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A slander refuted — yet again!



It is a clear testimony to the weakness of a proposed interpretation of prophetic scripture if a persistent attempt is made to refute an opposing view, by a notion which has been repeatedly and manifestly proved a lie. Futurism is a system of interpretation that is broadly based upon the theory that God means what He says and says what He means. Futurism states that the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition (2 Thess 2:3-5), is literally a man who has yet to be revealed. Opponents of Futurism have repeatedly said that such a view is the invention of the Jesuit Ribera in 1585 and therefore to be rejected as a lie of the devil. For the weak -

minded, the very mention of JESUIT is sufficient argument against Futurism for it to be avoided like the plague! But for those who do not accept that truth is established by scare-mongering tactics, a little examination of the claim is required.

Those who do examine this claim will quite easily discover it to be a lie and, furthermore, discover that the claim is all the more reprehensible in that it has been repeatedly proved to be a lie. When there is an insisting on a view which is based upon a falsehood, simply because it appeals to the mind and disposition of those advancing it, you have the beginnings of a very dangerous attack upon the old slogan of the Reformation — “Sola Scripta”. For those interested in reading the facts about the origins of the prophetic view that states that when God calls the Antichrist a man, He meant A MAN rather than a series of men such as the Papacy or a religious system; and when He said days (Daniel 8:14, Revelation 11:3) He means DAYS and not years, we reprint the following article. It comes from a fuller answer given to those who espoused the error of correcting God and attempting to make Him say YEARS when He inspired His servants to write DAYS. It is taken from “Aids to Prophetic Enquiry”, written by B W Newton and published in 1881. It clearly demonstrates the antiquity of the Futurist’s interpretation of the prophetic scriptures. It has never been answered nor, sadly, the evil slander that it refutes withdrawn, but rather it has been repeated again and again.

The doctrine that days means years is a comparatively modern notion. The following quotations sufficiently show the prevailing doctrine on this subject during the early centuries. Irenaeus, in the second century, says: ‘When Antichrist shall have ravaged all things in this world, reigning three years and six months, and shall have sat in the Temple at Jerusalem, then the Lord shall come from Heaven in clouds, in the glory of the Father, to cast him and those who obey him, into the lake of fire.’ (Irenaeus, Adv. Heres., chapter 30.) Hippolytus, in the third century, says, commenting on Daniel: ‘Time, times, and half a time; by which Daniel means three years and a half.’ Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 360, says: ‘Antichrist shall



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reign three and a half years only. I say not this from the Apocryphal writings, but from Daniel, for he says, 'and it shall be given into his hand until a time, etc; now a time is one year.' (Catech. 15.) Jerome, in the fifth century, says: 'Time signifies a year: times (according to the idiom of the Hebrews, who themselves have a dual number) signify two years; half a time six months.' Jerome speaks of this as being the doctrine which 'all ecclesiastical writers have delivered.' (Jerome on Daniel.) Theodoret, who lived in the middle of the fifth century, says in his commentary on Daniel 7: 'By a time, times, and half a time, the prophet means three and a half years, during which that horn which speaketh great things shall prevail.' Bede, who lived in the seventh and eighth centuries, commenting on Revelation 12 and 13, says: 'Time signifies a year; times, two years: half a time, six months: for before the three and a half years, he (Antichrist) does not blaspheme openly' (aperto ore). Quotations to this effect might be almost indefinitely multiplied, but it is unnecessary. Even Mede allows, that until the twelfth century, all expected an Antichrist 'who would last for three years and six months' (Triennalem et semestrem expectabant). Indeed, Mr Elliott himself says, 'It is, I believe, the fact that for the first four centuries, the days mentioned in Daniel and the Apocalyptic prophecies respecting Antichrist, were interpreted literally as days, not as years, by the Fathers of the Christian Church . . . They looked perpetually for the breaking up of the Roman Empire into ten kingdoms, as a sign of its near approach: that division being understood by them to mark the time of Antichrist's revelation; and in accordance with the literal interpretation of the prophetic days, as the forerunner, at only three and a half years' interval, of the coming of the Son of Man. Such was the expectation of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Cyril, Chrysostom, Jerome, and in fine Augustine.' (Elliott, Vol 3, P 966.)

Nor are testimonies to this effect confined to writers before the twelfth century. Sebastian Munster, born in 1489, originally a Franciscan monk, but eventually one of the Reformers, and said by Dupin to have been one of the ablest of those who embraced the Protestant faith, in his commentary on Daniel 7, writes thus: 'God, says the Prophet, will not permit the tribulation from Antichrist and his followers to assail His elect with undue severity; but it shall continue for a time, that is a year; and times, that is two years; and half a time, that is half a year; in other words, it shall not last through a septenary and full period, but through the half of a hepdomad or septenary period. For those days shall be shortened for the elect's sake.' (See Critici Sacri in loco.) Clarius also, a Benedictine of the sixteenth century, and Vatablus, Professor of Divinity at Paris in that century, write to the same effect. Their remarks may be seen in the commentaries on Daniel given in the Critici Sacri. See also the commentary of Zeger on the Apocalypse given in the same work. Grotius gives the same interpretation, and quotes in confirmation the following passage from Josephus, who speaking of Antiochus, says, that he despoiled the Temple, and caused the daily sacrifice to cease for three years and six months (Josephus on the Jewish War, Lib 1, Cap 1.) Clarius also refers to this: after saying that the saints would suffer under Antichrist for three years and a half - or as stated by John, forty and two months - he adds 'for so long a time the Temple was profaned by Antiochus, who was himself a type of Antichrist.' The passage from Josephus clearly proves that he understood days to mean days. The following passage shows the doctrine of the Jews on this subject at a later period. Aben Ezra, who lived in the twelfth century, referring to Saadiah, a celebrated Jewish teacher, says, 'Now Saadiah expounds correctly and well; know also that in Holy Scripture days are al-



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ways days, and never years. Yet it is possible that the word days may mean an entire year, since the repetition of the days produces a return of the year; as when it is said, Exodus 13:10, 'from days to days,' that is from year to year; days meaning a complete year. But when the number is stated, as two days, three days, it cannot mean years, but must be days, as it stands.' (Aben Ezra, as quoted by Maitland. See also Dr McCaul.) It is of course possible that all these writers may have been wrong. On many most important truths, their teaching was wrong; but in such cases we are able clearly to disprove their statements by the Word of God.

For those interested in further information on "Futurism" please contact the Editor or visit the [Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony website](#)