
Judged by the Gospel

*A Review
of Adventism*

by Robert D. Brinsmead

About the Book

Brinsmead writes out of a background of struggle both as an ardent apologist for Adventism and as a passionate exponent of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Emerging from the author's personal odyssey, this book is a sympathetic yet devastating examination of the history, tenets and claims of Adventism in light of the gospel. Upon reading the book, many Adventists who once took the claims of their denomination with radical seriousness have had their thinking revolutionized. One recently exclaimed, "I have read few presentations with such compelling interest. I wept in prayer, wept for the condition of my church, wept for the ominous future, wept for joy that God had set me free at last." Another declared, "This is the most devastating yet liberating document I have ever read." Many have become so engrossed in the book that they have read it in a single sitting.

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A Review of Adventism

Robert D. Brinsmead

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Preface

The gospel is a clear and certain light which must call all that we teach and do into serious and radical question. Luther declared that justification by faith is the article on which the church stands or falls. He meant that if we are right on this central article of the Christian faith, we will be essentially right despite all our errors; but if we are wrong at the heart of the faith, we will be essentially wrong despite all our truth.

It is not enough to confess that the Bible is true. Many sects and cults do that. We need to confess that the gospel of Christ is the truth of the Bible. Every other truth must be seen as a refraction of this one central truth. And every confusion over doctrine stems from confusion about the gospel. Sound religious faith therefore presupposes a correct understanding of the gospel.

Every aspect of our faith must stand under the judgment of the gospel. We dare not shape and compromise the gospel to fit our traditions. Rather, our traditions must be squared and shaped by the clear light of the gospel.

A few years ago I wrote *A Review of the Awakening Message*, Parts I and II.¹ In this I brought some aspects of my previous faith and teaching under the judgment of the gospel and found them wanting. The present review of Adventism is really an extension of that earlier review.

This presentation may at times be quite painful. But I want the reader to understand that it is not written to criticize others. Rather, it is written to bring my own faith under further judgment of the gospel. It should be read along with my books entitled *1844 Re-Examined* and *The Pattern of Redemptive History*.²

Come, let us reason together.

Robert D. Brinsmead

1. Robert D. Brinsmead, *A Review of the Awakening Message*, Part I (Fallbrook, Calif.: Present Truth, 1972); idem, *A Review of the Awakening Message*, Part II (Fallbrook, Calif.: Present Truth, 1973).

2. Published by Verdict Publications, P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, California 92028. Prices: *1844 Re-Examined*, \$6.95; *The Pattern of Redemptive History*, \$3.95.

Section I

The Gospel and Adventism

Introduction

Everything in this review of Adventism flows from what is said in this section on the gospel. My understanding of the sanctuary, Ellen G. White, ethics, the church and prophecy is determined by my understanding of the gospel. And unless the reader appreciates the all-sufficiency of the gospel, what follows may be altogether too shattering. The death of an illusion can destroy a person unless he has something better to take its place.

If the New Testament is read thoughtfully, it is not difficult to see what the first Christians were enthusiastic about. God Himself had visited this planet in the person of Jesus. He had died on the cross, risen from the dead and had been exalted as Lord of all at God's right hand. Paul summarized his great preoccupation when he said, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

In the great Reformation of the sixteenth century Johann Bugenhagen declared that the Reformers had "only one doctrine: *Christ is our righteousness.*"¹

This New Testament and Reformation preoccupation with the gospel does not mean a head-in-the-sand reductionism. Paul wrote on a wide variety of subjects, including spiritual gifts, Christian liberty, the Jew-Gentile problem, the church and ethics. And we know that the Reformers' teachings ranged over many aspects of theology. Paul and Bugenhagen meant that the gospel was so overwhelmingly central to them that everything else they discussed was colored by the gospel. All else was just an extension of their understanding of the gospel. If only this passion for the gospel had always characterized Adventism!

1. Quoted in J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1937), p. 54.

1

The Travail of Adventist History

When one examines early Seventh-day Adventist literature, it is obvious that the pioneers were not preoccupied with the gospel but with apocalyptic speculation. Their first periodical, *The Present Truth*, published in 1849-1850, contained more than eighty pages of fine print. These pages were devoted to what the pioneers called "present truth." To use their own words, this was "*the 7th Day Sabbath and Shut Door.*"¹ (The "shut door" was the teaching that Christ had ceased pleading for sinners on October 22, 1844, and that Adventists should no longer preach to the "wicked world" or the "fallen churches.") There was no gospel in *The Present Truth*. Its message was not concerned with New Testa-

1. "The principle [sic] points on which we dwell as present truth are *the 7th Day Sabbath and Shut Door*. In this we wish to honor God's most holy institution and also acknowledge the work of God in our Second Advent experience" (James White to Bro. and Sr. Hastings, 2 Oct. 1848, quoted in Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question" [Statement prepared by Arthur L. White to serve as an appendix to his forthcoming biography of Ellen G. White], p. 23).

ment religion. There is no indication that the pioneers understood justification by faith or that they thought the subject was of great importance.

A careful survey of the early Seventh-day Adventist literature leads one to seriously question the common belief that the Adventist body did not fall into the Laodicean state for several years. Perhaps the legend can be explained by our natural tendency to glorify the pioneer years. The *Adventist Review* was launched in 1850.² One can read this early publication and find almost no mention of the gospel. Most of it is astonishingly dry. Yet there was some improvement beginning about 1853-1854. For the first time Adventists began to preach "the message" to other Christians and, little by little, to the world of real sinners. The realization that sinners could still be saved had a salutary effect on the Adventist community.

I do not take the pessimistic view that Adventism has grown increasingly worse from its pioneer period. Rather, I take the optimistic view that, despite an unpromising beginning, the movement has generally been on gaining ground throughout its history. If the community, now in its *kairos* time—its moment of opportunity—can bring forth the gospel, the travail of its history will not have been in vain.

At special periods in our history the gospel has struggled to break through to the Adventist community. The year 1888 marked such a period. But even here we must keep a proper perspective. As McMahon's book, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man*,³ has shown,

2. *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1850), Paris, Maine. Joseph Bates, S. W. Rhodes, J. N. Andrews, and James White, Publishing Committee.

3. David P. McMahon, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1979), p. 238.

Waggoner had light on justification for the Adventist community. But better material on justification by faith could be found among Protestant scholars of his day. Certainly Waggoner could not be compared with great nineteenth-century expositors like Buchanan, Chalmers, Ryle, Spurgeon and a host of other good Protestants whom Adventists regarded as belonging to "Babylon." This critical attitude of sectarian Adventism toward the rest of the Christian church deprived the community of the help it could have received from men far in advance of Adventists in their articulation of the gospel.

In his book, *Feed My Sheep*, H. M. S. Richards Sr. tells this distressing story:

Some time ago it was my privilege to bring to Christ, as revealed in the gospel and taught by the true Advent message, a very fine woman and her daughter. They were both wonderful Christian women and knew Christ as their Saviour in the church to which they had formerly belonged. They saw and accepted all the great doctrines of this truth which we call "the message." They kept the Sabbath and joined the church. The daughter became the wife of one of our workers; she is now. For twenty years the mother was a member of our church, and faithful in attendance. But unfortunately in that particular church there was a series of pastors who preached less and less of gospel truth, less and less of Bible truth. Sometimes they did not take one text from Scripture, but composed their whole sermon from quotations from the Spirit of prophecy. Good as that is, it is still not the Scripture. One man preached there for over six months without using one Bible text, according to the testimony of some of his congregation.

After nearly twenty years in the truth, this woman shocked the pastor by saying, "I am leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church and going back to the _____ Church," which happened to be the church of her girlhood.

"Why?" he asked. "Why are you doing this terrible thing?"

"I'm doing it because I want to hear about Jesus. I'm hungry to hear the gospel, I'm hungry to hear the Bible preached."

"Oh, but don't you know those people don't have the Sabbath, the Spirit of prophecy, and all these other wonderful truths?"

"Yes," she said, "I know. I'm not giving up the Sabbath. I'm not giving up these wonderful truths. But they have something you don't have. They have the gospel, and they preach from the Bible. I'm so hungry to hear it, I'm going back."

"Oh," the pastor said, "I'll give you some Bible studies."

"No, you won't," she said. "You don't know what the Bible is. You have been here now for three or four years and I've never yet heard you give one Bible sermon. All you know is an old-covenant religion of do, do; don't, don't; touch not, taste not, handle not; you shall perish with the using. All you know is what these red books say. You read them to us all the time, but you haven't given us a Bible text for at least six months. You don't understand the Bible. You don't know what the Bible is about. Don't talk to me about the Bible."

"Don't you know that this is the truth?"

"Sure," she said, "I know. I'm going to keep the Sabbath, but I've got to hear the gospel. Good-by!"

Well, she did wrong, of course. It was almost certain that in due time she would give up the Sabbath and the other truths that distinguish us as a people. Possibly she should have waited twenty-five or thirty years until they got another preacher who would preach the gospel. But she wouldn't wait. She went. I saw her. I couldn't do anything with her, either. She had made her decision. She said: "No, they don't know what the gospel is. I've had three of them now in succession, important men, too, and not one of them knows what it is all about." I was in-

clined to agree with her. I had never heard one of them preach the gospel myself.⁴

We wish we could say that this incident were an isolated one. But all too often the lament of Ellen G. White still proves true, "Our churches are dying for the want of teaching on the subject of righteousness by faith in Christ, and on kindred truths."⁵

In a letter of February 20, 1980, to a leader of the church, Dr. Herschel C. Lamp, an ordained minister and missionary physician, tells this story:

The East Pennsylvania Conference Bible worker gave my mother, my sister, and me Bible studies for about a full year and covered nearly every subject on which a new Adventist is supposed to be catechized, including health reform, wedding rings, other "Christian standards", etc.

The first time I was ever in an Adventist church was the Sabbath in December of 1940 when I was baptized in the Harrisburg Church with your sister by B. P. Gernet. I really did not want to be baptized. I went through the rite primarily because I was afraid not to. I knew of the coming investigative judgment, the seven last plagues, the final outpouring of God's wrath on those who did not keep all the commandments of God and believe in the "Spirit of Prophecy" (the writings of E. G. White) and I wanted to escape the fires of hell that would destroy the wicked.

Upon returning home to Carlisle that December evening I went to the home of one of my high school classmates where I played table tennis with my three best friends. I stopped the game after a while to tell them of my baptism. Knowing nothing of my religious studies, they asked me what this step meant. My answer is still vivid to me—to my shame! I told them that the signifi-

4. H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), pp. 177-79.

5. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1948), p. 301.

cance of my becoming an Adventist was that I could no longer play pinochle, 500, and other forbidden card games, nor could I attend the movies with them, nor could I go to the dance at the Junior Prom, nor could I ever again shoot pool with them at the local pool hall! I didn't mention vegetarianism, abstinence from tea, coffee, and cola drinks, the avoidance of fictitious reading, etc., but it was enough to persuade them that I had lost my mind! As a new Seventh-day Adventist, this was my testimony, my witness, my gospel presentation! You might say that it is unfair to equate my presentation with the gospel, but where did I get these ideas? Looking back I remember no Bible study on justification by faith in the atoning death and faultless merits of Jesus Christ that could give me the assurance of salvation apart from the works of the law. I was simply ignorant of the gospel.

When I went away to college, I did begin to learn more about the atonement but it was always the traditional view—justification by faith is forgiveness for past sins, but after that there must be the character development of sanctification necessary to prepare one for the coming judgment and final acceptance. Little wonder that I struggled for assurance!

While I was working in the Arizona Conference in 1972 Elden Walter, then Ministerial Secretary of the Southwestern Union, came and gave his presentation on "New Testament Witnessing" at a week-long workers' meeting. His presentation of the assurance of salvation through justification by grace through faith in the merits of Christ was the first really clear presentation of the gospel that I had heard. This is not just a rebuke to our system of Christian education and to the theological training of our ministers; it is also a confession of my own failure to study the standard works of Protestant scholars which I have since read and have found to contain a clear portrayal of the gospel largely unknown to Seventh-day Adventists.⁶

6. Herschel C. Lamp, Personal letter of February 20, 1980, to a Seventh-day Adventist friend.

In my files I have personal letters from other Seventh-day Adventist ministers with a similar experience. One of them relates that he had only known "salvation by inward grace" or "salvation by character" until he was enlightened in the righteousness-by-faith agitation of the 1970's. Another ordained worker, who held an important post in a Seventh-day Adventist publishing house, writes that he never understood the gospel until he read Paxton's book, *The Shaking of Adventism*.⁷ He was humbled to think that God had to send a "Babylonian" to enlighten him on the gospel.

If the ministers do not understand or preach the gospel, it is no mystery why so many lay members fail to rejoice in it. I believe that if the ministry were ordered to preach the gospel or be shot, many could not save their lives. But being cursed as an unfaithful steward of the gospel before God's judgment bar is far more serious than that. It has been said that no one stands nearer the door of hell than the Christian minister.

There is a brighter side, of course. The gospel often does not register until a particular moment, and the awakened believer might blame others for failing to tell him what they have been trying to tell him for years. There are faithful shepherds who proclaim Christ as the sinner's only righteousness. And we should not look for a perfect church. That exists only in the imagination. Yet all too often we talk about "coming into this wonderful message" and "accepting the truth" when we do not really mean having sins forgiven and becoming God's children by faith in Jesus Christ. More often we mean accepting the Adventist prophetic schema, believing that this is the remnant church and that other churches are Babylon, keeping the Sabbath and learning about a

7. Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 172.

healthy way of life. There are commendable features to the Adventist way of life, but it is tragic when they are confused with the gospel itself.

Still, there are grounds for hope that the Adventist community will fulfill its destiny beyond all it could hope or think. I suggest that we should look on the history of the movement as the prelude to a mighty recovery of the gospel. If God, in His gracious electing will, planned such a thing, there could be a reason why early Adventism was allowed to orient itself so strongly toward the Old Testament, the law and eschatology. Other great churches began with a powerful revival of the gospel and then grew evangelically weaker in the course of history. On the other hand, Adventism began with a strong legal base but has been struggling to become more and more evangelical throughout its history. Since only those who respect the law of God can really appreciate the gospel, perhaps we should see that our history and the ministry of Ellen G. White have had a pedagogic function. Perhaps we could paraphrase Galatians 3:24 by saying, "All this was our guardian to discipline and prepare us for the Revelation 18:1 glory of justification by faith—the 'third angel's message in verity.'"

If this is true, the present crisis over the gospel must be the *kairos* time for Adventism. The powerful confrontation of the gospel with Adventism is really "the end of Adventism." The gospel is the goal or fulfillment of its calling. If we will stop acting like recalcitrant Judaism, we might see that the gospel does not come to destroy our fond hopes but to fulfill them. If by God's gracious will the community now gives birth to a great gospel revival, the travail of Adventist history will not have been in vain.

