

VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

"I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL."

BY ORSON S. MURRAY.

BRANDON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 1838.

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TERMS.

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BRANDON, SATURDAY, JAN. 27, 1838.

For the Vermont Telegraph.

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

To Wm. Miller, Low-Hampton, N. Y.

Brother Miller:—Upon more mature reflection, I have thought best to introduce my fifth objection in connection with the last, and therefore, shall pass to notice that, "God has never revealed the time, and hence we cannot know."

My reasons are the following:

1. All expressions, upon which commentators rely to ascertain the time, are figurative: "2300 days"—"1290 days"—"1335 days"—"time, times & a half"—and "time, times and the dividing of times"—and "70 weeks" in Daniel; "1260 days"—"42 months"—"five months"—"an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year," &c., in Revelation. These, neither you, nor commentators in general, believe to mean literal time. No one pretends that these days were just so many days, and no more; but you suppose these are as many years meant, as there are days expressed. But I never have been able to conceive why God should have directed his prophets to use figurative expressions concerning time, when the mode of reckoning time was generally known, and easily to be understood. The Bible abounds in figures, comparisons and metaphors, but these are all used to make the subject better understood—to make a more lively and lasting impression. But can this be true, if these expressions concerning time are figurative, and still mean a definite period? Should I write you a letter, informing you

by figurative terms, as literal ones. If the word *day* invariably means a *year*, (when it does not denote only 24 hours,) and *year* 360 *years*, and *time* the same period, then I think we might calculate, with some degree of precision at least, the time of any event foretold in figurative language. But the difficulty lies mainly in the fact that terms expressive of time are not uniform. And here is the rock, (hidden or overlooked,) upon which commentators, yourself among the rest, will find your theories shipwrecked. Although I have said something on this point in my article on objection 2d, still I wish here to be indulged with pursuing it further.

Let me again notice the word *time*.—Does this always express the same period? Let the following quotations answer: Ps. xxxi, 15: "My times are in thy hands"—i. e., all my years, months, weeks, &c. Eccl. iii, 1: "There is a *time* to every purpose"—i. e., a fit season. John, vii, 6:—"My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready"—i. e., probably, day of death. 1 John, ii, 18: "Little children, it is the last time"—i. e., last stage of the world, or last half. Jude 18: "There should be mockers in the last time"—i. e., near the 2d coming of Christ. Dan. 4: "seven times pass over him"—i. e., explained to mean, "till thou know that the Most High ruleth." From these few quotations, it is evident that the word *time*, as used in the scriptures, is indefinite in its signification. Therefore, unless we have some other way to explain the word *time*, beside "comparing scripture with scripture," we must inevitably come to the conclusion that "time, times," &c. in Dan. vii, 25; and xii, 7: mean an indefinite period. Besides, there is a strong evidence to my mind, that "time, times and the dividing of time," and "time, times and a half," do not denote the same nor equal periods of time. The former commenced when the "little horn" began to wear away the saints of the Most High," and will continue until the "ancient of days shall come," and "the saints possess the kingdom," see Dan. vii, 22, 25: and the latter began at the time the angel spake, and will last till "he that liveth forever," "shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people," see Dan. xii, 7. There must have been a number of centuries dif-

rael." John viii, 34: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day." 2 Cor. vi, 2: "Now is the day of salvation." Heb. viii, 8: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord." Luke xvii, 22: "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man," &c. &c.

Now as the foregoing terms are used to express unequal periods of time, and as the same terms, undefined, are used by Daniel and John; and as we have no rule by which to determine their length, other than to compare scripture with scripture, I must conclude, that Infinite Wisdom did not design we should know the precise time specified by them.

