Date-setting in America for the Second Coming of Christ During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract
The time of Second Advent of Jesus Christ has been of interest to His followers throughout the Christian age, and from time to time, some have gone so far as to fix a date for the event. In doing so, they have looked to Bible prophecies for a clue to the time of Christ's return. Perhaps the outstanding period of date-setting was during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During that time, there was a general advent awakening throughout the world. This was very marked in America where we find prophecy used during the revivals of the 1840's in an effort to determine the exact date. The fact that He did not come at the time appointed has caused the Christian world to look with disdain upon those who tried in recent years, to determine the date of Christ's return.

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the setting of dates, in America, for the second coming of Christ during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, endeavoring to ascertain what prophecies were used in determining the date, and how these prophecies were interpreted.

Comments
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The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods of tremendous urban growth that radically changed the country. Between 1860 and 1910, the population of cities with 2,500 or more residents climbed from 6 million to 46 million. Some of this new urban population came from the American countryside – between 1880 and 1910, about 11 million Americans moved to cities from rural areas. Millions more were immigrants. But in any case, American society, culture, politics, economics – in short, everything – was changed in the transformation from rural, agricultural country to urban. The Second Coming is a Christian concept regarding the return of Jesus to Earth after his “first coming” and his believed ascension to heaven about two thousand years ago. The belief is based on messianic prophecies found in the canonical gospels and is part of most Christian eschatologies. Views about the nature of Jesus’ Second Coming vary among Christian denominations and among individual Christians. In the historiography of masculinity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, Christian ideals have often been marginalized, and, when considered, they have tended to be misconstrued by the adoption of church-party approaches. This review offers a detailed critique of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s account of Evangelical ideals of manliness in Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780–1850 (1987; rev. edn, 2002). This review draws on the findings of my doctoral thesis; see William Van Reyk, ‘Christian ideals of manliness during the period of the Evangelical Revival, c. 1730 to c. 1840’ (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2007).