REVIEW

OF

MR. ROBERTS' SERMON AGAINST THE ADVENT NIGH,

DELIVERED AT THE MARKET-STREET METHODIST CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J., JULY 24, 1842.

BY L. D. FLEMING.

Third Edition.

James Cox, Printer, No. 1 Commerce street, Newark.

The following remarks are, strictly speaking, a review of Mr. "Dowling's Reply to Mr. Miller," rather than a review of Mr. Robert's Sermon, as Mr Roberts's entire argument, and even his criticisms, which were presented to the audience in such a manner as to make them appear his own, were all taken from Mr. Dowling, almost *verbatim*. Hence, onr strictures are on Mr. Dowling in *fact*, but on Mr. Roberts *by the way*. Our limits will only allow us to take a very cursory view of those points on which the greatest stress was laid.

I. Mr. Dowling seems to have become quite a text book among those who wish to oppose

the doctrine of the Advent nigh. Speaking of our calculations as connected with the *birth* and *death* of Christ, "*It is very unfortunate for these calculations*," says Mr. Roberts, or rather Mr. Dowling, "*that the end of the world is past already, and that the event took place more than two years ago.*" This is made out by saying that Christ was born four years before the vulgar era. To this we will agree. But to the deductions of Mr. Dowling and his satellite we shall *not* agree. As Mr. R. did not produce the evidence to prove that Christ was born four years before the vulgar era, we will present it for him.

According to Josephus, there was an eclipse of the moon during the last sickness of Herod, from which eclipse, to the vulgar A. D. 33, are 36 years. It is evident that Christ must have been about one year old at the time of Herod's death, as he was taken into Egypt to escape the hand of Herod, and was not brought back till after the death of Herod. Here we have astronomical proof that Christ was born four years before the vulgar era. Mr. D. and his pupils suppose that Christ must have been crucified at the age of 33, however much the time of his birth may be put back. Hence, putting it back four years, they have him crucified A. D. 29, instead of A. D. 33, and they say our calculations must have run out in 1839. This is begging the question! While we admit that Christ *was* born four years earlier than the vulgar era, we also show that he was 37 when

he was crucified. In Furguson's Astronomy, in an article headed "The true era of Christ's birth," he demonstrates by astronomical facts that the common era of the death of Christ *is correct.* The passover was always kept on the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Christ was crucified on a *Friday* at the time of the passover. And Ferguson says he could find *no* paschal full moon on a *Friday* for several years on either side of the 22d year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. "And this year," says Ferguson, "was the 33d year of our Saviour's age, reckoning from the vulgar era of his birth; but the 37th reckoning from the true era thereof." And this was the time of Christ's crucifixion. Then this view is not so "fatal to Mr. Miller's calculations," after all.

According to the Jewish law the priests could not take upon them that office, before the age of 30. Luke says iii. 23. "And Jesus began to be about 30 years of age" at his baptism; after which time he went into the wilderness, where he fasted, and was tempted 40 days. He then went into Galilee, and at the very commencement of his ministry, he says, "The time is fulfilled." What time? The only time given, to which allusion *could be had*, was the 69 weeks (of Daniel) unto Messiah the Prince. He was to confirm the covenant with many for one week.

It has been said by some that John the Baptist fulfilled one half of this last week, but we

are not *now* prepared to adopt this view. It seems that both Christ and John commenced their ministry in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. Hence John could not have occupied more than half a day (or year) in advance of Christ. It should be remembered that Christ was to confirm the covenant with many for *one week*, i. e. 7 years. Hence Christ did confirm the covenant for one week, and must have been crucified in the 22d year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar.

Again, according to Luke, Herod was in Jerusalem at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, at which time Pilate and Herod made friends. Josephus informs us that Herod was on his march with his army against Aretas his father-in-law. Being stopped by the passes he returned to Jerusalem, in order to offer sacrifices, it being the time of the passover. While he was there, on the fourth day, the news came that Tiberius Cæsar was dead. Being encouraged by Cæsar to carry on the war, and not knowing whether the next Emperor would sanction it, he returned home with his army. This was the 22d year of the reign Tiberius Cæsar. We have no account in history of Herod being in Jerusalem with his army at any other time; and this being the time of the passover, the evidence is indubitable, that this was the time of the crucifixion, which would make Christ 37. In the same year, Phlegon, a heathen writer, says there was the most extraordi-

nary eclipse of the Sun that was ever seen. But Ferguson informs us that there could be no natural eclipse at that time; so it must have been the supernatural darkness that attended the crucifixion of Christ. But still further, the 70 weeks of Daniel were not fulfilled till the 22d year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. All this evidence we have for the correctness of our position. But if it could be shown that Christ died four years earlier than we calculate, it would not effect our calculations in the least, because it does not change one of the prophetic numbers; and when it is said that 1810 years from the *death* of Christ, will bring us to A. D. 1843, it is based upon the vulgar era, and the objection vanishes. Mr. D. agrees with us in the prophetic character of the 70 weeks, as well as in the time for commencing them. This granted and we ask no more; for then our calculations are uninterrupted by any change or quibble touching the birth of our Saviour. So much, then, for our "*unfortunate calculations*," which were made the great hobby, of Mr. Roberts' borrowed argument. "Alas! master, it was borrowed."