2

The Nature of the Gospel

The first thing Paul says in the book of Romans concerning the nature of the gospel is that it is about Christ (Rom. 1:3). Let not the transparent simplicity of this point blind us to its light. The theme of the Bible and the pulsating heart of the New Testament is Jesus Christ. It is not Sabbatarianism, not vegetarianism, not the message that the pope is antichrist, not the message that when you are dead you are really dead, not all kinds of prophetic information and not us. Jesus Christ alone is the transcendent good news of the apostles.

The essence of this good news about Christ is best summarized in the recurring New Testament concept of *fulfillment*. Jesus Christ is declared to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He is the fulfillment of its history, its law, its feasts, its sacrifices, its institutions, its hopes and its promises (Matt. 5:17; Mark 1:15, RSV; Acts 13:32, 33; 2 Cor. 1:20).

Three features of the Old Testament's fulfillment in Christ have a vital bearing on our review of Adventism.

That fulfillment is a historical thing, a regal thing and an eschatological thing.

A Historical Thing

Biblical faith is historical faith. Israel's faith did not produce the story of the Exodus. Rather, it was the concrete historical event of the Exodus which produced Israel's faith. In the same way, the story of Jesus was not the product of the apostles' faith or the result of their ingenious method of interpreting the Old Testament. It was the concrete historical event of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which created apostolic faith and determined the way they interpreted the Old Testament. The Christian faith is not grounded on an event demanded by a certain method of prophetic interpretation. Such "faith" would be based on human "insight" and, by that very fact, would be sectarian and cultic. Rather, the prophecies are read in the light of an empty tomb. The gospel, then, is not just an interpretive "certainty." It is a historical certainty.¹

While the Bible is, on the one hand, a record of the mighty acts of God, it is, on the other hand, a history of Adam and of Israel. There are two divisions to this history. The Old Testament is the history of the first Adam and the first Israel. This is a history of failure, a history which stands under the judgment of God. The New Testament is the history of the new Adam, who is Christ, and the new Israel, who is also Christ.² This is a new, holy history with which God is well pleased. It is a history which fulfills God's covenantal purpose and brings

1. We need to remember this principle when we consider the question of Daniel 8:14 and 1844.

2. Christ is also the last Adam and the last Israel.

salvation to Israel and to the nations. In Jesus Christ, God rewrote the Old Testament—the history of Adam and Israel, indeed the history of the world. As the world was lost by the sin of one man, so it was rescued by the righteousness of One Man (Romans 5:17-19). Just as Israel obtained the victory over her enemy by David's single-handed victory over Goliath, so the church obtained the victory over all the powers arrayed against her by the victory of her new David in His death and resurrection (Col. 2:15).

The word *gospel* signifies the proclamation of good news, and it has special reference to the news of victory, particularly victory in battle.³ The gospel of Christ is the good news of the victory of Christ. In our name and on our behalf He fought our great enemies—sin, death and the devil—and utterly defeated them (Col. 2:15). He took our sin and alienation upon Himself, reconciled us to God by His death on the cross, and by His resurrection restored the race to favor with God. The whole deed of our salvation was accomplished and finished in the Christ event.

When we look at the New Testament passages on the gospel (such as Luke 2:10, 11; Acts 13:32, 33; Rom. 1:1-3; 5:6-10; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), it is plain that they all speak of a historical event. When used in the proper sense ("By this gospel you are saved"—1 Cor. 15:1, 2), the word *gospel* refers to what has been done and finished. What God will do for us if we fulfill certain conditions is not the gospel. God's deed of redemption is something He has already done whether we believe it or not. Our faith does not bring God's saving deed into existence but confesses its existence.

3. See Gerhard Friedrich, in Gerhard Kittel, ed., and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, tr. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:722-23.

Gospel preaching does not declare, "If you will do this or take these steps, God will do that." This inverts the order as if man were cause and God were response. It is not far from the pagan idea that deity can be manipulated if man can only find the secret technique—the right prayer, right sacrifice or right incantation. Rather, the initiative in salvation is wholly with God. Before we thought about it or had any desire to be reconciled to Him, God acted in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself (Rom. 5:6-10). He worked out the whole matter. Before we ever asked forgiveness, God paid our debt in the death of His Son, and in His heart forgave the sins of all men (Isa. 44:22; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:14-20).

The gospel does not proclaim a technique whereby we may attain salvation. Salvation by grace through faith is not salvation by technique. How many times have we heard things like "three steps to salvation" or "seven steps to get the Holy Spirit." That is not preaching the gospel but preaching law. Anything which tells us what we must do or how we should live is *law*. Law has its place, but it must not be confused with the gospel. For too long we have promoted techniques on how to get the Holy Spirit in order to "finish the work." This legalism leads the people of God into bondage. The gospel is the good news that Jesus has won the gift of the Holy Spirit for *all* His people by His humiliation and exaltation (Acts. 2:33). The gift is ours through faith alone (Gal. 3:1-5, 10-14). Gospel preaching does not consist in describing the spiritual feats the believer must take to get the Holy Spirit. It proclaims the steps Jesus has taken to win a free gift for us.

We are not against appropriate human "steps" such as repentance, faith, baptism and obedience. The Bible is clear that a man will be lost if he does not have these things. But we protest the humanistic emphasis which represents that God will do His part when man does his

—as if God does nothing until man's feeble efforts start the process. On the contrary, the historical gospel means that God's salvation is a finished reality in Christ, just as the world was a finished reality on the sixth day of creation. Says Alan Richardson:

Biblical faith, however, is not at all concerned with asking in what salvation consists or in recommending techniques, whether mystical or ethical, by which salvation may be attained. It is concerned rather with the proclamation of the fact of salvation and thus it differs from all "religions" by being kerygmatic in character. The Bible is concerned with the fact that God actually has in concrete historical fact saved his people from destruction.⁴

Two aspects of God's work must be carefully distinguished yet never separated: (1) God's work *for us* in Christ; (2) God's work *in us* by the Holy Spirit. Number 1 is historical. It is objective, unique, unrepeatable and finished. No one can add to it or take away from it. The New Testament everywhere testifies that whoever believes what Christ has done for him is justified and saved to life eternal. This holy history of Jesus Christ—His life, death and resurrection—is a sheer gift to be received by faith alone. A poor sinner does not have to look to his inward experience to find enough repentance, faith or reformation to be accepted of God, but he must come just as he is and accept the gift. When Christ comes to him clothed in His gospel, the sinner simply consents to have the robe of salvation placed upon him, just as one consents to take the bread given to him at Christ's Holy Supper.

If the poor sinner, in this matter of acceptance before God unto life eternal, stops to look at the work of the

4. Alan Richardson, art. "Salvation," in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:168.

Holy Spirit in him, his faith will falter. He will not find in his own inward life a righteousness complete and flawless enough to stand before the scrutiny of his own conscience, let alone the scrutiny of an infinite God. The work of the Spirit in the best saint is not yet finished and is therefore never a basis for acceptance with God. For the assurance of salvation and the consolation of a troubled conscience, the believer must set his eyes only on that which is wholly outside him—Christ's living, suffering and dying. The believer must recognize that God's Word abundantly testifies that he is saved by Christ's finished work *plus nothing*. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

For this reason it is wrong to include the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the definition of the saving gospel. Properly speaking, the inward work of the Spirit is the fruit of the gospel (Col. 1:5, 6). If we believe what Christ has done for us, we will have the Spirit of Christ living in us. Faith in Number 1 brings Number 2 (Gal. 3:10-14). Faith must always be directed outside ourselves to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Some may innocently include the work of the Spirit in the word *gospel*. Perhaps no harm is done if they use *gospel* as a broad term to include all the teachings of the New Testament. Yet one should speak of the fruit of the gospel as "gospel" only by way of metonymy, just as one can speak of the fruit of one's sweat and blood as one's sweat and blood. The problem arises when the operation of the Holy Spirit is deliberately included in the work which makes atonement for sin, or when it is made responsible for our acceptance in the sight of God. This is a great mischief. It is a denial of the gospel because it inevitably leads people to base their acceptance with God

on their spiritual attainment. It puts salvation by character in the place of salvation by grace.

In order for the gospel to be preserved in purity and simplicity, and in order for poor sinners (as we all are) to find a solid anchor for faith at all times, the gospel must be presented as a historical thing. Biblical faith is faith in a historical event or it is nothing at all.

A Regal Thing

The word *gospel* not only has historical connotations but regal connotations. In using the word *gospel*, the New Testament employs a word associated in ancient times with the news of the king's victory over his enemies and his ascension to the throne amid the acclamation of his people.

This regal motif is conspicuous in the New Testament. Jesus is the King of Israel. Everywhere He preached the "good news of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43). He announced its arrival in His own person (Matt. 11:12; Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20; 17:21). The long-looked-for new Adamic Ruler and new King of Israel strove against sin, death and the devil. By His death He destroyed all those powers arrayed against us (Col. 2:15). In His resurrection He was enthroned as King of heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:32-36). God "put everything under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:27), "with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him" (1 Peter 3:22). He was raised above "every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21, 22). In short, His reign began (Ps. 2:6-9; 110:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:25). Therefore, the apostolic gospel may be summarized in the three words which probably express the content of apostolic preaching more than anything else—"Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3).

How beautiful on the mountains
 are the feet of those who bring good news,
 who proclaim peace,
 who bring good tidings,
 who proclaim salvation,
 who say to Zion,
 "Your God reigns!"

—Isa. 52:7.

The message that "Jesus is Lord" at God's right hand is the gospel of salvation. Everyone who believes this in his heart shall be saved (Rom. 10:9, 10).

A recognition of New Testament eschatology has been one of the great gains in twentieth-century Bible studies. Before this it was generally said that Jesus began His spiritual reign ("grace") at His first advent and will begin His physical reign ("glory") at His second advent. We can no longer accept this Grecian dichotomy between spiritual and physical. Jesus reigns now over heaven and earth spiritually, physically and in every other way. He is already King in every sense of the word. He has "authority over all people" (John 17:2). All judgment has been committed to Him (John 5:22). He is the Ruler of the kings of this earth (Rev. 1:5). He is in absolute control of history. He looks after His own physically as well as spiritually. Nothing can take place on this earth without His permission. When His saints appeal to Him against their oppressors, He is not inactive. The book of Revelation shows that He sends His judgments on earth in answer to the prayer of His people. The seals and trumpets of Revelation are revelations of His judgments leading down to the final judgment. As trumpet after trumpet sounds and calamity after calamity falls on those powers which oppose the gospel and oppress His people, heavenly voices cry in triumph:

"You are just in these judgments. . . ."

"Yes, Lord God Almighty,
 true and just are Your judgments."

—Rev. 16:5, 7.

"True and just are His judgments. . . ."

He judges and makes war.—Rev. 19:2, 11.

The function of a biblical king is both war and law. Christ is such a King. He is the military leader of His people, and He presides at the heavenly judgment seat.⁵

The principal difference between the reign of Christ "now" and His reign in the "not yet" is that His present reign is invisible, while His future reign will be visible to all. Those who hear the gospel proclaiming that "Jesus is Lord" see Him by faith on the throne, controlling everything. Just as in the face of their own sinfulness they are righteous by faith, just as in the face of death they believe they have eternal life, so in the midst of what appears to the unbeliever as a world out of control, they see Christ's righteous judgments in the earth. With Isaiah they hear the celestial voices proclaiming, "The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3).

Adventism often speaks of the day when Jesus will remove His priestly robes and put on His kingly attire. But the New Testament proclaims that the reign of Christ has already begun (1 Cor. 15:25). Jesus is already King. We are not to think He will become King at some future time and then bring this world under His control. The New Testament proclamation, "Jesus is Lord," is a faith to live by even now. It is an affirmation which

5. According to John Calvin, this is what sitting at the right hand of God means. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20, 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), bk. 2, chap. 16, sec. 15.

should be the reason for everything we do. Jesus is Lord of life, Lord of death, Lord of the church, Lord of the nations, Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of the future. Happy is the person who can face anything which happens in the calm assurance that "Jesus is Lord."

An Eschatological Thing

Biblical faith is not only historical faith; it is eschatological faith. The Bible shows us that history is a road leading to an end. It is the end of a thing which gives it meaning. The Old Testament looked forward to the end of the age when God would rise in judgment to deal with sin, punish the oppressors of His people and usher in the eschatological reign of God. The New Testament announces that Jesus fulfills all that the Old Testament had promised (Matt. 5:17; Acts 13:32, 33; 2 Cor. 1:20). This means that in Jesus Christ the end of the world has already arrived. The end-time events, such as judgment, resurrection, the manifestation of God's wrath, the new creation and the destruction of sin and death, have already taken place in Christ. The gospel is the good news that God has achieved His goal for the human race, that history has reached its appointed end in its new Head and Representative, Jesus Christ.

This is why the New Testament speaks of the death-resurrection of Christ as an end-of-the-world event (Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26). The preaching of the gospel is also an eschatological event. For this reason the New Testament repeatedly declares that the last days have arrived (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20). The apostolic church is therefore an eschatological community waiting for the speedy consummation at the return of Christ, when all that has already taken place in Him and all that has been accepted in the gospel by faith will be visibly disclosed.

The real force of the gospel and of the New Testament documents cannot be understood or rightly interpreted if this all-pervasive eschatological consciousness is not recognized. The apostles wrote and preached in the conviction that they were living in the last days. Jesus' coming again was said to be "almost here," "near," "in just a very little while," "soon" (Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 1:1, 3).

While in the past God had spoken in different ways through the prophets, He had in the last days spoken in His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). In Him God gave His full and final revelation. Jesus Christ was God's last Word to man. And the New Testament constitutes the publication of His last will and testament. The apostolic gospel was complete (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 1:6, 7; Col. 1:25). Nothing was to be added to it, since it "was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). Thus, the canon of Sacred Scripture closed in the apostolic era.

Traditional Adventism has always been oriented to future events and to the end of the world. But it is our privilege to go beyond the vision of the Old Testament saints, who could only look forward, saying, "Behold, the days come." For the one who lives in the light of the New Testament, the future is no longer a matter of speculation. All our expectations have already taken place in Jesus Christ. Eschatology has already been realized in Him. The new creation has already taken place in Christ, and by faith we are already incorporated into the end-time events (2 Cor. 5:17). By faith we already participate in eternal life—the life of the age to come. By faith we have already crossed over from death to life and live on the other side of the judgment (John 5:24). In Christ we already have the future we wait for. The gospel, therefore, is our picture of the future, for that which will be has already been. It is not so much *what* awaits us in the future but *who* awaits us in the future. The second com-

ing will be the visible disclosure and empirical realization of what is already ours in Christ. The gospel is therefore our guarantee of His coming again.

Section II

The Gospel and the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine

3

The Gospel and the Two-Apartment Schema

The doctrine of the sanctuary and investigative judgment is Seventh-day Adventism's one unique contribution to Christian theology. In traditional Adventism it is said that Jesus entered the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension and continued His ministry there until He entered the most holy place for the first time in 1844.¹ He then began an "investigative judgment" of the professed people of God to determine who among the dead should be resurrected and who among the living should be translated at His coming.

