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ERRORS OF
MILLENNIAL DAWNISM

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**THE ERRORS OF
"MILLENNIAL DAWNISM"**

By
REV. JAMES M. GRAY, D. D.

CHICAGO
The Bible Institute Colportage Association
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826 La Salle Avenue, Chicago.

THE ERRORS OF "MILLENNIAL DAWNISM"

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It is the duty of the watchman to cry aloud and spare not, and in the performance of that duty it has become necessary to speak against a teaching whose literature, in the judgment of one of the calmest and most capable of Christian theologians, is perhaps unmatched for error among all the writings of the English-speaking world. I refer to what is commonly known as "Russellism" (after its author), or "Millennial Dawn."

The headquarters of this teaching was formerly in Allegheny, Pa., but later was removed to Brooklyn, N. Y. It is represented by only the one man whose name has been referred to, although probably there is an organization behind it, judging by the enterprise and zeal it shows, and the large outlay of money it in-

volves. The money is spent in newspaper advertising, in the rent of public halls, and in the printing and distribution of literature in book and pamphlet form, to an almost incredible extent.

The literature is exceedingly deceptive in that it seems to be disposed of solely for the public good, and contains so much that has the sound and appearance of Bible truth. For this reason it affects the same classes in the Church that are led astray by Christian Science—the spiritually-minded, as we say—but not the Scripturally-intelligent. They crave better things than they are getting, but apparently know not where to find them. Such heresy only germinates in rich soil.

Millennial Dawnism may be classified under four heads: (1) Its attitude toward the Bible; (2) its testimony concerning Jesus Christ; (3) its teaching about salvation; (4) its theory of the future life.

It seems almost ridiculous to deal with it in a serious way, because its absurdities are so palpable, but the damage it has done, and is doing, to countless souls in every state of the Union, across the border and beyond the sea, is the saddest of reasons for the attempt.

I. As to the Bible

Here the heresy shows the master mind. Archimedes said, "Give me where I may stand, and I will move the world," a safe assertion to accompany the impossible. With like audacity the originator of this heresy says, "Accept my interpretation of the Bible, and I will prove everything I say." In which he again suggests Mrs. Eddy, whose reverence for the Scriptures is one of the tenets of her cult; only you must enter the treasure-house with her "**Key**"—she will not permit you to examine its contents with another guide.

To quote its words, the six volumes of Scripture Studies which it publishes "**are practically the Bible itself,**" "not merely comments" upon it, (although they are comments nevertheless). It is its dictum that people can not see the divine plan in the Bible unless by their aid. These "Studies" are like the morphine habit. When it seizes upon a victim he can not get rid of it at his peril. "If any one lays Scripture Studies aside, even after he has become familiar with them, even after he has read them for ten years, and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for

ten years, our experience shows," says the author, "that within **two** years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read Scripture Studies with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures." (Watch Tower, Sept. 15, 1910, p. 298.)

For "a mouth speaking great things" (Daniel 7:8), there is thus little to compare with this; only the author overreaches himself as error often does. What kind of "Scripture Studies" must these be which so affect their votaries that, after one has become familiar with them for ten years, and then discards them for the Bible alone, he falls into darkness in two years? Can it be that they so distort his spiritual vision that the **real** light of the Bible blinds him in that time? Nor is this a rhetorical fancy, merely, for the Bible itself says that they who received not the love of the truth, "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

No wonder that a following narcotized by such an opiate should be prepared to accept,

for example, an interpretation of the story of the rich man and Lazarus which makes Abraham symbolize God; the rich man, the Jewish nation; Lazarus, the Gentiles; and the rich man suing for a drop of water to cool his tongue, the Jews of this country appealing to the President to intercede with the Czar on behalf of their suffering brethren! (Halderman's *Millennial Dawnism*, p. 41.) In the light of this and other so-called interpretations, we feel justified in quoting the language of another, that this author "obtains his sense of Scripture by means of key-words chosen and capriciously explained by himself; by a continual paraphrasing of the Bible to suit his own mind; by erroneous translations of the original; and even by sacrilegious alterations of the very language itself" (Principal Stevens). So much for the attitude of Millennial Dawnism toward the Bible.

