

Journal de l'Épigée.

Octobre, 1880.

« Jamais trop tôt mais un jour
peut-être, trop tard ! »

« Laissez les morts selever leurs
morts »

Le temps n'est pas une brise légère qui en passant
caresse le front de l'homme, mais un ~~tour~~ qui
tour à tour le brûle et le glace, une tempête qui
emporte rapidement sa frêle barque, sous un
ciel nébuleux, à travers les rochers. Il faut qu'il
veille et qu'il rame, il faut qu'il résiste sa
nature et plie sa volonté à l'ordre immuable
qui le froisse et le brise !

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THE

APPROACHING END OF THE AGE

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF

HISTORY, PROPHECY, AND SCIENCE.

BY

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.

Ἄμην ἔρχου, κύριε Ἰησοῦ.

FIFTH EDITION.

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON,

27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



THE volume now presented to the Christian public, consists as will be observed, of four parts: the first is commended to the candid consideration of those who have not yet received the truth of *the premillennial advent of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the second and third take that truth as proved and granted, and address themselves especially to those who, holding premillennial views, are still looking for the manifestation of Antichrist, prior to the visible advent of Christ, those who adopt a literal interpretation of the Apocalyptic prophecies, including their chronological features—in other words, to the *futurist* school of prophetic interpreters. The fourth and last part, which consists of *an investigation into the system of times and seasons presented in the word and works of God*, contains not a few original observations and discoveries, which, if the author mistakes not, throw fresh light on the whole subject of Scripture prophecy, and which he thinks will be found of interest to all students of the prophetic word, as well as, he trusts, to all lovers of the Bible. Perhaps, he cannot better introduce the book to the reader, than by giving a brief outline of its history.

Imbued by education with the ordinary view, that a gradual improvement in the present state of things was to be expected

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till all the world should be converted, and a spiritual kingdom of God be universally established on earth, and that no return of Christ was to be looked for till the day of judgment at the end of the world,—the author no sooner began to study the Scriptures independently than he perceived, that this view obliged him to interpret in a forced and non-natural manner a vast variety of apparently clear and simple passages, both in the Old and New Testaments. Unable to rest satisfied with doing this, he was led to read a variety of works, both for and against premillennial views, especially that most able treatise ever penned *against* them, entitled “Christ’s Second Coming, will it be Premillennial?” by Dr. David Brown, of Aberdeen. Unable to reach any decision satisfactory to himself by this study of prophetic works, the author nearly twenty years ago laid them all aside, and very carefully and critically read through the entire Bible, marking, studying and considering every passage bearing on the subject, with a view to collect the full testimony of the Word of God respecting it. This plan he would earnestly commend to those who may be in doubt as to the truth on this fundamental point. It completely set his own mind at rest, and his views have never been shaken since. That a premillennial advent of Christ is clearly predicted in the Word of God, the writer never afterwards doubted, or hesitated to preach; but the pressing claims of incessant evangelistic labours for many years, forbid his looking further into prophetic subjects.

A fuller acquaintance, acquired by personal observation, with the condition of the Greek and other professing Christian

Churches of Syria, Egypt, and Turkey, and of the effects of Mohammedan rule in the East, and also with the Papal system as developed in France and Spain, and with the Continental infidelity to which it has given rise, subsequently led the author to a careful study of the history of the Mohammedan and Papal powers, and of the prophecies of Scripture believed by many to relate to them. This resulted in a deep conviction that THOSE POWERS OCCUPY IN THE WORD OF GOD, AS PROMINENT A PLACE AS THEY HAVE ACTUALLY HELD IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

The remarkable events of the years 1866–70, especially the outbreak of the Franco-German war, which put a stop to evangelistic efforts which the author had been for some time making in Paris, led him not only still further to consider the question of modern fulfilment of prophecy, but to prepare a work on the subject, which he intended to have published under the title of “Foretold and Fulfilled.” This work advocated the Protestant or historic system of interpreting the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, and in doing so had necessarily to consider the question which lies at the base of the different views of unfulfilled prophecy taken by Christians — *the true meaning of the chronological statements contained in symbolic prophecy*, i.e., whether they are *literal* or whether they are *figurative*. In studying the masterly and exhaustive treatise of the Rev. T. R. Birks on this subject,*

* “First Elements of Sacred Prophecy, including an examination of several recent Expositions, and of the Year-day Theory,” by the Rev. T. R. Birks, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

the author was deeply interested in a statement made on the authority of a Swiss astronomer, M. De Cheseaux, that the leading prophetic periods of Scripture are demonstrably *celestial cycles*; that is, periods *as definitely marked off as such* by celestial revolutions, as are our ordinary years or days. This led him to examine the nature of these cycles, and to investigate the connection between astronomic facts and Scripture chronology, and thus to the discovery that the *epochs* of the prophetic periods of Scripture form a remarkable septiform series.