3. There is no ostensible reason why God

should reveal the "time of the end," or the "end of the world," any more than the length of our lives. I would, by no means, make reason tantamount to revelation; but where this leaves, that may assist. There is nothing more solemn, or any thing more important, to us, in the dissolution of a world, than the dissolution of the body. Both carry us directly before God, and fix our eternal state. Nothing is more calculated to lead us to a present preparation for an event, than to have it a certain uncertainty, i. e., the event sure, but the time not known. What more often startles the giddy youth, and brings him to seriousness, than the thought that, "I am walking on the line between two worlds, and the next moment may find me in either, I know not which." Did we firmly believe, (as we ought,) that the next morning sun is as likely as any other, to rise eclipsed with the brightness of Christ's coming, could we rest easy without a well-grounded hope in him? No more so, than the man who deeply feels that death may be at the door. I consider that God, in infinite wisdom has shut us up in an awful uncertainty about death; and I see no less of that wisdom, in leaving the "time of the end" unknown to finite beings. How much force would there be in an exhortation to the young, to attend to the concerns of their souls, from a consideration of death, if each knew he should live to be fourscore years old? An exhortation, enforced by such a consideration, would have but little influence, until they had passed their "threescore years and ten." Just so, if your theory be correct, and the time of Christ's second coming has been, or might have been known to be 1843, then

diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." This needs no comment to show, that not only Peter, but his brethren generally were "looking" for this great event, and knew not but it would be in their day. And why should they not be "looking?" Our Savior had given them to understand that he should come as a thief: see Luke xii, 39, &c. Does the thief give information of the time of his approach? Perhaps you say, Paul has explained himself in 2 Thess. ii, 1-3:—"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." But does he here say that it shall not be in his day? If so, what may we understand by the first verse: "our gathering together unto him." He says, it shall not come, except there come a falling away first. This he knew. But did he know there would be no falling away while he lived? Nay verily, for it had already commenced. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," verse 7. He only informs them in these verses, that the signs did not indicate an immediate approach of Christ.

We are informed by Christ himself that no man knows the time. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven but my Father only." Math. xxiv, 36. That he here refers to his second coming, or the "end of the world," is evident, and as you have admitted this, I shall not spend time with proof. The only way in which you evade the conclusion arising from this text, is, by saying that Christ means a literal day and hour.—Hence, say you, "I do not pretend to tell the day nor the hour, but only the year." I must confess this has always looked to me like trifling with divine things. But let me examine the subject, and see what Christ means by *day* and *hour*. Christ told his disciples, verse 37, that it would be at his coming as at the flood: "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark and knew not until the flood came

but will not at present. Should you reply, (as I expected you would have done before now,) I hope you will begin and settle my points as you go along. This will be coming right to the work. Unexperienced in controversy, I may have made many mistakes. Please point them out. I may, too, have been unjustly severe. My aim has been to use plainness, not severity. I am sensible of none but kind feeling toward you, and of ardent desire to know the truth. If my "objections" are not well founded, I do hope they will be removed. Let truth live, though it scatter my arguments to the winds, and crush their author beneath its mighty hand. Yours, truly,

AARON ANGIER.

Waterbury, Jan., 1838.

*A note of explanation, here, is due to brother Miller. About the time that brother Angier commenced his series of articles,—before either of them had fallen into brother Miller's hands—I saw brother Miller at Orwell, and had conversation with him of the subject of his reply to brother Angier. We agreed in thinking brother Angier proceeded through, before he replied. Subsequently, however, brother Miller sent me a communication, purporting to be a correction of what he viewed to be an error into which brother Angier had fallen, in his first article. But as he accompanied it with no request as to the time he wished it to appear, I have reserved it: it shall appear next week.

It appeared to me that one had better go thro', and then the other. There is now opportunity for brother Miller.—ED. TEL.

MISSIONARY.

From the Bap. Missionary Magazine.

ASAM.—LETTERS OF MR. BROWN.

In a letter of March 6, Mr. B. having alluded to the appointment of Messrs. Thomas and Bronson, and the expediency of one of them devoting himself to the Khamtis, a branch of the Shyans, comprising a large portion of the population of the northern and eastern parts of the Burman empire, gives the following notice of the

Singpho and Abur Tribes.

There are two other tribes, in this vicinity, which have perhaps nearly equal claims upon us for immediate missionary effort, viz: the Singphos and Abors; and we were just on the point of making an application to the Board in their behalf—when we received the glad intelligence that our brethren were already on their

banks of the Buri Diding, three or four days journey south of this place, in the midst of this tea country, has been mentioned as offering a good location for a missionary.