But the idea of a two-apartment heavenly sanctuary, modeled after the Levitical order of the earthly sanctuary, is called into question by the New Testament gospel. It is true that in more recent years some Adventist

1. In order to answer Ballenger, Andross introduced a slight modification when he said that Christ entered the most holy to dedicate the sanctuary at His ascension and then went back to begin His ministry in the first apartment. But this did not change the substance of the traditional position.

scholars have preferred to speak of "two ministrations" in heaven rather than "two apartments" in heaven.² The concept of two apartments in heaven has evidently struck them as naively literalistic. But whether there are two apartments or two ministrations makes no difference to the following objections:

1. The idea that Christ began His ministry in the first apartment at His ascension but did not begin His final ministry until 1844 is in conflict with the New Testament gospel. If Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament—if His redemptive act is finished, if He reigns as King at God's right hand, and if His resurrection inaugurates the last days—then it is impossible to maintain the idea that His final ministry in the most holy place did not begin until 1844. The two-apartment schema denies the emphasis on finality and ultimacy which pervades the book of Hebrews. The gospel proclaims the finality of Christ. Not only was His redemptive act on the cross a final thing, but His exaltation to the right hand of God as King-Priest was an ultimate thing. The apostolic gospel announces the arrival of the last days (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20). The New Testament church is an eschatological community. It is not waiting for Jesus to proceed with a final ministration in the holy of holies. As Hebrews 9:28 shows, it is waiting for the High Priest to come out of the sanctuary.³

2. E.g., see "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists—Church Manual Revision," art. 23, "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Adventist Review*, 1 May 1980, p. 27. For a further report of recent discussions relating to the two-apartment schema, see Lawrence Geraty, "A New Statement of Fundamental Beliefs," *Spectrum* 11, no. 1 (July 1980): 2-13.

3. Hebrews 9:28 is a play on the symbolism of the Day of Atonement, when the people waited in the outer court for the high priest to come out to bless the assembly.

The idea that Jesus merely began the first stage of His ministry in heaven is based on the pioneer assumption that the last days did not arrive until the 1844 era. Thus, J. N. Andrews argued that the last days did not arrive until his generation.⁴ The pioneers apparently did not recognize or accept the declarations of the New Testament that the last days had already arrived. Though we can agree with the pioneers that the final ministry of Christ in the holy of holies belongs to the last days, we must see that the last days began in the generation of the apostles.

Nineteenth-century Bible expositors generally did not understand the eschatological setting of the New Testament message. In the past fifty years, however, the eschatology of the New Testament has become widely recognized by scholars in the Christian church. This eschatological meaning of the Christ event makes the traditional Adventist schema untenable.

2. The gospel declares that the risen Christ has taken His seat on the throne at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 15:25-27; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 8:1; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev. 3:21). The throne of God was represented by the mercy seat in the most holy place of the earthly tabernacle. The expression that God sits "enthroned between the cherubim" is an allusion to the mercy seat in the holy of holies (2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16).

In order to avoid the force of the New Testament declarations that the ascended Christ sat down at the right hand of God, traditional Adventism advanced the rather childish argument of a movable throne. Using

4. See J. N. Andrews, *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12, Particularly the Third Angel's Message, and Two-Horned Beast*, 5th ed. rev. (Battle Creek: Review & Herald Publishing Co., 1892).

Revelation 4:5 and 8:3, it argued that the throne was moved into the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary—just because John the revelator declared that he saw “seven lamps” and the “golden altar” before the throne. But if these visions were to teach the arrangement of heavenly furniture, why could not someone just as logically argue that the “seven lamps” and the “golden altar” were moved into the most holy place before the throne? After all, in a number of reliable versions Hebrews 9:3, 4 says that the golden altar of incense was in the most holy place! Or why could not another just as logically argue that, since the veil had been rent, nothing separated the candlesticks and altar of the first apartment from the throne in the second apartment?

Is it not most tenuous, therefore, to resort to such “proof texts” as Revelation 4:5 and 8:3? The visions of Revelation are highly symbolic. A comparison with Revelation 5:6 shows that the “seven lamps” are the seven eyes of the Lamb. So Jesus Christ Himself is the reality of the lamps just as He is the reality of the bread on the table, the incense on the altar and the glory of the Shekinah. Surely the New Testament is not teaching that celestial geography corresponds to the position of the furniture in the Levitical tabernacle. Rather, it is teaching that Jesus Christ in His ministry is the reality of all the Levitical furniture.

Building a doctrine on symbolic inferences of Holy Scripture is extremely risky. Those who resort to such “proof-texting” only emphasize the weakness of their arguments.

It is mistaken zeal which confuses the solid reality of saving truth with a literalistic schema of celestial geography. This makes a man’s salvation depend on useless speculations as if the chief purpose of holy symbolism were to teach the correct geographical position of Christ.

Surely it would be better to build a doctrine on the clear utterances of the New Testament which tell us that Christ reached His ultimate exaltation when He sat down on the throne once and for all.

3. In Hebrews 4:16 the apostolic church is invited to “approach the throne of grace with confidence.” F. F. Bruce points out that this “throne of grace” is an allusion to the mercy seat.⁵ Hebrews 4:16 is therefore an invitation to enter the most holy place. Furthermore, Jesus Himself is said to be our Mercy Seat.⁶

Must we argue that Christians had no access to the mercy seat until 1844? Surely no Seventh-day Adventist seriously believes that.

4. The gospel to the Hebrews declares that the ascended Christ entered the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24). Was not the Shekinah in the holy of holies a symbol of God’s presence? And was not the purpose of the veil before the holy of holies to exclude the priests from the presence of God? Surely the presence of God is the true reality symbolized by the most holy place. There can be no holier place than before His unveiled presence.

How then can we say that Jesus was in God’s presence before 1844, but not in the most holy place? Surely no one could candidly read the New Testament and think it even suggests such abstract distinctions as the difference between God’s presence and the most holy place. To argue about heavenly curtains and the position of heavenly furniture when the living Reality of all this is seated on the throne in the unveiled presence of God is certainly reverting to shadowy Levitical things.

5. See F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 86-7.

6. See Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10, where the Greek word is *hilastērion*, which corresponds to the Old Testament Hebrew word for mercy seat—*kap-poreth*. *Hilastērion* designates the mercy seat in Hebrews 9:5.

In order to escape the force of the New Testament declarations about Jesus entering the unveiled presence of God, we have had to revert to the Old Testament sanctuary, illustrating that we are more comfortable with the Old Testament shadow than with the New Testament reality. We have shown that the priest in the first apartment ministered "before the Lord" (Lev. 4:6, 7) and have triumphantly argued, "If the priest in the first apartment ministered 'before the Lord,' then Christ could also be in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary and yet be 'before the Lord'—that is, in the presence of God." But this defense is manifestly weak, for the Old Testament expression "before the Lord" also refers to priests in the outer court (Lev. 4:15) and to sinners in the camp (Gen. 10:9; Ex. 20:3). In this sense everything and everybody is "before the Lord," and even the man who makes his bed in *sheol* is still before the Lord (Ps. 139:8). But the Levitical service emphasized the difference between being "before the Lord" in the first apartment and being before His unveiled presence in the cloud of glory above the mercy seat. Surely no Adventist would seriously argue that Jesus was not in God's presence in the ultimate sense before 1844. Then He was in the holiest of all, for there is no holier place than the unveiled presence of God.

5. Hebrews 6:19, 20 declares, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a High Priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." In early Adventism men like Uriah Smith wrote whole treatises to disprove that Christ is represented here as entering the holy of holies. They argued about first veils and second veils, and described the intricacies of the sanctuary furniture as if men's salvation, or at least the

salvation of Adventism, depended on proving that the veil of Hebrews 6:19 was the curtain at the entrance to the first apartment.

The identical Greek phrase *esōteron tou katapetasmatos* (literally, the inner of the veil), which appears in Hebrews 6:19, is also found in the Septuagint translation of Leviticus 16:2, 12, 15, where it refers to the veil before the holy of holies. In fact, the Septuagint never uses the phrase *esōteron tou katapetasmatos* for anything but this veil, and the writer of Hebrews preferred the Septuagint version.⁷ When we further consider that Hebrews 6:19, 20 is speaking of Christ as High Priest, it seems certain that the writer is borrowing the phrase *esōteron tou katapetasmatos* from Leviticus 16. Moreover, the curtain at the entrance of the first apartment of the tabernacle had no great cultic significance to a Jew. When the Gospels tell us that "the veil of the temple" was rent at the time of Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51, KJV), no one has any difficulty understanding that "the veil" refers to the veil before the holy of holies. It is therefore clear that the writer of Hebrews is inviting first-century Christians to enter the holy of holies by faith.

6. Hebrews 9 and 10 is the only place where the New Testament comments on the meaning of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Here Christ's ascension to the heavenly sanctuary is compared and contrasted with Aaron's entrance into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement:

When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner

7. See Norman H. Young, "The Checkered History of the Phrase 'Within the Veil,'" pp. 5-6, quoted in Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14: The Judgment and the Kingdom of God: A Rebuttal of Criticisms of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine."

room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. . . .

When Christ came as High Priest of the good things that are already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. . . .

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment . . .
—Heb. 9:6, 7, 11, 12, 24-27.

The apostle here contrasts Aaron's ministry on the Day of Atonement with Christ's work on the cross and His entrance into heaven. Notice the contrasts between type and antitype:

Type	Antitype
"The high priest [Aaron]" (vs. 7)	"Christ . . . High Priest" (vs. 11)
"Once a year" (vs. 7)	"Once for all" (vs. 12)
"Blood [of bulls and goats]" (vs. 7; cf. Lev. 16:6)	"His own blood [not of bulls and goats]" (vs. 12)
"Inner room [most holy place]" (vs. 7)	"Most Holy Place" (vs. 12)

"The high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year" (vs. 25).

"Christ . . . entered heaven itself" (vs. 24).

It is true that the Greek of Hebrews 9:12 does not literally read "Most Holy Place." The Greek is *ta hagia*. This is plural in form (the holies) but not necessarily plural in meaning. The pioneers argued that since *ta hagia* is plural, it signifies two apartments. But Adventist scholars now acknowledge that this argument is untenable.⁸ The Greek term *ta hagia* is ambiguous. It can be used for the holy place (first apartment), as in Hebrews 9:2, the most holy place, or the sanctuary as a whole. This same ambiguity is found in the Old Testament. In the King James Version of Leviticus 16, for instance, the second apartment is simply called "the holy place." Just as the context of Leviticus 16 indicates that "the holy place" refers to the most holy place, so the context of Hebrews 9 indicates that the writer is drawing the analogy between Aaron's entrance into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement and Christ's entrance into heaven at His ascension. For this reason the New International Version translates *ta hagia* in Hebrews 9:12, 25 and 10:19 as "the Most Holy Place."

Some translators render *ta hagia* as "sanctuary." This is acceptable, provided we do not conclude that they mean the sanctuary as a whole. (In Leviticus 16:33 the most holy place is called the sanctuary.) Let us remember that the writer of Hebrews is addressing Jewish Christians. He is discussing the high-priestly activity on the Day of Atonement. He tells them that Christ is the High Priest who has offered the day-of-atonement sacrifice and has gone into the sanctuary, into the very pres-

8. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), 7:444, 448-49.

ence of God. What could any Jew conclude but that Christ has fulfilled the type of the high priest's entering the most holy place?

How can we continue arguing against the clearest testimony of Holy Scripture? I am astonished and greatly humbled when I reflect that I agonized over Hebrews 9 for many years in an effort to support the traditional Adventist interpretation. Such is the power that preconceived opinions and blind loyalty to traditional beliefs can have over the mind. But I have had to surrender, because the gospel and the testimony of Holy Scripture are too strong for me.

In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, "heads have rolled" because of defection from the traditional Adventist dogma which declares that Jesus did not begin his ministry in the most holy place until 1844. Many have been turned from Adventism because they could not reconcile Hebrews 9 with the 1844 message. A. F. Ballenger and W. W. Fletcher encountered difficulty here and were lost to the denominational cause. Not so well known, however, is that leaders like W. W. Prescott and LeRoy E. Froom were haunted by Hebrews 9 for years. Although they tried ever so diligently, they were unable to reconcile Hebrews 9 with traditional Adventism.

Within the last generation more and more Adventist scholars have come to realize what Hebrews 9 teaches.⁹ Yet there has been a strange conspiracy of silence on the question. Now that the issue has been openly broached, some are terrified at the implications of Hebrews 9 for the movement. Triumphalistic Adventism might have to

9. It is ironical that Adventist scholars can confess the truth about Hebrews 9 in scholarly non-Adventist journals while maintaining silence on this point

admit a serious mistake in interpreting the Scriptures. This is almost unthinkable! We have called ourselves "the people of the Book." Shall we then be unwilling to examine our faith by the Book?

We must have the truth, truth at any price even if it kills us—and it surely will. But to die at the kind hand of truth is better than to live at the cruel hand of delusion. If Jesus tarries and a posterity must follow us, may it not have to be said that we came this way, stumbled onto the truth and were afraid to look it squarely in the eye.

The False Use of Typology

The pioneers used three arguments to establish the two-apartment schema of the heavenly sanctuary. (1) They erroneously appealed to the meaning of *ta hagia*. (2) They applied the symbolism in Revelation 4:5 and 8:3 to show that Christ was in the first apartment before 1844. (3) They used the typological argument that if there was a two-apartment ministration in the type, there must also be a two-apartment ministration in the antitype. Adventist books declared, "As in the type, so in the antitype."

in Adventist publications. For example, the Australian Adventist scholar, Norman H. Young, states in a forthcoming issue of the journal, *New Testament Studies*: "Although there is considerable confusion among the translations as to the rendering of ἅγια [*hagia*] in Heb. 9, 8, 12, 24 and 25, the commentators are in general agreement concerning its reference to the Holy of Holies. The preferred translations are 'holy place' (or 'Holy Place') and 'sanctuary'. These are fairly imprecise terms if, as most commentators affirm, τὰ ἅγια [*ta hagia*] in these verses means specifically the Holy of Holies. The text itself gives incontrovertible indication that this meaning for τὰ ἅγια [*ta hagia*] is correct despite isolated support for the idea that τὰ ἅγια [*ta hagia*] refers to the sanctuary as a whole" (Norman H. Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9").