II. Its Testimony Concerning Jesus Christ

Here it contradicts almost every fundamental of revelation.

(1) **It denies His Deity**, conceiving Him to be a created being. He existed before His in-

carnation, was higher than the angels, but still He was a creature like unto them and not Himself their creator.

(2) It denies His incarnation of the Virgin Mary, saying (Vol. I, p. 179), that He was not a combination of two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of these it affirms could produce only a hybrid, and, therefore, when Jesus was in the flesh He was merely a perfect human being, as prior thereto He was a perfect spiritual being. And it was not until He had sacrificed the human nature unto death, that He became a full partaker of the divine nature. How untrue this is is evidenced by the inspired declarations that He was "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16); "Emmanuel—God with us" (Matthew 1:23); "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

(3) It denies His resurrection, affirming that His body was not raised from the grave but, somehow or other, supernaturally removed from it. To quote the words of Vol. II, p. 129, "We know nothing of what became of it except

that it did not decay or corrupt. Whether it dissolved into gases, or whether it is still preserved somewhere as a grand memorial * * * no one knows." To which we reply that "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3); that a spirit hath not flesh and bones as He was seen to have (Luke 24:39), and that it is expressly said God raised Him up, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24).

(4) It denies His ascension and high-priestly intercession in the statement that whereas He dropped His spiritual nature when He came to earth, so He dropped His human nature when He left the earth. He is now simply a spiritual being as before, though probably, because of His obedience unto death, of a higher order than before. In Vol. II, p. 107, it says, "We must bear in mind that our Lord is no longer a human being," and again, "Since He is no longer in any sense or degree a human being, we must not expect Him to come again as a human being." All this in face of the fact that His disciples saw Him ascend as a human being (Acts 1:9), that Stephen saw Him in the

glory after He had ascended (Acts 7:55, 56), and that the angels testified, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). All this in face of the fact that **His priesthood was based upon His human nature**, and the express declaration of Paul to Timothy, that there is "one mediator between God and men, the man, (or Himself man), Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

(5) It is unnecessary to mention after the foregoing, that it **denies His second coming** in any Scriptural sense of that event. Indeed, it says His second coming took place in some mysterious manner as long ago as 1874, although He is not yet manifested to men. Those who sleep in Christ were raised in 1878, and the whole of the Church will be translated, or changed in a moment in 1914, notwithstanding the Scriptural teaching that we know not the day nor the hour of His coming (Mark 13:32).

(6) But one of its most dangerous teachings concerning Christ affects **the doctrine of the atonement**. This is thoroughly undermined of course, in the denial of His Deity, for were

He but a man, and not God, what efficacy could there be in His blood-shedding for the sins of men? Who could trust the redemption of His soul to a mere man, even the greatest, holiest and wisest who ever lived?

But it is in the extra-Scriptural teaching on the atonement that the greatest harm is done, for Millennial Dawnism makes the Church a part of the Redeemer in His redemptive work. It wrests that transcendent doctrine of the believer's oneness with Christ, to make it appear that we are part of the ransom price for sin.

In the Watch Tower of Oct. 15, 1908, we read that "Our Lord's work did not end with the application of His merit to those who were accepted of the Father as members of His body. Rather the sacrifice was allowed to continue on a larger scale—a **sacrificing of the Church**, the members of His body being counted as a **continuation and completion of our Lord's own personal sacrifice.** * * * We who now come in under this arrangement as members of the body * * * are * * * yielding up our lives in sacrifice during this age, and these sacrificed lives, counted in with

His, constitute the blood of Christ which seals the new covenant between God and the world. That new covenant will not be sealed till all the blood of the great mediator has been shed"!!

Roman Catholicism has never uttered greater blasphemy than this concerning Him who "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of **Himself**" (Hebrews 9:26), and Who, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). So much for its testimony concerning Jesus Christ.

