, is given

so fully in connexion with his prophecies, as to need no notice here. He uttered his first prophecy soon after he was introduced to the court of the king, and when he could not have been more than twenty-three or four years of age. His first vision was revealed to him forty-eight years after his first prophecy; his final vision, in the third year of Cyrus—which must have been near the close of his life, for he was then at least ninety or ninety-five years of age, and we hear no more of him afterward.

The Book bears throughout the impression of one and the same hand. The chief appearance of diversity is that from verse fourth of chapter second to the end of chapter seventh, it is written in the Chaldee language, but the remainder is in Hebrew. This is a peculiarity worthy to be noticed, but it affects not the question whether the whole is the work of one individual, if that individual understood both languages—and there cannot be a doubt that Daniel understood them both. Why he thus wrote, it may now be impossible to be ascertained; only conjecture can supply the reasons. All that is written in Chaldee, related particularly to the Chaldean kings or people, except chapter second in part, and also chapter seventh in part. It was fit that the Chaldeans should have these events, and also the whole of the vision of the series of kingdoms, in their own native language. There were great objects to be gained by the influence which Daniel should exert over the nation that conquered his people; and we can see from the period of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and onward, how a divine Providence ordered all things so that Daniel might throw his protection over his countrymen, meliorate their captivity, and perhaps secure the decree for their restoration. The existence of these records in the Chaldee language, would of course further this influence, and in this is an adequate reason for a part of these prophecies being found in that language. Perhaps, too, as the Hebrew language became at that time greatly corrupted, many of his countrymen born in Chaldea would understand the Chaldee better than the Hebrew.