The Abors are the great family of the north. This race includes also the Bor, Abors and Miris, who speak the same language. *Miri* is a term applied to those who have descended to the plains, and mingling with the Siamese and other races, have partially adopted the habits of more civilized life. The term *Abor* (signifying *Independent*) is applied to those who live on the highlands in a savage state, and have never acknowledged the supremacy of the *Asam* rajahs; but on the contrary have heretofore been in the habit of descending annually to levy tribute on the people of the plains, and not unfrequently carrying off many of them as slaves. *Bor Abors*, (or *Great Abors*), is a term used to denote the main body of this people, who occupy the higher and more distant ranges of the north, and stretch far on to the borders of the Tibet. The banks of the great river Dihong, (the Sampoo of geographers,) are entirely occupied by this race, and all the eastern ranges of mountains, as far as the river Dihong.

It would of course be imprudent for a missionary to proceed at once into the midst of this savage people. His first efforts would naturally be amongst the Miris, settled about Sadiya, from whom he would learn the language. He might then advance without danger to the Abor villages, or the precincts of the Sadiya valley, and afterwards to those which were more remote, according as he should find the disposition of the people favorable.

Neither the Singphos nor Abors have any books, or any knowledge of letters whatever. The first thing to be done is to give them a written language. The foundation of their literature is to be laid. This you will at once perceive to be a very important circumstance. Those who shall first give them a written and printed language, and select their books for fifty years to come, will give character to all their future literature. They will open the fountain, whose properties, either good or evil, will assuredly be communicated to all the streams that flow from it in after ages. How important then that in the outset we should lay for them the foundation of a literature truly Christian—that their first books should be pure truth, the truth revealed in God's word. Mankind in the rude state of these tribes, look up to their literature, if they have one, as their oracle; and it is an

these expressions concerning time are figurative, and still mean a definite period? Should I write you a letter, informing you that I would make you a visit in *ten days*, Providence permitting, would you think I had kept my word, if, in just *ten years*, I visited you? Would you not inquire why, if I meant *ten years*, I did not say so, and not use figurative language in so plain a case? But if I inform you that before *many days* I shall visit you, it will be seen that I make use of the most convenient way of expressing an *indefinite* period. But, not only am I at a loss to know why figurative expressions should be used to denote a *definite* period, but I find that in some cases at least, when the time of an event was specified, the prophets were directed to use *literal* expressions to make themselves understood. In proof of this, see Gen. xv, 13: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." All will admit that these 400 years meant just so many, or in other words, were *literal* years. And, although in comparing this with Exod. xii, 40, 41, we find a discrepancy, yet this can easily be accounted for. Be this as it may, I never have read an author who considered these years figurative. Again, when God sentenced the Jews to captivity, in Babylon, he gave the precise time: see Jer. xxv, 11: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." Compare with Dan. ix, 2: "In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Now who will pretend that these years were figurative? Far the contrary, is perfectly evident. The same is true with respect to the wanderings of the Jews in the wilderness. They were expressly told that they were to remain in the wilderness 40 years, and these years proved to be *literal*. Jonah also was to say to Ninevah, "yet within 40 days," &c. No one can doubt, that these days were understood to be just so many and no more.

I have now shown that, in *some instances* at least, God has made known the time of events, by using the *common* mode of reckoning; and I call on you, and all others who believe in your mode of reckoning time, to show *one instance* where the period of any event is *defined* by any other than *literal* days, years, &c. In the cases of Ezekiel and the spies, the time is unequivocally defined by *literal* years.

2. These figurative expressions *do not* always denote the same period of time.—If they did, then, could we but find the specific period of one, we could as well reckon

have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people:" see Dan. xii, 7. There must have been a number of centuries difference in their commencement, and most likely both will end together,—at the second coming of Christ.

The word *year*, too, when it does not mean one revolution of the earth in its orbit, is always indefinite in its signification, unless accompanied with a numeral. See Isa. lxi, 2: "To proclaim the acceptable *year*," lxiii, 4: "The *year* of my redemption is come." Jer. xi, 23: "Even the *year* of their visitation; also xxiii, 12; and xlviii, 44. Heb. i, 12: "thy *years* shall not fail;" xi, 24: "By faith, Moses when he was come to years," &c. Rev. ix, 15: "Which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a *year*." This last you reckon 360 years; but as the others quoted are all *indefinite*, I shall want some proof from the Bible that this does not follow the same rule.