ii. Another point on which great stress is laid by Mr. Dowling, (and by Mr. Roberts, *of course!*) is the commencing of the 2300 days, at the same time with the 70 weeks. He objects to this on the ground that the original Hebrew is *a rav boker*, i. e. evening-morning, and not *myaim*, days. Hence he thinks it must mean literal days, and not prophetic days; or, he thinks that *perhaps* it means 2300 sacrifices,

and only 1150 days. Here Mr. D. has made two strings to his bow, and neither of them helps him out of his dilemma; for one is 55 days too short, and the other about 100 days too long. Mr. D. admits that the time, times and a half, the 42 months, &c. of Daniel and Revelation, are prophetic days, although he might object to it with the same show of propriety as to the 2300 days.

Mr. D. argues that the 2300 evenings and mornings were *probably* only so many sacrifices. Yet all will admit that *evening and morning* was used for each *day* in the creation week. But according to Mr. D.'s reasoning, the world was created in *three* days, instead of *six!!* Mr. D. while cutting down the 2300 days to 1150, should have taken off 55 days less, and then he would have had a fit for the time of the persecution by Antiochus. What absurdity men will fly to, to evade the truth. Yet all this will not defer the Advent of our Lord for a single hour.

Speaking of the desecration of the Jewish temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, Mr. D. observes, that *if* we had been fully informed on the subject, "*he doubts not that the time*" would come out just right. But with the best evidence he can make out, he is minus 55 days, on one hand, and has about 100 days too many on the other hand!! Such is the foundation of Mr. Dowling's argument for applying the vision of the 2300 days to Antiochus. We challenge the proof for the correctness of such an application.

III. Mr. Dowling applies the little horn of Dan. viii. 9. to Antiochus Epiphanes, which evidently refers to the same power as that mentioned in Dan. vii. 8, which Mr. D himself applies to Romanism. Now, Antiochus was king of Syria, and as such was one of the four horns or kingdoms of the Grecian monarchy, and *not another* horn coming out of them! How this difficulty could escape the notice of Mr. D. we cannot conceive. That those who adopt him as their oracle for better or for worse, should not pause long enough to see it, is no marvel. Antiochus was one of the four! How then could he be "*another?*" Daniel says "out of one of them came *another little horn*," &c. To apply it to Antiochus is preposterous! Again, the little horn was to become great, but *not* by his own power. But Antiochus *did* become great, if he *was* ever great, by his own power, as much as any monarch ever did. Again, the *little horn* was to become very great toward the south, the east, and the pleasant land. How did Antiochus become great toward the south? He had to fly from Egypt without achieving a conquest, at the command of the Romans. How did he become great toward the east? When his funds got low, he went to the east to rob a temple which Alexander had adorned with much gold and silver, in which attempt he was defeated. He went from there to Babylonia, where he got intelligence of the conquests of Judas against the Syrian army, which drove

him into despair. How could Antiochus, who trembled at the word of the Roman Senate, be called a king of *fierce countenance?* Any one who has read the history of Rome, must see that the king of *fierce countenance*, was undoubtedly the Romans. It is said "The Samnites were the most brave and warlike people that ever had engaged the Romans. The language of that people was, that they were unable to withstand the *fierce* looks, and fire darting eyes of the Romans." Again, the little horn was to stand up against the Prince of princes, viz. Christ. How could Antiochus stand up against him, when he died more than a century before Christ was born? Christ was crucified under the Romans. These are a few of the dificulties in the way of applying the prophecy to Antiochus.

Mr. D., to give plausibility to the charge of error, has changed the reading of the text, and renders it, "How long shall the vision last, the daily sacrifice be taken away," &c., when the text is thus, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot." The word *sacrifice*, supplied by the translators, is not in the original.

The "absurdity" spoken of by Mr. D, (and by Mr. R. *of course!*) about dating the vision a long time before the Goat had an existence, comes with a very poor grace, until he will say, and also prove, that the ram was not a part of the vision!