Practical duties of a pressing nature connected with the foundation of the author's EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS,* prevented the completion of the intended volume, and the papers connected with *the astronomic measures of the prophetic times* lay by for some years in the hands of the Rev. T. R. Birks of Cambridge.

But in 1876-7, when the long impending Eastern question came once more to the front, and attention was, by the tragic and eventful scenes transpiring in European Turkey, again directed to evident cotemporaneous fulfilments of prophecy, the author was strongly impressed with the duty of giving to his brethren without further delay, any light which God might have given him on this sacred and deeply interesting theme; of adding his contribution, however small, towards the understanding of the prophetic word, and in spite of many difficulties he has made leisure, during the last eighteen months, to complete his researches into the subject, and prepare the present volume for the press.

* See Appendix C.

In order to secure correctness in his astronomic statements, the author submitted a considerable portion of the fourth part of this work to the criticisms of Professor Adams of Cambridge, whose discovery of the planet Neptune by pure mathematical calculation, has long given him a position of the very highest eminence, as an authority in astronomic science. Professor Adams was kind enough to allow the author to read to him many (though not quite all) of his statements on "the connection of Times and Seasons natural and revealed," and he also verified some of M. De Cheseaux's calculations with reference to the cyclical character of the prophetic Times. Finding M. De Cheseaux's work in the British Museum, the author had it carefully copied for his own use, and subsequently sent it to Professor Adams that he might examine a point about which he had expressed some doubt, relative to the times of the equinoxes and of the summer solstice in the year of Daniel's vision 552 B.C.

The following letter from Professor Adams shows M. De Cheseaux to have been slightly in error on this point,—error easily accounted for by the want, in his day, of such accurate data as more modern science supplies—but which does not in the least affect his conclusions as to the cyclical character of the prophetic Times:—

OBSERVATORY, CAMBRIDGE, March 18, 1878.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received the copy of De Cheseaux safely, and I ought ere this to have sent you the result of my examination into the correctness of his statements. Pray pardon the delay, which has been caused by my having been so busy. I have calculated very approximately the times of the

equinoxes and solstices for the year B.C. 552, which is that given by De Cheseaux as the year of Daniel's vision, and I find the following results, expressed in mean time at Jerusalem, reckoned from midnight.

			d.	h.	m.
Vernal equinox	... March	...	27	8	2
Summer solstice	... June	...	29	11	39
Autumnal equinox	... Sept.	...	29	11	51
Winter solstice	... Dec.	...	27	0	17

Hence the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox take place not far from noon at Jerusalem, but the vernal equinox takes place about four hours before noon. De Cheseaux's error appears to arise chiefly from his having supposed that the excentricity of the earth's orbit was the same in the time of Daniel as in his own time, whereas it was very sensibly greater. I have added the time of the winter solstice also, though it is not required for your purpose. . . . The fact is that the change of excentricity and place of the apse of the orbit of any planet, is a compound phenomenon, due to the combined action of all the other planets, and therefore the final result is got by compounding together several variable quantities, which have quite different and indeed incommensurable periods. I will return your copy of De Cheseaux, which is quite beautifully done, immediately, either by post or railway, as I have done with it.

I remain, dear sir,

Yours very truly,

J. C. ADAMS.

As his letter did not reach the author in time to allow of his adding Professor Adams's correction to M. De Cheseaux's statement quoted on p. 404 of this work, he inserts it here.* The modern solar and lunar tables employed by Professor Adams, also showed some slight errors in M. De Cheseaux's calculations, amounting to *about an hour* in the period of 1040 years (referred to on p. 403) but in nowise invalidating the claim of that period to be considered *a cycle harmonizing the*

* The statement referred to has been omitted in this edition.

lunar month with the solar year, or the cyclical character of the associated prophetic periods of 1260 and 2300 years, of which it is the difference.

The author has also to acknowledge his indebtedness to the kind and valued criticisms of his friends, the Rev. Henry Brooke of Dovercourt, and Philip Henry Gosse, Esq., F.R.S., of Torquay, who saw portions of the prophetic parts of this work while it was passing through the press. Their accurate acquaintance with the prophetic Scriptures, and deep reverence for the Word of God, gave the suggestions they made a special value in this principal branch of the subject dealt with.

There remains to the author the grateful task of acknowledging the *very considerable help* he has had in writing and revising this volume from the practised pen of his beloved wife, for many years the sharer of his toils in various efforts to spread in different lands the knowledge of saving or of sanctifying Truth. The part which—in spite of much wearying labour by day and often by night, as Honorary Secretary of the EAST LONDON INSTITUTE FOR HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS—she has cheerfully taken in the task of preparing this work—however others may regard the result—will endear it to him while memory endures.

And now the author commends this work to the candour of the Christian Reader, and above all to the blessing of God! He alone knows how earnestly and incessantly the enlightenings of his own Holy Spirit have been sought, in the course of its preparation, how often the heartfelt prayer, "O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me," has gone up amid