There is a major fallacy in this reasoning. It is not necessary for all features in the type to be reflected in the antitype. While there is always some *correspondence* between type and antitype, there is always *contrast* as well. The writer of Hebrews majors far more on the contrasts than on the parallels between the two sanctuaries. For instance, he says that while the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, Jesus' blood does take away sin. Earthly priests died, but Jesus remains a Priest forever by the power of an endless life. Aaron was from the tribe of Levi, but Christ was from the tribe of Judah. Jesus is not only Priest, but a King-Priest, and thus not like the type in this respect. The greatest emphasis in Hebrews is not on the likeness of the two systems but on their unlikeness. So Hebrews says: "Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day" (Heb. 7:27). "It will *not* be like the covenant I made with their forefathers.'" (Heb. 8:9).

Day after day every priest *stands* and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He *sat down* at the right hand of God.—Heb. 10:11, 12.

The Levitical priest offered sacrifice again and again. But we do not argue that Jesus must therefore offer sacrifice again and again. The Levitical priest *stood* before the Lord, pleading the offering for the people. But Christ's intercession is that of a King *seated* on His throne. Aaron stood up; Christ sat down.

E. Earle Ellis offers much good sense on the proper use of typology. He says:

The Old Testament type not only corresponds to the new-age reality but also stands in antithesis to it. Like Adam Jesus is the representative headman of the race; but unlike Adam, who brought death, Jesus brings forgiveness and life. Jesus is "the prophet like Moses" but, unlike Moses' ministry of condemnation, that of Jesus gives righteousness. . . . One may speak, then, of "synthetic" and of "antithetic" typology to distinguish the way in which a type, to one degree or another, either corresponds to or differs from the reality of the new age. . . .

Typology is never mere repetition but is always combined with a change of key in which some aspects of the type are not carried over and some are intensified.¹⁰

Reflection on many of the Old Testament types will demonstrate that all features of the type are not carried over into the antitype. Perhaps most importantly, the antitype always transcends the limits of the type, so that the old forms are inadequate to express the divine reality. We cannot say a certain feature of a type must be reflected in the antitype unless the Scripture indicates this. Nothing in Hebrews suggests a two-apartment ministration in heaven. If that were the lesson the writer of Hebrews drew from the two apartments, we could safely follow this lead. But traditional Adventist interpretation is not found in the book of Hebrews.

Basing a doctrine on a type is risky business and contrary to sound hermeneutics. It led the pioneers to make two fundamentally false conclusions—that the atone-

10. E. Earle Ellis, "Chapter XII: How the New Testament Uses the Old," in I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977) pp. 211-12.

ment was not made on the cross and that there is a two-partite sanctuary in heaven.

The Atonement

Since Aaron made the atonement in the sanctuary (Lev. 16:17), the pioneers concluded that Christ must also make His atonement in the sanctuary and not on the cross. They were consistent with their own typological principle which argued, "As in the type, so in the antitype," but it was a false principle. The typology of Hebrews moves on a different plane. While Aaron went into the sanctuary and made the atonement, Christ made His atonement before He went in (Heb. 1:3; 2:17; 9:12, 26; 10:12-14). That is why His ministry is "superior." The superiority of Christ's ministry is demonstrated by contrast, not by parallel.

The pioneers generally insisted that the atonement was not made on the cross.¹¹ After 1888, Adventism began to modify this position. It said that the atonement was not *finished* at the cross. Not until the publication in 1957 of the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*,¹² did informed Adventists feel comfortable with Christ's complete atonement on the cross. The final step is now inevitable. If the atonement took place at the cross, then it must be obvious that the atonement cannot be separated from the day of atonement by nearly two thousand years.

11. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1971), p. 161.

12. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C., Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957). "Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors."

As long as the community has denied or qualified Christ's complete atonement on Calvary, the doctrine of justification by faith has inevitably been impaired. An atonement less than full and complete could only produce a "justification" before God which is less than full and complete. We need look no further for the reason why Adventism has tried to live with a doctrine of justification by faith which falls short of both New Testament and Reformation doctrine. Much like old Judaism, Adventism still looks to the future for a full and complete justification. Adventism believes this will take place in the "investigative judgment" when Christ makes a "final atonement" for His people. If the "final atonement" is future, then real justification must still be future. Consequently, present assurance of salvation is virtually impossible when this Adventist schema is taken seriously.

Adventism concluded that the atonement is made in heaven by projecting the Levitical sanctuary into heaven and by reasoning, "As in the type, so in the antitype." Since this is a false use of typology, it leads to a false understanding of the gospel. It is a gospel bound by the Levitical order. It is not the New Testament gospel, which utterly transcends the Levitical order.

The Two Apartments

Traditional Adventism has said that since there are two apartments in the earthly sanctuary, there must be two apartments in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, the two-apartment Levitical schema is projected into heaven. Nowhere does the book of Hebrews say there are two apartments in heaven. If the writer of Hebrews wished to teach that, he had sufficient opportunity. To argue that because the earthly had two apartments, the heav-

only must also have two apartments, is to ignore the contrasts between type and antitype in typology.

To insist that there must be two apartments in heaven on the ground of the type is no more reasonable than insisting that Christ must be a Levitical priest who offers sacrifice again and again. We all admit Hebrews teaches that the daily and yearly sacrifices met their antitype in the one great offering of Christ. Why cannot we also see that the daily (first-apartment) and yearly (second-apartment) sanctuary ministrations are also fulfilled in the one great ministry of Christ?

The writer of Hebrews has no burden to show two apartments in heaven. When he contrasts the earthly and the heavenly orders, his reasoning is not along spatial lines but functional lines. Like a true Hebrew, he is interested in the function of the sanctuary, not its spatial categories or geographical arrangements. Scholars who compare Greek and Hebrew thought show that while the Greek (and Western) mind tends to think spatially and in terms of visual images, the Hebrew thinks in terms of function. If I were to say, "Think of a sailboat," most of us would immediately "see" an outline of a sailboat. But a Hebrew would "feel" the wind filling the sails and the vessel moving through the water. The Bible does not tell us what Noah's ark looked like. Nor does it describe the visible appearance of the tabernacle. The Hebrew thinks dynamically. He is interested in function. Thus, when the writer of Hebrews compares and contrasts the sanctuaries of the two covenants, he compares and contrasts their functions. He is not interested in the spatial specifications of the heavenly sanctuary. To the Hebrew, even God is known by what He does. The superiority of the heavenly sanctuary is demonstrated not by what it looks like but by what it does. We should remember this when we read that the

earthly sanctuary was "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven" (Heb. 8:5). This "copy" is more functional than spatial. Even here there are great contrasts, because the earthly tabernacle was only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1, KJV).

Hebrews, of course, does talk about the two ministrations of the Levitical tabernacle. "The priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood" (Heb. 9:6, 7).

Does the apostle tell us the meaning or the lesson to be drawn from these two apartments? He does, for he continues: "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place [the heavenly sanctuary] had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle [the earthly sanctuary] was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper" (Heb. 9:8, 9).

If the Holy Spirit is represented as speaking so definitely on the meaning of the two apartments in the earthly sanctuary, what right have we to ignore the definitive interpretation of the Holy Spirit? Traditional Adventism says, "Surely there must have been an object lesson in the two apartments." The Bible says, "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing" (Heb. 9:8).

Two features of the old-covenant sanctuary demonstrated its inadequacy. First, animal blood could not cleanse the conscience of the worshiper. Second, the veil before the holy of holies prevented free access to God. So long as the two-apartment arrangement stood, the way into the *hagia* or the heaven of God's presence was not

disclosed. Thus, the earthly system had to be replaced by a "better" sacrifice and a "better" tabernacle.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent. In His resurrection Christ, as our great High Priest, went directly into the unveiled presence of God. The gospel therefore proclaims unrestricted access to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19, 20). To suggest that our High Priest, who was given every title and who reached ultimate exaltation in His ascension, was excluded from the most holy place until 1844 is an intolerable contradiction to the New Testament gospel.¹³

In their handling of Old Testament typology, Adventist pioneers made two fundamental mistakes. They tried to interpret the meaning of the two apartments without regard to the New Testament interpretation (Heb. 9:8). And they tried to build a doctrine on an Old Testament type. Typology, however, should be used to illustrate rather than prove a doctrine.¹⁴ Traditional Adventism has no proof for its two-apartment schema in heaven other than a false typological analogy.

What I have said here on the book of Hebrews is found in all great commentaries on Hebrews from John Calvin to the latest excellent commentary by Hughes.¹⁵ Their testimony is not only united on the essential meaning of

13. The embarrassment is not relieved by admitting that upon His ascension Christ went into the most holy place to anoint the sanctuary but then went back into the first apartment, where He continued until 1844. Such theories imply that Adventists know more about the sanctuary in heaven than the writer of Hebrews.

14. Typology presupposes faith but does not establish it.

15. See John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 12, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. William B. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963); Philip E. Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

Hebrews 9, but sound and convincing. But the Adventist two-apartment heavenly schema is not even mentioned in the great commentaries available in English. The writers do discuss important heresies. But they apparently feel that the Adventist theory of Jesus going from one apartment to another in 1844 is not even a significant heresy.

4

The Gospel and the Investigative Judgment

If we accept the New Testament gospel, which declares that Christ's redemptive act is finished, that He already reigns at God's right hand and that His victory over sin and death inaugurated the last days, we cannot accept the traditional Adventist doctrine of an investigative judgment beginning in 1844. The New Testament gospel and the theory of an investigative judgment are not compatible. This does not mean that anyone who believes in the investigative judgment does not believe the gospel. But their understanding of the gospel is so immature that they have not discerned its eschatological implications.

In a later chapter we will examine some of the more technical arguments for the doctrine of the investigative judgment. Before we do this, however, let us judge the matter in the clear light of the gospel.

Four aspects of New Testament theology call traditional Adventist eschatology into question.

1. The structure of New Testament eschatology is trinitarian—that is, the end of the world unfolds in three stages. The cross is an end-time event (Heb. 9:26). The outpouring of the Spirit for the preaching of the gospel is an end-time event (Acts 2:17). And the parousia or return of Christ ushers in the great consummation.¹

The apostles therefore proclaimed that they were in the last days. They believed that their gospel confronted men with the eschatological moment of decision which would usher in the parousia and day of wrath. To them the Lord's coming was "almost here," "near," "in just a very little while," "soon" (Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 1:1, 3). In a sense, we are no nearer Christ's coming than they were, for the line of time has been running parallel to the line of eternity since the resurrection. The apostles fully preached the gospel (Rom. 15:19)—all that was necessary to prepare the church for the coming of Christ (Rom. 5:1; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:7).

If the apostles were in the last days, where did they describe the Adventist investigative judgment? Or where did they write of a future investigative judgment preceding the Lord's return? For them, the next great event was the Lord's coming. Of course, the traditional Adventist may say that the apostles did not understand the book of Daniel and had no light on the great 1844 judgment. But the Adventist then has the unenviable task of adding to the message which the apostles preached. Paul opposed adding anything to his gospel. The apostles knew of only one cataclysmic event in the future—Christ's coming. Since the structure of New Testament eschatology is trinitarian, there is no room for a fourth dimension to accommodate a new eschato-

1. For a further discussion on each of these events as an end-time or eschatological fulfillment of the Old Testament, see Robert D. Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 104-19.

logical event beginning in 1844. No matter how much one searches the New Testament, he cannot go beyond the fact that Christ came to the cross, He came to His Father in heaven, and He will come again in power and great glory.

2. The gospel declares that Christ's reign has been inaugurated, for He is now seated at God's right hand. The good news is that our Lord reigns. Paul declares, "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

The Hebrew word *shaphat* has the double meaning of "to rule" or "to judge."² Translators sometimes use these two expressions interchangeably. Judgment is a regal function. To be enthroned as a king means to be installed in the office of judge (Ex. 2:14; 1 Sam. 8:5, 20; Prov. 20:8; Isa. 33:22). Judgment is the prerogative of the king. To reign is to judge. The New Testament does not abandon this concept but incorporates it (Matt. 19:28; 25:31, 32; Luke 22:29, 30; Rev. 20:4).

Thus, Calvin was right when he commented that to sit at God's right hand means to preside at the heavenly judgment seat.³ If Christ is now reigning, He is now judging. Therefore, the gospel not only declares, "Your God reigns" (Isa. 52:7), but "The hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). The entire book of Revelation prominently features Christ's present work of judgment. Revelation 1-3 shows that the Son of Man is the Ruler/Judge active in judging the churches, rebuking sins and removing the candlesticks from those who do not repent. He is also Judge of the nations. The revelator shows that in response to the cries of His oppressed people, Christ

2. See *ibid.*, pp. 91-4.

3. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20, 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), bk. 2, chap. 16, sec. 15.

judges the despisers of His gospel with wars and plagues. The calamities which fill the pages of history are His judgments—precursors of the final judgment at the end of the world.

If eschatology has a trinitarian structure, the end-time judgment is also trinitarian. The judgment of the world took place at Calvary (John 12:31; Rom. 3:25), it continues as Christ now reigns at God's right hand, and it will be consummated at His return in power and glory.

In light of the repeated New Testament affirmation that the ascended Christ took His seat at God's right hand and began His reign, how can we say that the pre-advent judgment did not begin until 1844? Furthermore, how can we defend the traditional Adventist idea that Jesus will not receive His kingdom and put on His kingly robes until after His work of investigative judgment is completed? As far as the Bible is concerned, judgment is a kingly function. Unless Christ were enthroned as King, He could judge neither His house nor the nations.

3. The New Testament does not deny a pre-advent judgment but sees the gospel as its reality. In these last days—this eschatological moment of time between the resurrection and the parousia—Christ judges all men by the gospel. In the gospel the final judgment is mysteriously present (John 3:16-20; 5:24; 9:39; 12:31; 16:8-11). Those who obey the gospel are declared righteous before God's judgment seat and are given eternal life. They are sealed for the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30). He who refuses the gospel is condemned to eternal death. "God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). This is the present reality of the judgment (John 3:19).

We do not oppose traditional Adventism's insistence on a pre-advent judgment to determine who shall be resurrected or translated at Christ's coming. But the

gospel decides on which side men stand. By their response to the gospel they are marked for eternal life or eternal death. God does not need a further investigative judgment to determine who shall be resurrected or translated. Christ knows His sheep (John 10:14). "The Lord knows those who are His'" (2 Tim. 2:19). He has already marked them as His by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 14). Paul declared, "Those He justified, He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

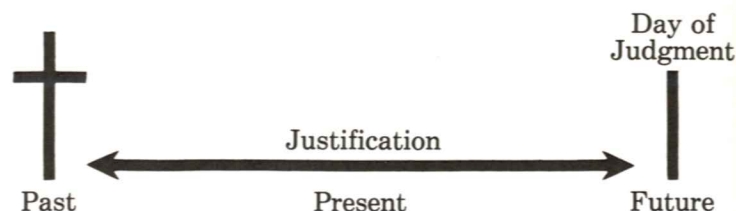
Whenever Jesus or the apostles speak of the future judgment, they *never* refer to the one before Christ's coming but *always* to the judgment which takes place *at* His coming (Matt. 13:39, 40, 42; 25:14-33; Luke 19:11-27; Rom. 2:13-16; 1 Cor. 3:11-13; 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:25, 30, 37; 1 Peter 4:5; Rev. 11:18).