Month is sometimes so used, though it generally means one twelfth part of a year. Num. xi, 19, 20: "Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days; neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils," &c. Jer. ii, 24: "In her *month* they shall find her." Job, xiv, 5: "The number of his months are with thee." Now if we make these our rule, (and I know not how we can do otherwise,) their "42 months," "5 months," &c. mean *indefinite* periods. Besides, I am decidedly of the opinion that John's "42 months," and Daniel's "2300 days," mean one and the same time, and I think others will be of this opinion, who will carefully compare the two. "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."—Dan. viii, 14, and Rev. xi, 2. "Holy city," I believe, always means Jerusalem, either the Old or New, and as the Gentiles will not "tread under foot" the "New Jerusalem," therefore, it here means ancient Jerusalem.

Week, I think, always means 7 days, except in Dan. ix, 26: see my article on 70 weeks.

Day is so often used indefinitely, that it would be quite superfluous to quote many passages. A few only will be noticed.—Luke xii, 46: "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him." Luke i, 80: "and was in the wilderness till the day of his showing to Is-

Just so, if your theory be correct, and the time of Christ's second coming has been, or might have been known to be 1843, then any exhortation, enforced by this event, would have been powerless for nearly 1800 years past,—because all would have seen that their eternal state would be fixed before that time arrived. But, on the principle that this time is not, nor ever has been known to mortals, then an exhortation, thus enforced, would have been pertinent and weighty, at any time within that period.

4. The apostles give evidence by their writings that they did not know the time.

Paul, in his first epistle to the Thess. iv, 15, 16, 17: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:—Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Also 1 Cor. xv, 51, 52: "Behold, I will shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." How could the apostle, consistently, have used such language, if he had known that the "trump" would not sound for nearly 1800 years? Did he and his brethren expect to live so long? If not, how could he say, "then we which are alive, and remain?" &c. But if he *did not know* the time, if his blessed Master had only informed him of the event, and commanded him and other disciples to be ready; without telling him the time, then the apostle could with propriety convey the idea that it *might* be in his day. See also Titus ii, 13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Paul, then, was "looking for the glorious appearing of the Savior," and exhorted Titus to look for it, and to enjoin it upon his brethren to do the same. Again, Peter says, in his 2d epistle, iii, 10—14: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be

that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.—Math. xxiv, 38, 39. But the *literal* time, *year*, *month*, *day*, *hour*, when the flood would come? If not, "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." That our Savior here uses "day and hour" (as the Bible generally does) *indefinitely*, is evident from the fact that he exhorts them to be ready for this very event: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."—Verse 44. Were this paraphrased to suit your explanation, it would read thus: "In 1843 years after my birth, in such a *day of the year and hour of the day* as ye think not, I shall come, therefore be ye also ready." But what particular concern of theirs was it, whether he came the first, second or third day of that year? or at midnight, or cockcrow, or in the morning of the day? Certainly their probationary season, or time to get "ready," would cease more than 1700 years before, if they were ready for death, why not ready for his coming at any year, day or hour.—Again, Math. xxv, 13: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Did he address them as *dead men*, or *living*? Did he mean to say, "when 1843 shall come you must begin to watch, for I cannot tell what *day of that year, or hour of the day*, I shall come?" No brother Miller, you cannot, on re-examination, think he means "day and hour only." But Mark, in chap. xiii, verses 32, 33, I think settles the question: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." "When the time is"—i. e., whether in *your day*, or at some *future time*. Be ready, therefore "lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." verse 36. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." verse 37. Yes, brother Miller, this reaches to us, (because he has not yet come.) We should be ready, and my readers should see to it that they are all ready,—for we know not when the time is."

I must here stop a moment and exhort all my readers, not to wait till 1843, before you "look" for the coming of Christ. We ought always to be "looking" for him,—for he "will come, and will not tarry," beyond the time appointed in the great council of Heaven. Are we ready to meet him? Solemn question! Let it be seriously answered.

I have now gone over the ground proposed. You now see most of my reasons, for my objections. I could greatly enlarge,

we were just on the point of making an application to the Board in their behalf—when we received the glad intelligence that our brethren were already on their way.

Both these tribes we know to be very numerous, though it is impossible to form an accurate estimate of their numbers.—The population of each, however, is extremely scattered, dwelling in small solitary villages, in the depths of the forests and the fastnesses of the mountains. To penetrate the interior and distant portions of their territories, and preach the gospel to their whole population, is a work which would be attended with great, and at present insurmountable difficulties, but to enter upon their outskirts and commence the work of evangelization amongst a large portion of these two great families, is a work which, so far as we can now discover, would be entirely practicable and safe.