III. As to the Doctrines of Salvation

We understand the Bible to teach that he who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life from the moment he so believes. Millennial Dawnism teaches that he will have that life only at some future time.

We understand the Bible to teach that to believe on Jesus Christ is to be born of God. Millennial Dawnism teaches that no one is born of God until he has been raised from the dead.

We understand that "born of God" and "begotten of God" are interchangeable terms.

Millennial Dawnism distinguishes between them.

We understand that he who is justified by faith is sanctified in the same manner. Sanctification, in the Bible view, is an event and a process. It is instantaneous and yet progressive. As a process, however, it is still the work of God within us, the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us (John 16:13-15). Millennial Dawnism teaches that it is the result of our own works.

We understand that they who believe on Christ and are born again shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-29). Millennial Dawnism teaches that one may enjoy all the blessings of Christ's work on his behalf, and yet fall from grace, and utterly perish at the end, dying the second death.

We understand that he who finally rejects Jesus Christ in this life shall die in his sins, and shall not obtain salvation either in this age or in that which is to come. Millennial Dawnism teaches that he who does not believe on Jesus Christ in the present age, shall most certainly believe on Him under more favorable

circumstances, and obtain salvation in the age to come. This it teaches to be true of all except a few apostates.

Thus we finally arrive at that which chiefly gives Millennial Dawnism its popularity with the natural heart, and constitutes its greatest harm, viz.:

IV. Its Theory of the Future Life

As explanatory of this, Millennial Dawnism is wrong to begin with, in its definition of life, holding it to be simply a principle common to all beings whether God, man, animals or plants. All existence results from the impartation of this principle into organism, the nature of the existence resulting from the nature of the organism. Man results spontaneously from the impartation of this principle into a human organism, and by similar reasoning the extinction of his being follows the separation of the two.

(1) It is this that gives color to its teaching about the sleep of the soul, and that when a man dies he passes out of existence until the resurrection. The answer to this is cumulative.

In the first place, the New Testament teaches that death does not mean extinction of being. Christ said: "Let the dead bury their dead" (Luke 9:60), when He was referring to the living. Paul said, "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). John said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

In the second place, the New Testament teaches that the penalty for sin is more than extinction of being. The rich man in hell "lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16:23). Christ said it had been good for Judas if he had not been born (Matthew 26:24), which is inconsistent with the theory that he has ceased to exist.

In the third place, if everlasting punishment means only extinction of being, then everlasting life must mean only continuation of being, which is the boon even of Satan himself, who is to live forever (Revelation 20:10).

In the fourth place, if death means extinction of being, how can there be a resurrection, for this implies the coming back to life of the same person who passed out of it, otherwise a resurrection would be a new creation.

In the fifth place, the Scripture especially says that the soul continues to exist, for Christ warns us in Matthew 10:28, not to fear them "that kill the body, but have not power to kill the soul." And even this says nothing about the spirit. Man has a spirit as well as a soul, and it is by his spirit he becomes the offspring of God, and his spirit never dies.

In the sixth place, the Bible shows us men living after death—Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, for example. In the sixth chapter of Revelation John has a vision of those to be beheaded in the great tribulation, and shows them anticipatively, as souls existing after such beheading (Haldeman).

Finally, if death means extinction of being, then Jesus Christ became extinct at Calvary—annihilated, as Dr. Haldeman expresses it. And no wonder, as he says, that to break the horror of such a thought, Millennial Dawnism should teach that after such extinction He was created over again, not as a man indeed, but somewhat after His former estate as an invisible spirit. But "if Jesus Christ was annihilated, then the gulf between deity and humanity remains unbridged, redemption is a failure, and salvation beyond the hope of fallen men."

(2) But growing out of the sleep of the soul arises that other theory equally unscriptural of a **probation after death**. Millennial Dawnism gets a semblance for this by fantastically applying all that refers to the earthly national restoration of living Israel in Palestine, to a restoration of all the dead of all the nations and all the generations of men!