4. If the gospel is the reality of the pre-advent judgment, justification by faith is its liberating verdict. It is as if Paul were to come to Campus Hill and declare, "When I came into this Adventist city, I saw that you were very eschatologically conscious, for I saw that you have an inscription to your only unique contribution to theology which reads, 'The Investigative Judgment.' That which you imperfectly understand and grope after, I declare unto you in my message of justification by faith alone."

The present issue over the investigative judgment is the same issue which has been raging over justification by faith. For the last decade the debate has largely focused on the forensic nature of justification—whether the righteousness of faith is Christ's work of atonement plus nothing or Christ's work plus our transformed characters. I suggest that this part of the debate has been settled. The focus is now on the eschatological meaning of justification by faith. This brings the entire question of the investigative judgment under review. Since the ar-

ticle of justification by faith is the heart of every doctrinal issue, let us explore its relationship to the final judgment.

In the Bible, justification has a historical and an eschatological reference point. It looks back to the death and resurrection of Christ and forward to the day of judgment:



The setting for Paul's doctrine of justification by faith in the book of Romans is the great day of judgment. The authors of the New Testament believed that the last days had already arrived. An eschatological consciousness dominated Paul's thinking. He was overwhelmed by the thought that the day of God's wrath and righteous judgment was about to burst upon Gentile and Jew. To read Romans 1 and 2 is to feel that time flees and we find ourselves standing before the great white throne in judgment. And in this setting the apostle addresses himself to life's ultimate question: How can I find a righteousness which can stand in the judgment of God?

It is clear from Romans 2:13-16 that the word *justified* means to be pronounced righteous by the Judge on the day of judgment. Thus, we use the term *forensic*, which has to do with law, judgment, juridical procedure. Jesus used the same meaning of justification when He said:

I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.—Matt. 12:36, 37, RSV.

We cannot stress the eschatological context of the biblical message of justification too strongly. To lose this is to lose much of the force of Paul's gospel. Justification is concerned with our acceptance as righteous people on the day of judgment. It addresses life's ultimate question. All other questions pale into insignificance when we see ourselves standing before God in judgment and are forced to cry, "Who shall be able to stand?"

But Paul's message of justification has been removed from its eschatological setting. Instead of addressing the ultimate question of finding a righteousness to stand in the judgment, it is reduced to the question, "How do I begin the Christian life?" In this way justification becomes a preliminary thing relating only to Christian initiation. This has happened in the traditional Adventist doctrine of justification. But this is not what Paul is talking about. With the apostle, justification is not so much concerned with the first step but with the last step. Meeting God's approval on the day of judgment is the only step which ultimately matters. What have we gained if we fail the last step? We may fight with the beasts of Ephesus. We may gain an "Adventist justification" to get us started. And we may run and fight ever so hard on the way of sanctification. But if we ultimately fail in the day of judgment, everything is in vain, and nothing has any meaning. The whole Adventist controversy over justification and sanctification is meaningless unless it relates to this ultimate question of human existence.

Only as we are confronted with the awful reality of judgment can we appreciate the full force of Paul's gospel. What righteousness can we bring to stand before the undimmed splendor of God's law? Piety, holy living and inward renewal by the Holy Spirit have their place, but in the matter of finding a righteousness to stand in the judgment, they have no place.

We now come to the historical aspect of forensic justification. When we say "forensic," we mean that the righteousness here demanded is not found in our repentance, faith, new birth, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our new obedience or anything else within us. It is a legal verdict outside us. It has a historical reference point. It is nothing but the holy obedience and bitter suffering of the Son of God on our behalf. The only righteousness which can stand before God in judgment is the holy history of Jesus Christ—His death and resurrection, His finished work. This "righteousness of God" is proclaimed to us poor sinners in the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17). By hearing this gospel, we learn that this holy obedience of Jesus, this satisfaction He gave to the law by dying on the cross, is ours. It was all done in our name and on our behalf just as if we had personally done it ourselves. By faith alone we accept it, God counts it as ours, and by it we triumph in judgment.

So justification not only addresses the ultimate question, but by pointing exclusively to the historic work of Christ, it concerns God's ultimate act of redemption, which took place in the death and resurrection of Christ. And finally, justification by faith is God's ultimate verdict, because it means that by faith we now have the verdict of the day of judgment.

The apostle John teaches us that by believing we may now have eternal life—the life of the age to come (John 5:24). And Paul teaches us that by faith we may now have God's ultimate verdict—the acquitting verdict of

the day of judgment. Just as Christ told the penitent thief, "I say to you *today* [right now], you will be with Me in Paradise," so Christ is the Judge who meets us in the gospel to give us the verdict of the judgment "today."

Justification looks forward to the day of judgment and backward to the cross. These, however, are not two separate events. In the gospel they are seen as one. For Calvary was the end-of-the-world event. The day of judgment took place in Christ's cross (John 12:31, 32). Here God arraigned the whole world to judgment in the person of its Representative. Here He poured out His flood of wrath, condemned the old eon and dealt with sin. And here He manifested His judgment of pardon and deliverance for all men in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

When the gospel comes to us, creating faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are baptized or incorporated into this death-resurrection (day-of-judgment) event. With Christ we have gone through the waters of the flood of God's wrath, and now, like Noah, we come out into the sunshine of the new world, where the day of wrath is past. Or to change the figure, the bondage in Egypt or the captivity in Babylon is past, for we have participated in the new exodus of Christ's resurrection. By faith we already live on the other side of the judgment and have begun the life of the age to come. We say "by faith" because in this present life we stand by faith. To have faith is to possess all, and to lose faith is to lose all. Justification by faith has nothing to do with the heresy called "once saved, always saved."

In the biblical message of justification, therefore, we see how the past, the present and the future are related. In the preaching of the gospel the past is made present to us so that we too can have a part in Christ's holy history. The Christ event is not a history now dead but a

history made contemporary as it ever lives on in the gospel (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:1). More than this, the future is also present in the gospel, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1, KJV). In the gospel the final judgment is mysteriously present (John 3:16-20; 5:24; 9:39; 12:31; Rev. 14:6, 7). Those who believe already possess its verdict of justification and have eternal life, while those who do not believe have its verdict of condemnation and already bear the sentence of eternal death. This means that God is now judging men by the gospel. It is the "eternal gospel" which declares, "The hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:6, 7).

Judgment day unfolds in three dimensions—in the cross, in the gospel and in the consummation at the parousia (second advent). God judged the world at Calvary. He now judges the world by preaching the deed of Calvary. And He will finally judge the world when all men stand before the unveiled reality of Calvary.

Justification by faith is of ultimate importance because (1) it addresses life's ultimate question, (2) it is based on God's ultimate act of judgment and salvation, which took place in Jesus, and (3) it brings God's ultimate verdict of acceptance. We therefore conclude that the New Testament gospel is the reality of the pre-advent judgment, and justification by faith is its liberating verdict.

5

Daniel and Revelation

It is now quite widely acknowledged in informed Adventist circles that the traditional Adventist sanctuary doctrine finds no support in the book of Hebrews. It is often said, however, that the doctrine is supported in Daniel and Revelation. But we ought to be suspicious of a doctrine which only finds support in apocalyptic passages of Scripture. Just as it is unsound to build a doctrine on a type or parable, so it is unsound to build a doctrine on apocalyptic symbols. If what we teach is not supported by the didactic portions of Holy Scripture, it is time to call it into question.

Certain traditional arguments from Daniel and Revelation are no more sound than our traditional use of Hebrews 9. This is true of our appeal to Daniel 7:13, 14:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power."

According to our traditional interpretation, Jesus entered the most holy place in 1844 to fulfill this scripture. But according to the New Testament, this scripture was fulfilled at Christ's ascension. Jesus declared to His disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matt. 28:18; cf. Luke 24:26; John 5:22, 27; 17:1, 2; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 15:25, 27; Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev. 1:5; 3:21; 5:1, 6, 7; 12:10). According to Ridderbos, this "is a clear reference to the prophecy in Daniel 7:14."¹ There is strong evidence that Matthew 28:18 is a citation from the Septuagint Version of Daniel 7:14.

A fundamental principle of good biblical interpretation is to allow the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament. But just as we have ignored the way the New Testament interprets the two apartments (Heb. 9:8), so we have ignored the way the New Testament interprets Daniel 7:14.

Daniel 7:10 (KJV) says, "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Traditionally, we have called this the "investigative judgment"—meaning the trial of the professed people of God. I want to make two observations on this interpretation of Daniel 7:

1. There is nothing in Daniel 7 to indicate that this judgment is to try or to "investigate" the saints. They are not on trial. A straightforward reading of the passage indicates that the purpose of this judgment is to judge the oppressing "beasts," especially the "little horn," and deliver and vindicate the saints. Our traditional interpretation misses the whole feeling of judgment in apocalyptic literature, which sees everything in

1. Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1962), p. 467.

stark black and white, with no ambiguity between the enemy and the covenantal people.

2. We have assumed that the expression "the books were opened" signifies a kind of celestial inquiry as in a Western law court. However, a number of scholars have recently shown that it is a mistake to project Western juridical proceedings into Hebrew juridical imagery. The expression "the books were opened" should be interpreted dynamically. It does not mean a ponderous, Western-style inquiry continuing since 1844. "The books were opened" signifies divine action against the sinful "little horn" and action on behalf of the oppressed saints. Likewise, when the Bible says the Lamb opens the sealed scroll or that God opens His eyes or that the Lord remembers sins, these expressions mean that God takes action. It is therefore difficult to support our wide distinction between "investigative" and "executive" judgment from the Bible.

There is an even greater problem in the traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14. The phrase "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" is believed to involve a cleansing of the sanctuary from the confessed sins of the saints. This interpretation, however, can only be injected into Daniel 8:14. It has nothing to do with the context. According to the context, the desolator (little horn) pollutes the sanctuary (Dan. 8:11-13; cf. 11:31). The "cleansing" is from the profanation of the temple by the antichrist. Just as our traditional interpretation places the saints rather than the antichrist on trial (Dan. 7), so the traditional view makes the saints rather than the antichrist pollute the sanctuary. Nothing in the context of Daniel 8:14 suggests that the sins of God's people are transferred in and out of the sanctuary. This whole exercise is

doubtful Levitical exegesis. The New Testament gospel is not concerned with such mechanical abstractions.

If we were faithful to the context of Daniel 8:14, we would see that the passage is simple and straightforward. The desolator desecrates the sanctuary, and after a certain period it is "cleansed" from his profanations. Daniel 8:14 in context, therefore, does not suggest a blotting out of the sins of the saints in an investigative judgment.

When we turn to the book of Revelation, proof for an "investigative judgment" beginning in 1844 is conspicuously absent. In Revelation 14:6, 7 the "eternal gospel" is represented as declaring, "The hour of His judgment has come." If one argues that this judgment did not begin until 1844, he should also argue that the proclamation of the gospel did not begin until 1844. Furthermore, the word *judgment* in Revelation is consistently used in the context of taking vengeance on Babylon and the oppressing powers. What right have we to construct from this brief comment on judgment in Revelation 14:7 an elaborate trial of the saints beginning with the dead and moving to the living?

We must conclude that nineteenth-century Adventism's apocalyptic thinking was far removed from the reality of sober biblical exegesis. For more than one hundred years this tradition has grown within our isolated community, and now we must awake and realize that we have been living in a world far removed from what the Bible actually reveals. The only proper way to study the Bible is to lay aside all preconceived opinions, even Adventist ones, and objectively examine what the Bible says. Unless one is prepared to take great leaps of faith across chasms of nonexistent evidence, it is impossible to arrive at some of the traditional Adventist positions.

6

The Positive Contribution of Traditional Adventism

In this chapter I want to say something positive about the traditional Adventist concept of judgment:

1. It aroused a community to a strong eschatological consciousness. Adventism has not been wrong in its affirmation that the last days have arrived. Justification by faith cannot be understood unless it is restored to its eschatological setting of the day of judgment (Rom. 2). Therefore, Adventism is correct in insisting that the gospel must be preached in an eschatological setting. If only we would now put the gospel in that setting!

2. Adventism was right in directing attention to the most holy place. If only we would go beyond celestial geography to the reality of the most holy place! The mercy seat is in the most holy place, and this mercy seat (*hilastērion*) is the cross of Christ (Rom. 3:25). It was at the cross (the mercy seat) that justice and mercy met, that the blood and the law came together.

We have been slow to see that justification by faith is the sanctuary message in verity. When Paul presents the message of justification by faith, he presents it in the setting of the judgment. Romans 3:21-31 is the heart of Paul's great Epistle. These few verses tell us more about the gospel than any other portion of Scripture. In Romans 3:25 the apostle leads us into the "most holy place" of the gospel.¹ Here we are to understand that when God justifies the believing sinner, He justifies Himself and vindicates the honor of His law (Rom. 3:25, 26, 31). The conclusion of Romans 3:31 is that the law is highly honored in the way God justifies the believing sinner. Is not this exaltation of the law and the grace of God in the cross of Christ the essence of the "third angel's message"? (Rev. 14:12). Yet our understanding of the sanctuary has remained almost Judaistic or Rabbinic. Adventism will come of age when it realizes that Romans 3:21-31 is the reality of the sanctuary message. The opening of the most holy place signifies a full unveiling of the meaning of the cross. By its preaching, sinners are justified, God is shown to be righteous, the law is vindicated, and men are brought to judgment.

3. Despite its nineteenth-century swaddling clothes, Adventism's preaching of judgment has served a very useful pedagogic function. Adventism arose at a time when Protestantism was losing sight of the biblical doctrine of judgment according to works. Antinomianism was rife. The stern note of judgment and the binding claims of the law of God were Adventism's contribution. The gospel can be appreciated only as men see themselves arraigned before the judgment. Only he who feels pressed to find a righteousness which will stand in the

1. In using the word *hilastērion* (mercy seat), the apostle Paul is using the symbolism of the most holy place.

judgment will truly understand the Pauline message of justification by faith.

While many other religious groups have felt complacent with a gospel isolated from the stern realities of judgment, the Adventist community has toiled and groaned, trying to become righteous enough to stand in the judgment. All is not lost if we see that this has been a valuable preparation for a restoration of the apostolic gospel (Rev. 18:1).

4. Traditional Adventism has also believed that somehow the final judgment is now present in history. Although it has been difficult for the movement to articulate this concept biblically, the idea nevertheless embodies a great biblical insight. It is a remarkable recovery of New Testament and especially Johannine thought. John teaches that the final judgment is already mysteriously present (John 3:16-19; 5:24; 9:39; 12:31). And of course, Paul's message of justification by faith implies that the verdict of the judgment is now present to faith.