The Singphos are the great southern tribe, and divide with the Shyans nearly the whole territory between here and Ava. Within these limits, it is generally agreed, by the natives, that the Singphos are fully equal, if not superior, in point of numbers, to the Shyans. Including, however, all the branches of the Shyan family, dwelling north, east, and south of Ava, that is doubtless far the most numerous of all the Indo-Chinese races.

The Singphos are an entirely different race from the Shyans; less cultivated, but more energetic, and in war more savage. Their language possesses little affinity to any of the neighboring dialects. They have no regular and settled religious system, like the Shyans, who borrowed their religion from their conquerors, the Burmans. But the Singphos exhibit few or no traces of Buddhism, though they possess some rude and general ideas of religion. So far as their religion is concerned, we should not suppose it to present those obstacles to the introduction of Christianity which attend the preaching of the gospel in countries where Hinduism or even Buddhism prevails. They, as well as the Abors, appear to be in very much the same state as the Karens, whose general ideas of religion constitute a state of mind far more favorable for the reception of the gospel, than is to be found in those countries where deep-rooted systems of idolatry are interwoven with the whole fabric and texture of society.

The Singphos, at least a large portion of them, are easy of access from this place. Companies of them are constantly coming in, for the purposes of trade, and many of the people here understand the Singpho language. The tea forests lie chiefly within the Singpho territory, which, in proportion as they are cultivated, will become the means of increasing the facilities for communication with this people. Many of the villages are included within the possessions of the English government, and of course the residence of a missionary among them would be entirely safe. Healthy locations might probably be found amongst them, otherwise a missionary will have to retreat to Sadiya during the rains. Ningru, a fine village on the

be pure truth, the truth revealed in God's word. Mankind in the rude state of these tribes, look up to their literature, if they have one, as their oracle; and it is an undeniable fact, that the grand prop of almost every heathen religion is the heathen literature connected with it.

As an encouragement to immediate efforts towards giving the Singphos and Abors a written language, it will be gratifying to the Board to learn that O. A. Bruce, Esq., superintendent of the Government Tea Plantations, has offered one hundred rupees towards defraying the expense of the first book that shall be printed in the Singpho language, and the like sum for the first book that shall be printed in the language of the Abors. Mr. Bruce has been a resident in this place for many years, and no person can have a better acquaintance with the wants of these tribes, in a moral and intellectual point of view, or be better prepared to appreciate the blessings which Christian instruction would bring to them. Mr. Bruce gave it as his decided opinion, that it would be perfectly safe for missionaries, at the present moment, to commence operations both among the Singphos and Abors.

By adapting the Roman letters to the Singpho and Abor languages, on the plan used for writing the other East Indian dialects, the time occupied in teaching the natives to read, and of course the expense, will be very trifling, compared with that of teaching scholars to read English or Burmese, or any other language where the sounds of the letters vary. By using each letter to express one invariable sound, children will learn to read, in *two months*, better than they could, on a different plan, in *twelve*.

There is another extensive tribe living on the hills to the northeast of this place, viz: the Mishmis, to whom I hope the attention of the Board will be eventually directed. They come down to Sadiya every year, in companies of thirty or forty men each, for the purpose of trading. It is impossible to form any estimate of their numbers, but they are generally supposed to be less numerous than the Abors.

The system of *Romanizing*, spoken of above, was applied to the Asamese and Shyan languages by Mr. Brown, in the works mentioned in the first extracts. In a later communication Mr. B. writes,—in regard to the *Adaptation of Roman Characters to East Indian Languages*.

We are glad to learn that the Board approve of the application of the Roman characters to the Shyan language. In regard to any objections being offered to it by the natives, I do not think there is reason to apprehend any thing of the kind. The Shyans are a scattered and subdued race; and having no central spot from which their laws and customs are regarded, as the Burmans have, they do not entertain those strong prejudices against all innovations which the Burmans manifest. The characters at present used by the Shyans, are entirely different from those used by their ancestors, at Ahois, &c.—They now use a sort of mongrel alphabet, chiefly borrowed from that of their