

Ascension Robes; Slander Refuted

by James White

FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD OFFERED

IN almost every place where our ministers give discourses upon the second coming of Christ, and the necessary preparation for that event, they have to labor against the prejudices of the people, caused by reports of the inconsistencies of Adventists; one of which is, that at a point of expectation in the past, many of them did prepare robes of white linen, and put them on ready to ascend and meet their coming Lord.

While all sane persons, who have any knowledge of what the holy Scriptures do teach of the necessary preparation to meet the Lord as he shall descend from Heaven, will agree that to prepare a literal white robe made of cloth as a fitting preparation for the transit from earth to Heaven, from mortality to immortality, must be an indication of downright insanity, none will see in such an act, done in sincerity, evidences of criminality.

But we do not believe that anything of the kind ever occurred. We have been actively engaged in the proclamation of the doctrine of the second advent for

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more than twenty-five years, and have traveled and preached in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Canada, and have not met a person who has seen an Adventist thus attired, or one that was able to give better proofs that anything of the kind ever did occur than vague reports. We have never found the place where the thing occurred. It was always in the next town, country, or State.

Again, reports in relation to this matter, and slanders of a similar nature, have a hundred times been denied in Second-advent

periodicals, and proofs have been called for of the truthfulness of these statements. No one has been able to produce the proofs. But still the tongue of slander takes great delight in repeating the old threadbare falsehood. Elders Loughborough and Strong met it at Orange, Mich., recently, and Eld. Cornell writes that he meets it at Johnstown, Mich. In both these cases, this miserable untruth is declared from the pulpit by professed ministers of Jesus Christ.

The people, generally, credit the statements of these ministers, and conclude that the story of ascension robes is true. Especially do those who are not favorable to Second-advent views take great delight in this sort of clerical slander. And the fact that our people are not always prepared to meet it, is the reason why we have felt called upon to notice the matter at this time.

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In 1847, while on our passage in a steamboat from Portland, Me., to Boston, Mass., Mrs. W. was speaking to those around her in the ladies' cabin of the fearful storm we encountered in a recent passage between these two cities. She spoke of the importance of being always prepared for the close of our probation, either at death, or at the coming of Christ. A lady near her replied:-

"That is the way the Millerites talk. I mean to have a jolly good time before I become a long-faced Christian. The Millerites are the most deluded set on earth. On the day they were expecting Christ to come, companies in different places put on their ascension robes, and went into graveyards, and upon the tops of houses and high hills, and there remained, praying and singing till the time passed by."

Mrs. W. then inquired of the lady if she saw any of these persons thus attired. She answered:-

"No, I did not see them myself, but a friend who saw them told me. And the fact is so well understood everywhere, that I believe it as much a though I saw it myself."

At this point, another lady, feeling that the testimony of the first should not be questioned, stated:-

"It is of no use to deny that the Millerites did put on ascension robes, for they did do it in towns all around where I live."

Mrs. W. asked this lady if she saw them with their robes on. She replied:-

"No, I did not see them, as they were not in my
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immediate neighborhood. But it was commonly reported, and generally believed, that they did make white linen ascension robes and put them on."

By this time strong feelings were evidently controlling these two ladies, because Mrs. W. did not seem to credit what they said against the Millerites. And the first in the conversation stated with emotions of excitement and passion:-

"I know it was so. I fully believe the testimony of those who have told me these things. I believe what my friends have told me about those fanatical Millerites, the same as though I saw it myself."

Mrs. W. then inquired of her for the names of some persons who had figured in this fanatical movement. She stated if the putting on of ascension robes was so very common, certainly she could give the names of some. To this she replied:-

"Certainly I can give you names. There were the twin Harmon girls in Portland. My friends told me that they saw their robes, and saw them going out to the graveyard with them on. Since the time has passed, they have become infidels."

A school-mate of Mrs. W., who had never been an Adventist, was in that cabin, and had watched the conversation with mirthful interest. She had been acquainted with the Harmon girls during the entire period of their Second-advent experience. She could no longer restrain her feelings, and broke out in a laughing mood as she pointed to Mrs. W.:-

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"This is one of those twin Harmon girls. I have known them always, and know that this report of their making and wearing ascension robes is all a lie. I never was a Millerite, and I do not believe that anything of the kind ever took place."

The storm that was fast arising in that cabin suddenly abated, and there followed a great calm. Mrs. W. then stated that all the

stories about ascension robes were probably as destitute of truth as this one concerning the twin Harmon girls.

Elder Josiah Litch, lately editor of the Advent Herald, Boston, in his history of the rise and progress of Adventism, published in the Advent Shield, 1844, makes the following statement:-

"Those periods came and passed with no unusual occurrence. As soon as they had gone by, a flood of scoffing, reviling and persecution burst forth, not from the infidel world so much, but from the professed friends of the Saviour; the most idle and foolish stories of ascension robes, and going out into the graveyards to watch, going to the tops of the houses, etc., etc.; these were repeated again and again, both from pulpit and press, until the public were, many of them, at least, almost persuaded to believe them true.

"How, or where they originated, except in willful falsehood, we cannot devise. Some of the reports of that character we happen to know, originated with professed ministers of the gospel, who gave date and place, when there was not a *word* of truth in the whole story. Others must have originated in a similar way."

We do not, however, indulge the thought that what

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may be said to show the falsity of statements concerning ascension robes will put an end to this kind of slander. No, these clergymen know the influence they have with the public mind, and the advantage they have over us in this respect, and, regardless of justice and truth, they will doubtless continue to do this vile, scandalous work, wherever the glorious doctrine of the coming of Jesus shall be proclaimed. We can only expose their sin in this thing, and disabuse honest ministers. The dragon is wroth with those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Devil will use any willing tool to slander and abuse the followers of Jesus Christ. Scoffers will scoff, and liars will lie, whether they bear the title of Reverend, or be patrons of brothels. And the higher the position, the greater the criminality.

But for all these things will God bring men into judgment. Those who fear God and keep his commandments, and suffer reproach for the sake of Christ and the truth, will have their reward. Those who employ the vile tongue of slander against them in order to crush their influence, and keep them from obeying the commandments that they may live, will perish in all their villainy. They will also have their reward. The True Witness has spoken relative to the present controversy and the final destiny of both classes of actors, as recorded by the prophet John.

FIRST CLASS. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev.22:14. These are doing right. Although they suffer for well doing, all the hate and slander that wicked men and demons can invent, their reward is the holy city and the tree of life.

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SECOND CLASS. "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Verse 15. These are commandment-breakers, and commandment-haters - haters of those who keep the commandments of God. They are also noted for two things in particular, namely, loving and making lies. The application of these two items is so natural to these reports of ascension robes and the like, that no further comment is needed. They make lies and love to publish them from the pulpit and the religious press. But, thank God, in the Judgment they are without. The happiness of those who love God and keep his commandments is then no more to be marred by their poisonous influence. Would God that they would repent of, and forsake their wicked course, and live, and finally share the holy city and the tree of life. But as they will not do this work, that they may share that reward, their corrupting influence must be borne with Christian patience and fortitude while the controversy lasts, sustained by the glad hope that when the Master comes, deliverance from their influence will also come.

FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD is offered to any person who will present unquestionable proofs of the truthfulness of these

statements that believers in the second advent of Christ, on the day of expectation, did put on ascension robes. Those who can produce such proofs, are requested to forward them immediately to the writer, at Greenville, Montcalm Co., Mich., and receive fifty dollars by the return of the mail. JAMES WHITE.