The apostles did not have to indulge a doubtful exegesis of Old Testament apocalypticism to prove the present reality of judgment. The incarnation and resurrection event proved to them that they were in the last days. They clearly discerned that the gospel was an eschatological event by which men were being judged. They still believed in a future, final judgment, but that was the judgment of "the living and the dead" at the second advent (Rom. 2:13, 16; 1 Cor. 3:11-13; 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:25-37; 1 Peter 4:5; Rev. 11:18).

Adventism's preaching of judgment already present in history has been a "lesser light" struggling to apprehend the "greater light" of the apostolic witness. The apostolic gospel is the reality of the "investigative judg-

ment," and justification by Christ is its liberating verdict now accepted in faith.

5. Adventism is the outgrowth of a nineteenth-century apocalyptic revival. It was not a gospel revival. But apocalyptic and gospel have an interesting relationship. Käsemann has argued that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."² By this he means that the Jewish apocalyptic which flourished in the intertestamental period prepared the way for the gospel. It focused on the approaching day of judgment and the in-breaking of God's kingdom in the age to come. It put all men in expectation and provided a framework so that the gospel could have a great impact. I want to suggest that Adventism has done something similar.

2. Quoted in D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 23.

7

1844—Is It Prophetic?

The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism were generally young and inexperienced in churchmanship. They had no knowledge of the original biblical languages. None of them possessed theological training. Most did not believe in the Trinity.¹ They had no adequate Christology. Most were Arians, who thought Christ was a created being.² And they did not have a clearly-formulated doctrine of salvation. Their great interest was eschatology. Their preoccupation was apocalyptic speculation. We admire their pluck. In their zeal, and sometimes in their sheer ignorance, they challenged the entire Christian church and all its great teachers and scholars on such questions as the Trinity, the atonement on the cross, the deity of Christ, Sunday-keeping and the immortality of

1. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1971), p. 163; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, ed. Don F. Neufeld (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1966), p. 526.

2. See Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, pp. 165, 170, 175-79.

the soul.³ Amazingly, the pioneers proved to be right in some of their "innovations" (really restorations). But they were certainly not right on everything.⁴

We say this not to deprecate the pioneers but to vindicate them. If they had been giants in biblical knowledge, as our legends have presented them, if they had been men of experience in theology and churchmanship, they would have to be condemned, because they entertained serious heresies on cardinal points of the Christian faith. But when we realize that they were like those youthful and unlearned fishermen who followed Christ, we can grant them an indulgence. We do not censure them but ourselves, because we thought we were following the pioneers by freezing Adventism into a nineteenth-century mold and canonizing their entire eschatological schema. How could we think that a rigid conservatism and a dedication to maintaining the status quo would honor the spirit of the pioneers?

Recently, I listened to a taped presentation by Raymond F. Cottrell. He was speaking at a meeting of the Adventist Forum at the Loma Linda University Church on February 8, 1980. At this forum he publicly told a large audience what he had been discussing in scholarly circles for almost thirty years.

Elder Cottrell, one of the editors of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, told an amazing story. In the 1950's he tried to defend our traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 with sound biblical arguments. He resented Dr. Donald Barnhouse's comment that there is

3. The nonimmortality of the soul had been introduced among the Adventists before October 22, 1844. See art. "Immortality," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, pp. 559-60.

4. Traditional Seventh-day Adventism could only have arisen in an Anglo-Saxon environment with the King James Version of the Bible. It has been very difficult to defend some of the traditional Adventist arguments with other versions and in other languages.

not a suspicion of a biblical text to support the idea of an investigative judgment. But after laboring with Daniel 8:14 for some time, using the original languages and the historical-grammatical method of interpretation, Cottrell found that he could not substantiate the traditional Adventist interpretation from the Bible. At Francis D. Nichol's suggestion he then sent a questionnaire on Daniel 8:14 to twenty-seven leading Adventist scholars. It soon became evident that they too had no adequate biblical defense for the traditional interpretation. Some expressed the thought that the traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 had virtually nothing to do with its context and that the word "cleansed" in Daniel 8:14 was simply a fortunate accident of the King James Version which established a connection with the cleansing of the sanctuary in Leviticus 16.

The General Conference then appointed a committee to study the problems in Daniel. This group met for five years but could not resolve the issues. A minority of the committee agreed with Cottrell that they could not substantiate the traditional Adventist position on Daniel 8:14 from the Bible. The majority wanted to resolve the difficulty by ignoring the contextual and linguistic problems altogether.

At the meeting of the forum Elder Cottrell declared that, after long and exhaustive study, he could not prove the traditional view from the Bible. (The late Don F. Neufeld of the *Adventist Review* editorial staff also reached the same conclusion in the 1950's.) Cottrell does not want to abandon the traditional teaching. In fact, he desperately wishes to retain it. But he believes it solely because Ellen G. White teaches it.

It is doubtful whether even the most ardent traditionalists are satisfied with Elder Cottrell's solution to the problem of the 1844 "investigative judgment." After all,

how can Adventists preach this message to the world if they cannot preach it from the Bible?

The Contextual and Linguistic Evidence

The lay reader should not be frightened by scholarly terminology. A jury of laymen is expected to sit in a court of law and follow the arguments of experts. The laymen, and not the experts, must give the verdict of "guilty" or "not guilty." Likewise, the jury of the priesthood of all believers must hear the evidence and decide what the true faith is. They dare not leave the decision to experts or to church leaders. Like a juror, the ordinary layman must hear the evidence of those proficient in languages, history and theology. Then he must wrestle with the evidence and make the final decision of "biblical" or "not biblical."

Daniel 8. Our present task is not to interpret Daniel 8:14 but to determine what the passage and the context are saying. Common sense ought to dictate that we should not try to *interpret* what is being said unless we *understand* what is being said.

1. Daniel 8 describes the evil work of a little-horn power. In Daniel 8:13 this evil power is called the "desolating trespass."⁵

2. The desolator concentrates his attack on the sanctuary. His great trespass consists in removing the "regular burnt offering." The Hebrew simply uses the word *tamid*.⁶ It is a word frequently employed in the Old

5. Literally, the trespass desolating.

6. Literally, the continual, the regular, the perpetual, or always.

Testament and simply means "continual," "regular," "perpetual," "always." Most translations supply the word "sacrifice" or "burnt offering"—hence, daily sacrifice or regular burnt offering. We concur with these translations for two reasons:

a. The context is about the sanctuary.

b. The Hebrew word *tamid* is most frequently used in connection with the continual services of the sanctuary. *Tamid* is especially used to designate the evening and morning burnt offerings, which were the foundation of the entire tabernacle ritual (Ex. 29:38, 39, 42; Num. 28:3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24, 31; 29:6, 11, 16, 19, 25, 28, 34, 38; 1 Chron. 16:40; Ezra 3:3-5).

Two Hebrew expressions are used with almost monotonous repetition to describe the burnt offering—"regular" (*tamid*) and "morning and evening." It seems that the Jew could call it the "regular" or the "morning and evening" instead of the "regular morning and evening burnt offering."⁷

3. Daniel 8:13 (NEB) addresses the question, "How long will the regular offering be suppressed?"

7. William Miller and most of his followers in the 1843-1844 movement taught that the *tamid* referred to paganism. This interpretation was shared by the pioneer Seventh-day Adventists, including the early Ellen G. White (see Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1945], p. 75). Second-generation Adventist Bible students began to recognize that the *tamid* actually referred to the regular burnt offering, as most translators indicated. Mrs. White did not oppose the "new" interpretation, and it has now been generally held for many years. The comment in *Early Writings* (p. 75) indicates quite clearly that the early Ellen G. White was mistaken about the "daily." Significantly, she made no effort to defend the "old" view (paganism) against the "new" view (the regular services of the sanctuary) and would not allow those who still contended for the old view to use her statement in *Early Writings* to "prove" their position (see *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, pp. 319-23).

4. Since Daniel 8:14 answers the preceding question, it must not be divorced from its context. The answer is, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated." That is to say, 2,300 regular offerings will be suppressed.

The Hebrew does not say 2,300 days but 2,300 "evenings mornings." This is not discussing evenings and mornings as in Genesis 1, where evening means the dark part of the day and morning means the light part of the day. Daniel 8:14 is discussing the evening burnt offering and the morning burnt offering.

Daniel 8:26 refers back to verse 14 in saying, "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true." Obviously, this also means "the evening sacrifice and the morning sacrifice."

Therefore, the answer to the question regarding how long the regular evening and morning offerings will be suppressed is that 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices will be suppressed. Then they will be restored.

Several difficulties now confront the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14:

1. It is doubtful that the 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices are equivalent to 2,300 days. While some scholars argue that they are, most scholars argue that 2,300 sacrifices (one for each evening and morning) are the equivalent of 1,150 days. Contextually and linguistically, it seems that those who prefer 1,150 days have a stronger argument. Further evidence from Daniel 9 and 12 also seems to favor 1,150 days.

Even those who prefer the expression "2,300 days" would be wise to treat the evidence modestly and objectively, and join those who say, "The text seems to imply

2,300 days, but we cannot be certain."⁸ It would be well to remember the biblical rule, "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Deut. 19:15; cf. Matt. 18:16). There is no further witness in the Bible that the period of Daniel 8:14 positively means 2,300 days. The ardent traditionalist may wish to take a leap of faith despite the gap in the evidence. This, however, is not the only point where such a leap of faith is required.

2. It is difficult if not impossible to prove that a day in prophecy must equal a year. Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 are more pretexts than proof-texts. They do not say what we have traditionally tried to make them say. There are numerous instances in Bible prophecy where a day means a day and a year means a year. The Bible prophesied that Abraham's children would be afflicted four hundred years and that the Jews would be in captivity seventy years. The "seventy weeks" (KJV) of Daniel 9 cannot be used to prove the year-day principle, because this expression simply means "seventy 'sevens'" (Dan. 9:24, NIV).⁹ The context indicates that Daniel 9 is talking about "weeks of years" and not "weeks of days."

8. G. C. D. Howley, ed., *A Bible Commentary for Today* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1979), p. 917. *A Bible Commentary for Today* comments on the 2,300 evenings mornings of Daniel 8:14: "Any who would attempt exact calculations should note major uncertainties: . . . In this verse and in v. 26 the Heb 'evening morning' could mean 2300 whole days or 2300 evening and morning sacrifices, 1150 days; the phrase is unique. Gen. 1:5 and other passages adduced by those who argue for the longer period (e.g. Young) specify 'day.' The context, with the twice daily offering so prominent, favours the shorter period."

9. "Seventy weeks of years is an interpretative translation: Heb. gives literally 'in sevens, seventy', the word 'in sevens' being a masculine form as in verse 26, whereas the feminine normally stands for 'weeks'. The masculine recurs in 10: 2, 3, but qualified as 'in sevens, days'. To understand 'weeks' here without reserve is unwarranted, accordingly the term 'sevens' is used in these comments" (ibid., p. 919).

The formula "a day for a year" was not used by the New Testament or by early Christians. This interpretive formula was first suggested by a medieval Jewish scholar.¹⁰ It was gradually adopted by some Christian expositors and reached its zenith of acceptability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Since the New Testament repeatedly declares that Christ is coming "soon," "in a very little while" and that the last days have already arrived, the early Christians could not have understood that a day represents a year in prophecy. If Christ had returned in the first century (which could have happened if the church had responded to her opportunities),¹¹ the year-day principle would obviously not have applied. At best, the year-day principle was an apocalyptic interpretation imposed on the Bible which gave some of God's people a convenient way of looking at history.

If proving that a day represents a year is beset with difficulties, what shall we say about proving that 2,300 sacrifices equal 2,300 years? Perhaps we need another leap of faith!

3. But a greater difficulty now confronts the traditional Adventist prophetic schema. A straightforward contextual reading of Daniel 8:14 suggests that we should begin numbering the 2,300 suspended sacrifices

10. According to Froom, the earliest exponent of the year-day principle was a Karaite Jew, Benjamin Ben Moses Nahawendi (eighth-ninth century A.D.). He calculated the 2,300 year-days from the destruction of Shiloh and arrived at 1358 C.E. as the Messianic year. At least ten Jewish expositors applied this principle to the long time periods of Daniel before Joachim of Floris, the first Christian expositor to apply this principle, did so in the year 1190. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1950, 1948), 1:713; 2:240, 196.

11. This is also the position taken by *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), 7:729.

from the time the desolator took away the regular burnt offering: "'How long will the regular offering be suppressed?' . . . The answer came, 'For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings'" (Dan. 8:13, 14, NEB).¹²

The desolator
causes the
regular sacrifice
to cease.

The sanctuary
is reconsecrated.

2,300 evening and morning
sacrifices are suspended.

4. The King James Version of Daniel 8:14 states, "Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." In Hebrew the word for "cleansed" literally means "justified" or "vindicated."¹³ The Revised Standard Version has "restored," and the New International Version has "reconsecrated." "Cleansed" is not the best translation, but it

12. Early Adventism made an educated guess that the "daily" (KJV) or paganism (as they believed it to be) was taken away in A.D. 508. When the next generation saw the "daily" as the continual ministration of the sanctuary, another educated guess was that the papacy supplanted the continual ministry of Christ in the sanctuary of heaven in A.D. 508. In both cases the date was arrived at by taking the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11 from 1798 (i.e., by a process of working backward) and then searching for some event in A.D. 508 that would match the taking away either of paganism or of Christ's priesthood. The reader can see that adding 2,300 years to A.D. 508 would look rather grim. See art. "The Daily," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, pp. 319-23. For further insight into the long controversy over the "daily," see Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference" (Paper presented at the meeting of Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Scholars in New York City, November 14, 1979).

13. The niphal (passive) of the verb *to declare righteous*.

is acceptable if "cleansed" is used in the juridical sense of "to justify."

In the context of Daniel 8:14, "cleansing the sanctuary" must mean cleansing it from the pollution of the desolator (see Dan. 11:31 for a parallel scripture; cf. Ps. 79:1; Rev. 13:6). To introduce into Daniel 8:14 the idea of "cleansing the sanctuary" from the confessed sins of the saints is not only a diversion but contrary to the context.¹⁴ The little horn, not the saints, pollutes this sanctuary. Furthermore, it is covenant-breaking and unconfessed sin which defile the tabernacle (Num. 19:13, 20; Ezek. 5:11; 23:38). The theory that the Levitical tabernacle was defiled by confessed sins taken into the sanctuary is questionable.

Daniel 9. Traditional Adventism links Daniel 8 and 9. Daniel was troubled because he could not understand the vision concerning the desolation of the sanctuary. Daniel 9 begins with a reference to Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy-year desolation of the sanctuary and the

14. The history of how Daniel 8:14 came to be linked with Leviticus 16 is very interesting. The Millerites were not content to think the Bible predicted the very year Jesus would come. They wanted to know the very season of the year. It was Miller who first suggested that the Day of Atonement gave the clue. He pointed out that the high priest came out of the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement to bless the waiting people (Heb. 9:28). He reasoned that if the Passover was fulfilled at Calvary in the Passover season of the year, Christ's coming out of the holy of holies would be fulfilled in the season of the year corresponding to the Day of Atonement. His followers finally arrived at October 22, 1844.