Another, and an insuperable difficulty in the way of Mr. D.'s application of the little horn to Antiochus, and the taking away of the daily to the Jewish sacrifice, will be found in Dan. xi. 31, and xii. 11. "And they shall take away the daily, (*sacrifice* is added by the translators,) and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." "And from the time that the daily shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days." Now, we have never heard it disputed that the above passages have reference to the same abominations spoken of in Dan. viii. 13, which Mr. D. applies to Antiochus, and the Jewish sacrifices. The 1290 and 1335 days, let it be remembered, Mr. D. admits to be years. "And from the time the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away," &c., there shall be 1290 days or years, and at the end of 1335 days or years from the taking away of the daily, Daniel is to stand in his lot, or in the resurrection with the righteous. Mr. D. says the daily sacrifice was taken away 168 years before Christ; accordingly, then, "*most unfortunately for his calculation*," the resurrection of Daniel with all the righteous. took place A. D. 1167, which was 675 years ago!! Such is Mr. Dowling's logic, and Mr. Roberts adopts it without a scruple!!

There were evidently two desolating powers, viz. the daily and the transgression of desolation. And Daniel informs us, xii. 11, that the daily is not to be suppressed till about the

time the other is set up. On this point of the subject Mr. R. excused himself from prosecuting the examination, for the want of time. We request that he would take time, and give a solution of the daily in chap. xii., of the 1290, 1335 days, &c., and not leave us with the main pillars of our edifice untouched. But as Mr. D. has given us nothing very definite on this part of the subject, we have little hope that Mr. R. will help the people out with it.

Whatever the daily was, referred to in chapters viii. xi. and xii. we are given to understand, that it was not to be taken away until 1335 years before the end, when Daniel was to stand in his lot, i. e. be raised. The pagan daily was suppressed, or taken away, A. D. 508. We are informed by Gibbon, that "Vitalian with an army of *Huns* and *Bulgarians*, mostly idolators, declared themselves the champions of the Catholic faith." This was A. D. 508; and that mighty revolution caused the *taking away* or the suppression of the *daily*, i. e. pagan rites.

IV. Mr. R. said that he opposed the doctrine of the Advent nigh for the same reason that Paul did, in his letter to the Thessalonians!! Well, now, what were Paul's reasons for saying to the Thessalonians (impliedly) that the day, or coming of Christ, was not as nigh as some of them supposed? Why, this, "There must be a falling away first, and the man of sin must be revealed." It will not be denied by Mr. D. or R. that these are fulfilled. Then,

to make Mr. R.'s statement correct, that he has *the same reasons* that Paul had, for his opposition to the Advent nigh, he must be inspired; and if so, will he be so kind as to tell us what is to take place *yet* before "*that day shall come.*" This he is bound to do to make his statement correct.

Mr. R. was very particular to state to his hearers that he did not say that Christ would *not* come as soon as 1843! But who, we ask, that has read Mr. Dowling's book, or heard Mr. R. read it, did not understand the whole of it to mean, that Christ will not come so soon? No other impression could be received, than that "the Lord delayeth his coming." Indeed, the whole effort was to prove that the end is *not* so nigh!

V. Mr. R. had much to say about the great injury this error will produce after 1843 shall have passed and proved the calculations false. He did not want the Bible to be held responsible for the doctrine! He expressed great solicitude on this point. But he may give himself no uneasiness, for he may rest assured that God will justify his own word without any of man's help. While he had much to say about the injury that will accrue from our supposed error, he did not once intimate that if he were in error, awful consequences would follow! Now, we would ask, which view of the subject will be attended with the most fatal consequences? If the event *does not* come so soon as *we* calculate, it will simply prove that

we have erred in our calculations. But, on the other hand, if it *does* come, awful will be the calamity that must result from preaching "my Lord delayeth his coming."

If any who heard Mr. Roberts, or any others are desirous of looking over his sermon, they will find it (as it has been in print about two years) in "Dowling's reply to Miller," Pages 40, 42—52, 61, 70, 75, &c. Or if any feel desirous of examining both sides of the question, in pursuit of the truth, and would see the perfect fallacy of Mr. D.'s whole argument, we would refer them to "Litch's Refutation of Dowling."

VI. We have scripture authority to support us in the sentiment, that Christians *may know* about the time of Christ's Second Advent. Daniel was commanded, chap. xii. 4, 9, 10, "to shut up the words, and seal up the book to the time of the end," when we are given to understand, many shall search and understand it. The best Hebrew scholars so interpret the above passages. Christ said when ye see such and such things, "then *know* that it is nigh, even at the doors." The Apostle says, "Brethren, *ye are not* in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief in the night." But to the worldly and time-serving professor, and to the unbelieving, &c., it *will* come as a thief, and they shall not escape. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." Did not God reveal the time of the coming of the flood? He did;

and Noah proclaimed it. But few believed it. "So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." The following passages we think will settle this point. Dan. viii. 13—19; ix. 21—27; x. 1, 14; xii. 10—13. Matt. xxiv. 32—39; xxv. 5, 6. Who will give the mid-night cry if none know of the time? See Luke xxi. 25—28.