"Even though they have been destroyed, and their personality wiped out, they will be created again." In other words, it claims that God is permitting sin in this dispensation, with no restraint and no accountability attached to it, simply that men may have a thorough experience of its results. In the millennial age to follow, man's past experience will thus serve as a deterrent on the one hand, and a spur to better things on the other (Principal Stevens).

Could anything have more Satanic attractiveness than this? The man who broke all the laws of God, will be brought to life again pure and spotless. The Gospel will be preached to him again. No longer guilty of sin, no longer under sentence of death, we wonder why he needs the Gospel. But Millennial Dawnism is not troubled by trifling inconsistencies like this. He will have one hundred years in which

to accept the Gospel. If he rejects it, he will die the second death. If he accepts it, he will have a probation of one thousand years. Why he needs a probation after the Gospel is accepted is not clear. If he stands the test, he will live forever; if he fails, he will be destroyed.

This is the system of the second chance. Where did the originator obtain it? More than thirty years of diligent study of the Bible has not enabled me to find it there.

"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Jesus says, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29). He does not say that some shall rise in order to a second probation or opportunity. He does not say that they shall come forth again in order to be made good in some future age and partake of eternal life. He is using the past tense. He says they that **have done** good shall come forth, and they that **have done** evil. It is a question as to what your standing and position are with reference to

God **today**, and in **your present body**, not at some future time and in some other body.

And when Jesus speaks of those who have done **good**, we must not be misled by that word "good." The good are only those who are God's people in the sense that they have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ. It is only a living faith in a living God that can produce good works acceptable to God.

V. Christendom and the Church Defied

This false teaching of Millennial Dawnism concerning the future life is so serious that I would not have this reply to it rest solely on my own interpretation of Scripture truth. I would have you know that the position here maintained is that practically of the whole of Christendom.

The latter includes Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and the Greek Church. And Protestantism in its turn includes both the Calvinistic and Arminian churches—the Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians. These all, without exception, in their creedal statements, contain as fundamental, the doctrine of the

eternal, conscious punishment of those who die in their sins.

— And Millennial Dawnism admits this. How great effrontery, therefore, that this modern religious teaching (modern in a way, though it is an old foe in a new form), and represented practically by one man, should challenge the interpretation of **all** the churches, in all the centuries! And that this challenge should concern a doctrine than which there is scarcely one more important in the whole of the Christian scheme! And what foolishness and blindness on the part of men and women, professing to be Christians, to be led away by such a system!

— But Millennial Dawnism not only denies the Bible as interpreted by the creeds of Christendom, but in so doing dishonors and vilifies the Church of Christ. It charges the translators of the Revised Version with dishonesty in the rendering of certain Hebrew and Greek words bearing on the doctrine. It charges theological professors and pastors with duplicity or ignorance in the interpretation of the same words. It charges those who claim to believe the doctrine as being really ashamed of it, and affirms that they deny in private what they publicly

profess. It makes us hypocrites and semi-infidels.

But the disciple is not greater than his Master, nor the servant than his Lord. If the Church be vilified we should be surprised were Jesus Christ exempt. He too, is dishonored by implication, for Millennial Dawnism says, "We can not imagine how sincere believers of this terrible doctrine can go from day to day about the ordinary affairs of life, believing all the time that fellow-mortals are dying at the rate of one hundred a minute."

It forgets that Jesus Christ went about the ordinary affairs of life from day to day, knowing and teaching all that orthodoxy claims for the future retribution of the wicked. It forgets that the most solemn word ever uttered upon the subject was uttered by His lips Who was the incarnation of divine love, and Who gave His life to save us from our sins.

It were safer, my readers, to stand by Jesus Christ than any human teacher. It were safer to take our theology from the Bible than from the Watch Tower. It were safer to believe the creeds of Christendom than the theories of a single man, and the teachings of all the

churches than the **ipse dixit** of Millennial Dawnism.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

"These be they who separate themselves (or make separations), sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19).

"From such turn away " (2 Timothy 3:5).

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