This reasoning is similar to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position that, since Aaron went into the holy of holies in the autumn, Christ went into the holy of holies on October 22. But why not insist that the Day of Atonement sacrifice must also be offered in the autumn? Did not Aaron offer sacrifice, go in, and then come out in one day? Why select one phase of the day of the Day of Atonement service and insist that it must be fulfilled in the autumn?

When Christ did not come on October 22, the pioneers studied Leviticus 16 for another explanation of what happened in 1844. In doing this, they were simply maintaining the connection between Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16 which had already been made by the Millerites.

city of Jerusalem. Daniel evidently felt that this time was nearing fulfillment. He therefore prayed for a speedy restoration of the desolate sanctuary (Dan. 9:17).

In answer to Daniel's prayer the angel Gabriel introduced the prophecy of the "seventy 'sevens'":

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people . . . to finish transgression . . . and to anoint the most holy [place]."
—Dan. 9:24.

This verse is a wonderful prophecy of six great things to be accomplished within the period of time decreed. We must here confine ourselves to the points relevant to the present discussion.

1. First we consider the meaning of the "seventy 'sevens.'" The word for "seven" is simply *shabua*, which means "a seven."¹⁵ It may mean a "seven" of days or a "seven" of years. The context of Daniel 9 demands years.¹⁶ It is obvious that the "seventy 'sevens'" is a play on the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. The glowing promises of the prophets, especially of Isaiah 40-66, had led the Jews to anticipate the great eschatological deliverance at the end of the seventy years. The prophets spoke of the coming exodus from Babylon in decidedly eschatological language. But the imminent return from Babylon would be very modest compared to the glowing promises of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The Jews would soon realize that the eschatological exodus was still future. Even though they would return from Babylon, the kingdom would not be restored, and they would still be oppressed by Gentile powers. God's

15. See footnote 9.

16. The "seventy 'sevens'" do not prove that a day equals a year in prophecy.

eschatological salvation would not take place at the end of the seventy years, as they were inclined to think, but at the end of seventy times seven years.

2. The prophecy declares that the "seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people." The word "decreed" is from the Hebrew word *ḥataḥ*. This is the only time this word is used in the Old Testament. Translators are generally agreed that it means "determined" or "decreed." According to Brown, Driver and Briggs,¹⁷ it means "divide" or "determine." In New Hebrew it can mean "cut," "cut off" or "decide." It might be permissible to use "cut off" if it has the same sense as "determined." To say, however, that *ḥataḥ* means "cut off from" is stretching the point. And to say it means that the "seventy 'sevens'" are cut off from the 2,300 evenings and mornings is still further stretching the point.

In other words, the idea that the 2,300 evenings and mornings and the "seventy 'sevens'" represent two time periods which begin together must be assumed by another leap of Adventist faith. Daniel 9 does not say this.

3. A stronger case can be made for the two time periods ending together. This could be indicated by a straightforward reading of Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24. Daniel 8:14 (NIV) says that the sanctuary would be reconsecrated at the end of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. Daniel 9:24 says that the sanctuary (most holy place) would be anointed at the end of the "seventy

17. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 367.

'sevens.'"¹⁸ Do not the reconsecration of the sanctuary and the anointing of the sanctuary correspond?¹⁹

The expression "to finish *the* transgression" indicates that Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24 are concerned with the same event. The Hebrew does not read "to finish transgression" but "to finish [or restrain] *the* transgression [*hapesha*]." The definite article indicates that this passage is referring to the transgression of Daniel 8:12, 13. Here the little horn is called "the desolating trespass" or "the trespass which causes desolation." In other words, "to finish the transgression" means to stop the desolator from suppressing the regular evening and morning burnt offerings. Then the sanctuary will be "reconsecrated" (Dan. 8:14) or "anointed" (Dan. 9:24).

4. Daniel 9:25-27 then divides the "seventy 'sevens'" into seven sevens, sixty-two sevens and one seven. The entire period is said to begin from "the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25).

Traditional Adventism has said that this decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7). Actually, there were two other decrees prior to the decree of Artaxerxes. The first and foremost was issued by Cyrus about 536 B.C. The second, issued by Darius about 520 B.C., was really only a reaffirmation of the decree of

18. The expression "anoint the most holy" refers to a place (i.e., the sanctuary) and not a person. See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 9:347.

19. The reconsecration and anointing of the sanctuary in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes was marked by the Feast of Dedication, which was still a great celebration at the time of Jesus. (Our Lord attended this feast.—John 10:22.) The dedication and anointing of the tabernacle at Sinai is actually equated with a "cleansing" in Hebrews 9:19-23.

Cyrus. The decree of Artaxerxes, about 457 B.C.,²⁰ was the most insignificant and was more like a royal letter given to Ezra.

Daniel 9:25 literally reads "from the going out of *the word [dabar]* to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem." It would be reasonable to argue that this refers to the divine word given to the prophets concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Isa. 55:11; Jer. 25:11; 29:10). The traditional Adventist interpretation must make two assumptions at this point: (a) It must assume that the "going out of the word" means the issuing of a decree by a Persian king. (b) It must assume that this decree was not the decree of Cyrus or Darius but of Artaxerxes.

Artaxerxes, however, did not issue a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The traditional interpretation must read into Ezra 7 that which is not there.

Gerhard Hasel has tried to defend the traditional interpretation in the *Ministry*.²¹ But Dewey M. Beegle²² underscores the weakness of Hasel's arguments when he makes the following points:

Hasel thinks the order given Ezra by Artaxerxes I in 457 B.C., the seventh year of his reign, is the proper starting point.

A copy of the official letter is found in Ezra 7:11-26. But there is *not one word* in the letter or the context about building anything. Ezra "the scribe skilled in the law of Moses" (7:6) is authorized to take a group of exiles back to Palestine. He is given money to buy animals for sacrificing in the temple and he is entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the Jews. He will teach those who

20. None of these dates can be established beyond question to the exact year.

21. See Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27," supplement to *The Ministry*, May 1976.

22. Dewey M. Beegle is Professor of Old Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary. We do not subscribe to Beegle's liberal tendencies, but we recognize the validity of his observations on Hasel's article.

are ignorant of the ways of God and those who are disobedient will be judged by him.

Where does Hasel find a basis for his claim? He refers to Ezra 4:7-23 where it is reported to Artaxerxes that the Jews are "finishing the walls and repairing the foundations of Jerusalem" (4:12). Hasel comments:

"If this report comes from the time later than the decree of the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, namely a period of uncertain political conditions for the Persian monarch after the Egyptian revolt of 448, then one may safely conclude that the decree issued in 457 B.C. related to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem" (*The Ministry*, May 1976, p. 15D).

But one cannot "safely" come to Hasel's conclusion because after Artaxerxes heard the report of rebuilding he said, "Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me" (Ezra 4:21). Artaxerxes had authorized Ezra to start a religious reform, not rebuild the city, and so he ordered the fortification of the city stopped. If Hasel is right, then Artaxerxes was schizophrenic. There is no evidence that Artaxerxes ever followed through and authorized Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem.

Hasel makes a second try by referring to the report which Nehemiah got about the broken-down walls and burned gates of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:3). "This implies," he comments, "that the city had been rebuilt, which could hardly have started before 457, because the decrees of both Cyrus and Darius related only to the building of the Temple" (*The Ministry*, May 1976, p. 15D). It implies nothing of the kind, unless you want to believe it.

Attempts to rebuild walls were interpreted by ancient kings as fortification in preparation for revolt and they seldom authorized such activity. The Jews needed walls to protect themselves from raids and harassment by their neighbors. But these enemies were there to check what was going on and so the unofficial attempts to rebuild the walls were stopped before much could be accomplished. The battered walls and burned gates reported to Nehemiah were the rubble left from Nebuchadnezzar's destruction. The returning exiles built the temple and con-

structed homes in area cleared of debris, but they did little with the wall system.

A third try by Hasel is Ezra's thanks for God's love in granting "some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judea and Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:9). The whole context is spiritual and has to do with the rebuilding of the temple. There was no wall around Judea; therefore the verse cannot be interpreted in a physical sense. Ezra had brought the law of Moses and taught the people a way of life. That was a "wall of protection" for the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea even though they had no walls for physical security.

Hasel makes a fourth try by quoting from Ezra 6:14 a reference to the "decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes." Then he comments "Ezra considered the third decree to be the culmination of the three decrees" (*The Ministry*, May 1976, p. 15D). The whole verse is talking about the completion of the temple in March, 515 B.C., fifty years before Artaxerxes came to the throne. The appearance of his name is an editorial mistake due to the passage in Ezra 4:7-23, which Hasel himself admits is misplaced. The editor did not know that the account was out of order and so he associated Artaxerxes with the earlier kings Cyrus and Darius. This notation has nothing to do with what Ezra thought.

In other words, Hasel is building his foundation on four broken reeds and instead of supporting his theory they puncture it. Or to put it another way, if you add four zeroes you get zero. *There is not one bit of solid evidence to show that in 457 B.C. there was a royal decree, or even one from God, ordering the rebuilding of Jerusalem.* Gerhard Hasel has done as thorough a job as possible under the difficult circumstances. This critique of his views should not be taken as an attempt to "hassle" him personally. The examination is really a refutation of all the conservatives who try to start the 490 years in 458 or 457 B.C.²³

23. Dewey M. Beegle, *Prophecy and Prediction* (Ann Arbor: Pryor Pettengill, Publisher, 1978), pp. 117-19.

Only one Persian king is said to rebuild Jerusalem, and that is Cyrus:

"[God] says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'"²⁴

—Isa. 44:28.

"I will raise up Cyrus. . . .
He will rebuild My city
and set My exiles free."

—Isa. 45:13.

5. Daniel 9:27 says, "'In the middle of that "seven" [the last seven years] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.'" The traditional interpretation has said quite dogmatically that this means Christ died on the cross in A.D. 31 and made the earthly temple sacrifices obsolete. The context, however, reads, "'The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. . . . Desolations have been decreed. . . . He [the same he] will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.'" This entire passage seems to be discussing what the desolator does, not what the Messiah does. It seems to say just what Daniel 8:11-13, 11:31 and 12:11 say—the desolator will take away the evening-morning sacrifice and set up the abominable sacrilege.

From the time the evening and morning sacrifice is suspended to the time it is restored (Dan. 8:14) or the

24. It might be said that restoring the sanctuary constituted the real rebuilding of Jerusalem, which was, after all, primarily a spiritual or covenantal community. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for "restore" in Daniel 9:25 is used in reference to people (see Isa. 44:26; Jer. 30:18; Ezek. 36:10, 11, 33).

most holy is anointed (Dan. 9:24) would be about three and one-half years or 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices. The 1,150 days of Daniel 8:14 and the 1,260, 1,290 and 1,335 days of Daniel 12:7-13 are all very nearly the same length of time, and all seem to refer to the same period. Perhaps it is significant that the Hebrew in Daniel 9:27 does not speak about "the covenant" but about "a covenant."

I am not trying to be dogmatic in the above comments except to point out that the traditional Adventist should not be dogmatic. It is well known among Old Testament scholars that Daniel 9:24-27 is the "dismal swamp" of biblical exegesis. The enigmatic sayings of this passage are difficult both to translate and to interpret with any certainty.

8

Is the Passion for Literalistic Exactness Demanded in Prophetic Interpretation?

The Western mind has a predilection for scientific accuracy and chronological exactness. The latest and best biblical scholarship, however, has demonstrated that the church has often been guilty of pressing the Hebrew Scriptures into a rigid prediction-fulfillment schema that is not consonant with the feeling and structure of Hebrew prophecy.

Much Old Testament prophecy is written as poetry. Poetry expresses truth, but in a different way than scientific prose. We must not insist on reading the inspired poetry of the Old Testament with a scientific mind-set. As Dr. Goldsworthy says, "To test such language by the rules of scientific prose distorts and even destroys the truth within it."¹

1. Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Old Testament and Christian Existence," *Verdict* 3 no. 4, (Mar. 1980), p. 7.

This brings us to another observation on Hebrew prophecy. Events did not always occur in exactly the way a literal reading of a prophecy might have indicated. Scholars, for instance, can now demonstrate that cities such as Babylon and Tyre were not overthrown in the way a rigid and literalistic reading of the poetic oracles might have suggested. The prophecies were fulfilled in principle, but we must allow for poetic description and even for the contingency of conditional elements which could modify the severity or duration of the punishments pronounced.

In the past we (the conservative Christian movement in general) have been too anxious to show that prophecies on the fall of Babylon, Tyre or other places were fulfilled in the minutest detail. This zeal to establish confidence in the biblical predictions has involved considerable "liberties" with the evidence.

Prophets described the future in terms of past events. Events such as creation, the Flood and the Exodus were used to describe what God would do in the future. Thus, Isaiah wrote of the deliverance from Babylon in terms of a new exodus, but as in all typology, he used contrast as well as comparison. Such prophecies were never intended as an exact outline of the future. They did not capture the future in photographic detail. They were more impressionistic. The poetic use of the past and the blending of the historical and eschatological dimensions made it impossible for the Old Testament saints to chart coming events like some of us do today. They had faith that God would act. They saw the past as a type of how He would act. But they allowed for the element of surprise in the way God would actually fulfill His word. Pannenberg puts it well:

These promises point explicitly to new divine activity that will take place in the life of men in the future. God,

however, continues to be absolutely free even with regard to his promises, which are very rarely fulfilled in the precise literal sense in which they were understood when they were first proclaimed. Despite this, the Israelites always regarded historical events as the fulfilment of God's earlier promises because they respected God's freedom to fulfil his promises in whatever way he liked.²

The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament are now being used much more acceptably by informed students of the Word than in the past. The old method was to handle the Messianic prophecies as if they were simple predictions to be literally fulfilled by the coming Messiah. It was then easy to match the New Testament fulfillment with the prediction as if a direct one-to-one relationship existed between them. Many Jews must have wondered about the Christian method of using the Bible! But numerous Old Testament passages which the New Testament declares have been fulfilled in Jesus were concerned with local historical situations that applied to the prophet or to his people. Details associated with the original words of the prophet cannot be applied to Christ at all. The prophecy about the virgin (or young woman) conceiving and bearing a son is an example. A reading of Isaiah 7 will quickly demonstrate that not all details regarding this child can be applied to Christ. The young woman was probably Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3). Although Matthew used Hosea 11:1 as a prophecy (Matt. 2:15), it was written by Hosea as a historical statement about the Exodus. Yet Matthew says Jesus "fulfilled" this scripture. Jesus did not fulfill a prediction but a historical type.