Great stress is laid on the follwing passage: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man," &c. The following is Mr. Wesley's note on the above passage:—

Matt. xxiv. 36. "*But of that day*—the day of judgment; *knoweth no man*—not while our Lord was on earth. Yet it might be afterward revealed to St. John consistently with this." It does not say of that day and hour no man *shall* know, but simply no man then knew. It is also said to be correctly rendered thus, No man may make known, &c., but God only will reveal it.

VII. Mr Dowling and his disciples labor to overthrow our argument by denying that the visions of the 8th and 9th chapters are *one*, because they are fifteen years apart. But we cannot make good sense of the prophecy unless we consider both chapters as speaking of *one vision*. After Gabriel had told Daniel (chap. viii.) to "shut up the vision, for it shall be for many days," Daniel says, "I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." Yet Gabriel was commanded to make him understand it. In the first year of Darius, fifteen

years after he had the vision, Daniel learned by books, that the 70 years of the Babylonish captivity were accomplished. And as he had been informed (chap. viii. 14,) that the sanctuary would be cleansed at the end of 2300 days, he evidently supposed that, as the 70 years had ended, the sanctuary would now be cleansed; and for this he began to pray. The prophecy is not divided as the chapters in our version divide it. The last thing he says in chap. viii. is, that none understood the vision. He then goes directly on (see Coit's arrangement of the Bible) to the explanation of Gabriel, given in the 9th chapter. Now, let it be remembered that chap. ix. is not a vision, but simply an explanation of *the vision* spoken of in chap. viii.; for he does not say in chap. ix. that a vision appeared unto him, as he does in chap. viii.; but he says, ver. 21, "Whilst I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in *the vision*, touched me,' &c. Whom he had seen in what vision? Why, the vision spoken of in chap. viii. of course. To speak of the 8th and 9th chapters as two distinct visions, savors either of great *ignorance* on the subject, or of being so pressed for argument, as to *wilfully* violate common sense! Let the enquiring read the 8th and 9th chapters in connection, and they cannot help seeing the fallacy of Mr. Dowling's argument; for no new vision is once mentioned in chap. ix. This fact alone annihilates Mr. D.'s entire argument on this point. Gabriel goes on to say to Daniel, (ix.

21.) "I am come to give thee understanding. Therefore understand the matter and consider *the vision.*" What vision we ask? Will Mr. Dowling or his reflector tell us? If they say the vision in the 8th chapter, our point is gained; and we challenge them to find *a vision* in chapter ix. Gabriel, after telling Daniel that he had come to explain to him "*the vision*" (of chap. viii. of necessity) he says, "70 weeks are determined upon thy people," &c. He then told him, ver. 25, when to commence that period, viz. at the going forth of the commandment, which was in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, B. C. 457.

Now, we have not the sagacity to see how Gabriel gave Daniel any light or understanding on the subject, unless the 70 weeks are considered a key to the 2300 days. Will Mr. D. be so kind as to tell us, or at least to shine upon his satellites, that they may reflect a little light to dispel our great error? But this seems too much like laboring to prove a self-evident truth. Our position is so clear that the unbiassed cannot but perceive it.

In conclusion, we would say to all who may chance to peruse these desultory observations, Look well to this great subject. Be cautious how you drink down the anodynes of those servants who are saying "my Lord delayeth his coming." "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Do not let others settle this great question for you. O! beware, lest that awful day overtake you as a thief in the night. Por-

tentious clouds are hanging over the moral heavens. And those who oppose our views are constantly prophecying that some great event is at hand. And while they do not say what it is, *we* think we are authorized, *not* to prophecy, but to say from the testimony of God's word, that we believe the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. O! dear reader, let me say again, be ye also ready.

Since publishing the first edition of this little Review, we understand that Mr. R. being requested to reply to it, publicly refused, giving as a reason, that it was '*a falsehood*,' for he said he had not preached against the *Advent* NIGH. We shall enter into no defence on this charge, but simply quote a few of his own words *verbatim et literatim*, and leave the reader to judge for himself.

Mr. R. speaking of the ill effects of our calculation after the time expires, says—'*When these calculations fail, as fail they will*,' &c. Again 'Christians are taught to *believe* the time *near*, although it is at an *immense* distance off.' Again, 'wave after wave of unnumbered centuries were to pass between the first and second Advents.' And yet Mr. R. says it is '*false*,' when we say such statements are against the Advent nigh.