The New Testament authors understood that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by recapitulating its history

² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 12.

as the new Israel, the new Moses, the new David, the new Adam and the new Temple. In our discussion of Hebrews we saw that not all features of a type apply to the antitype. Likewise, not all features of what we might call "Messianic prophecies" are represented in the New Testament story of Jesus. Many Old Testament details do not apply to Christ and therefore disappear. Or prophecy is fulfilled apotelesmatically, so that certain features of the prophecy apply in one fulfillment, but some of the details do not apply in the next or greater fulfillment at all.

Says John L. McKenzie in his excellent essay on "The Transformation of Old Testament Messianism":

It is not, and we trust never will be, necessary and proper to explain and defend our faith by anything else but the truth. . . .

We have lost some messianic texts—or rather we recognize that we never had them; we have gained understanding of others. But we have gained far more. Modern biblical studies have given the messianic belief a breadth and a depth which we never perceived in earlier generations, and they have shown us that messianism influenced the composition of the New Testament far more than we realized. Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of the hope of Israel, not by verifying predictions of isolated episodes in His life but by bringing the reality for which Israel hoped. . . .

Jesus is the reality which gives fullness to the reality of the Old Testament; He satisfies its desires, realizes its hopes and potentialities, gives it intelligibility. He is the fullness of Israel.³

When Jesus fulfilled the hopes and destiny of Israel, He transformed them. He was far greater than a literal

3. John L. McKenzie, "The Transformation of Old Testament Messianism," in C. Luke Salm, ed., *Studies in Salvation History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 97-8.

reading of the Old Testament could possibly indicate. No one reading the Old Testament prophecies could anticipate just what God would do in His great act in Christ. An element of divine surprise remained until the event occurred. And even then the fulfillment of prophecy was evident only to faith.

In the same way, the apostles saw many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the Christian church's mission to the Gentiles. How could anyone reading Amos 9:11, 12 (restoring David's fallen tent) have possibly seen a picture of Pentecost and the ingathering of the Gentiles? (Acts 15:16, 17). And when those Old Testament prophecies found their fulfillment in the Christian church, some subsidiary features, couched in the poetic imagery of Palestinian life, disappeared. They found their fulfillment in *principle*, but in a way no one could have anticipated.

Much progress has been made over aspects of the nineteenth-century use of the Bible. If Adventism is to stay abreast of the best in biblical scholarship, it must revise some of its methods of handling Bible prophecy. We have dogmatically stated how prophecy must be fulfilled and have clung to our outmoded prophetic dogmatism as if the existence of traditional Adventism were at stake—and it surely is!

In summary, prophecy was never meant as a detailed blueprint of the future. The Hebrews did not have our Western passion for scientific, exact and detailed fulfillment. They were far more "romantic" or poetic in expressing their hopes and aspirations. And even as the New Testament demonstrates, they moved in a typological framework which allowed far more fluidity. J. Duncan Derrett observes, "To the Jewish mind there is nothing incongruous in a story's having two tendencies or implications, for both may be true and inconsistencies

are of little moment."⁴ Thus, the passion of Christ is seen both as the fulfillment of the Easter Passover season and of the high-priestly acts on the autumnal Day of Atonement.

This brings us to biblical chronology and apocalyptic time periods. Most forms of historicism and futurism being taught in the church today have their roots in the nineteenth century. They have a passion for mathematical exactness in the fulfillment of prophecy, and this is applied especially to the time prophecies of apocalyptic literature. For example, historicists say that a day in symbolic (apocalyptic) prophecy equals exactly one year. In those passages on the 1,260 days, the prophet was supposedly predicting that the pope would be taken prisoner by General Berthier in the year 1798. Great pains are taken to determine the exact beginning and ending points of apocalyptic time periods. Futurists are equally insistent on mathematical exactness. They suppose that the 1,260 days mean 1,260 literal days to be fulfilled in some future event—as if the apocalyptic author were looking at an exact timetable of events in modern Palestine. Both historicists and futurists think that the mysterious numerology of apocalyptic literature demands the computation of the times and seasons in God's program of last-day events.

Traditional Adventism has frozen the prophetic schema of the nineteenth century. Features of the nineteenth-century use of prophetic time periods must be revised. We have imposed our system of mathematical exactness on the time prophecies. But since the nineteenth century, biblical researchers have learned more about biblical chronology and about the nature of apocalyptic literature and its use of mysterious numbers. It

4. J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970), p. 410.

is no longer a simple issue whether historicism, futurism or preterism are correct. And unless Adventism awakens, it will become an anachronism.

Informed Bible students now realize that we cannot expect a historian of Old Testament times to write history according to the canons of historiography generally accepted today. The unsophisticated Hebrew people did not measure time with the mathematical exactness we now insist on. Their chronology was not always precise, and certainly not complete. The pioneer Adventists lived in the world of Ussher's chronology, which assumed that the Bible presented a complete record extending back about six thousand years to creation. But more recent research has shown that there are great gaps in biblical chronology reaching back to creation. Says Alan Richardson, "The Bible does not give us a divinely revealed chronology any more than it gives us a divinely revealed cosmology."⁵

In the first chapter of Matthew, the evangelist declares that there were three groups of fourteen generations—from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian Exile and from the Exile to Jesus. We now know that this chronology is not to be taken literally.⁶ As Tasker suggests, "The tidy mind of our evangelist, a Jewish Christian familiar with rabbinical ways of thinking, leads him to find symmetry in the use of numbers."⁷ When the Hebrews used arithmetic, it was what J. H. Ropes calls a "Jewish sacred arithmetic."⁸

5. Alan Richardson, *The Bible in the Age of Science* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 165.

6. In Matthew's second group of fourteen generations, for example, three generations have been omitted according to the evidence of 1 Chronicles 1-3.

7. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 31.

8. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 32.

As for the seventy-year captivity in Babylon, we may speculate when the period began (606 B.C. or 587 B.C.) or ended. But we do not really know, because we are not really told. Neither is there a way of proving that it was exactly seventy years. The period could have been somewhat prolonged or shortened. If we reckon from the time the city and sanctuary were destroyed about 587 B.C., the deliverance came in about fifty years—which meant that the year of release was a Jubilee.⁹ In Jewish sacred arithmetic the seventy-year captivity was composed of “ten sevens”—and seven was a number associated with punishment (“‘I will punish you for your sins seven times over’”—Lev. 26:18). It was also a number associated with sabbatical rest (Lev. 25:2; 26:15-35).

Apparently, Israel was charged by the Lord with breaking the sabbatical law for 490 years (from David to the Babylonian Exile). This would mean that the land was seventy years in sabbatical arrears. Seventy years were also the years of a man's life (Ps. 90:10).

We have already seen a connection between the seventy years of Jeremiah and the seventy times seven years of Daniel 9:24. There also appears to be a recurring pattern of seventy times seven (490 years) in the Old Testament.

The preexilic Jews numbered years in the pattern of forties and twelves. Thus, 1 Kings 6:1 says there were 480 years (forty times twelve) from the Exodus to the building of Solomon's temple. From there to the end of the Exile was regarded as another 480 years (forty times twelve). G. R. Driver suggests that “the method by which this sum is reached [can] be shown to be entirely artificial.” It was obtained, he says, by multiplying the tenure of office of the high priests (said to be forty years)

9. The Jubilee was a release from all debts and bondage every fifty years.

by twelve. “Clearly therefore,” he says, “480 years is a round figure approximating to the supposed sum of the years of office of the 12 high-priests.”¹⁰

The postexilic Jews, however, did not reckon in units of forty times twelve, but seventy times seven. For example, in Acts 13 Paul estimates the time from the Exodus to David's reign as forty plus 450, which equals 490 and is seventy times seven years.

The evidence therefore indicates that these time periods were only approximate. The Jews were more interested in demonstrating the recurring pattern in the epochs of history, using the figures to suggest a correspondence, than in dating events with scientific accuracy. Driver says that “numerous examples of simplifying numbers by adapting them to the nearest multiple of one or other of these ‘sacred’ numbers can be found in sober historical works.”¹¹ As we have seen, Matthew divides Jewish history into three periods, with each period artificially assigned fourteen generations. Apparently, each period could be designated as a seventy times seven. It seems that the Jews never intended anyone to employ these numbers as a scientifically accurate chronology. Tasker quotes J. H. Ropes, who says:

Jewish sacred arithmetic had found it necessary to calculate the future by the aid of Jeremiah's prophecy of God's salvation after seventy years; and in Daniel we find this interpreted as seventy weeks of years, or 490 years. Here in Matthew the methods of the rabbis are used, and the period from the initial promise to Abraham, by which the Jewish religion was really founded, to the birth of the

10. G. R. Driver, “Sacred Numbers and Round Figures,” in F. F. Bruce, ed., *Promise and Fulfilment* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 70.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

Messiah is figured at three times seventy weeks of years, or three times fourteen generations which is the same thing.¹²

All this means that the seventy times seven years of Daniel 9:24 were never meant to be fitted into history with mathematical precision. Just as the period from the Exodus to David was reckoned as seventy times seven years, and the period from Solomon's temple to the dedication of Zerubbabel's new temple was reckoned to be another seventy times seven years, so from the new exodus from Babylon to the new David (or from Zerubbabel's temple to the anointing of the temple mentioned in Daniel 9:24) is designated as seventy times seven years. If the reader thinks there is some ambiguity in all this, he is quite right. That is the way Jewish apocalyptic writers and even Matthew the evangelist used sacred arithmetic. They were not concerned with the exact measurement of time. They were more interested in the symbolic or typological significance of a given period.

Furthermore, the ancient Hebrews designated time more by its quality or character than by its actual duration. Time was characterized by the events which filled it with significance—harvest time, wartime, etc. Instead of using our calculators when we study an apocalyptic time period, we should study sacred history to see what past event the sacred writer is alluding to. We should then seek to understand the significance or character of that period of time rather than its exact chronological length. This method will never bring the kind of disappointment Adventism suffered in 1844 and might well encounter again.

12. Quoted in Tasker, *Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 32.

And all down the centuries men have continued to suppose that every previous interpretation was wrong, while their own at last is right, and is to be vindicated in the fulfilment of the expectations of the book of Daniel in their own day, only to find that their own interpretation inexorably goes to join the others that events have demonstrated to be wrong.¹³

There is a compelling reason why the attempts to make the seventy times seven years fit the events of Jesus' life with mathematical precision are misguided. If such precision were really intended in Daniel 9, the vision would have to be one of the most remarkable Messianic predictions in all Scripture. Yet neither Jesus nor His apostles appealed to such an argument in support of the Messianic claims.

The evidence indicates, therefore, that the seventy times seven of Daniel 9 roughly corresponds to similar periods of time in Old Testament history. Perhaps it should be remembered that the measure of divine forgiveness is also likened to seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22).

We are not questioning the reliability of the Bible but the reliability of certain approaches to the Bible. *The reliability of the Bible is relative to its intentionality.* If the apocalyptic authors intended to give us a scientifically exact chronology and failed, we could question their reliability. But apocalyptic literature is designed to be evocative rather than mechanically or magically predictive. The book of Revelation, for example, repeatedly evokes Old Testament events and institutions. The five months of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:5) are not a prediction of what the Turks were doing for 150 years nor of what will happen in a literal five months during the com-

13. H. H. Rowley, *The Re-Discovery of the Old Testament* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1946), p. 187.

ing tribulation. The revelator is recalling the Flood story, when the "waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days" (Gen. 7:24). The reader is to see a correspondence between the judgments of God in the Flood and the judgments of God under the fifth trumpet.

Apocalyptic literature is imaginative, daring and poetic. To try to read the mysterious apocalyptic numbers as if they were mathematical predictions to be fitted into an exact timetable is to miss the artistic spirit of the literature. It is as clumsy and unimaginative as a literal interpretation of a love poem. Does nineteenth- and twentieth-century piety have to be so colorless that it must treat apocalyptic drama as predictive narrative to be interpreted with mathematical precision?

When the revelator sees the woman fly into the wilderness with eagle's wings for forty-two months, where she is protected for three and one-half years, he is not presenting an exact timetable. The apostle John is making a skillful play on two events in the Old Testament which illustrate the condition of the Christian church between the resurrection and the second advent. Those two events are Israel in the wilderness for two years plus forty years (hence the figure forty-two) and Elijah being hid from Jezebel for three and one-half years. By such ingenious imagery and apocalyptic manipulation of numbers, John beautifully shows that the situation of the church is like that of both Israel and Elijah in the desert. Let sanctified imagination grasp these two analogies from the Old Testament, and we will have a rich source of understanding on the present life of faith. Used in this way, apocalyptic does not tickle idle curiosity, but it builds character—faith, hope and patient endurance. Instead of using our calculators when we encounter these mysterious numbers, we should rather read our sacred history to determine which event the author is alluding to.

What then becomes of the traditional Adventist computations which not only determined the exact year but determined Daniel 8:14 to the exact day—October 22, 1844? This could only be done by resorting to the questionable method of reckoning the Day of Atonement according to the calendar of an obscure group of Karaite Jews.

The pioneers should not be censured for being products of an age which thought prophecies were to be calculated and fulfilled in the minutest mathematical detail. It is we who deserve censure when we cling to arguments and methods which twentieth-century biblical science has demonstrated to be untenable. If Adventism maintains these outmoded nineteenth-century arguments, it will soon be as anachronistic as the Flat Earth Society.

9

The Certainty of the Words of Truth

In the introduction to his gospel Luke speaks about “the certainty of the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4). The New Testament gospel is a bright and certain light. The Old Testament was only a shadow of it. The Old Testament revelation was given “in many fragments and by various methods” (Heb. 1:1, Weymouth). Because the Old Testament is a shadow of good things to come, many of its statements are enigmatic. They are sometimes difficult to translate and even more difficult to understand.

In the last days, however, God spoke to us by His Son (Heb. 1:2). God spoke definitively and clearly, for Jesus was God’s Word to man—His full and final revelation. With the coming of the apostolic gospel, that which was still a mystery even to prophets of the Old Testament was unveiled, and God’s secret was made known (Matt. 13:16; Rom. 16:26; 2 Cor. 4:3; Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:25, 26; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

What more could God reveal to us, asked Luther, since the tomb is empty and the seals are broken and the message of salvation is so plainly declared to us in the gospel of Christ? The New Testament message of salvation is not based upon a doubtful interpretation of one or two texts in the Old Testament. The apostles were witnesses of a concrete historical event. They walked the roads of Palestine with Him who was God in human flesh. They saw Him die on a cross (which none can deny), they saw the empty tomb, and they ate and drank with the risen Lord. They were witnesses of the incarnation and the resurrection. The Christ story is told by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter and Paul, each in his own way, but all recount essentially the same wondrous story, which is the "good news."

The story of Christ is inexhaustible—as two thousand years of diligent Bible study has demonstrated. The essential features of this holy history are so clear that it really does not matter which version of the Bible we use. This history will shine through any version in any language on earth. All Scripture abundantly testifies that all who repent and believe that Jesus is the Son of God risen from the dead are judged and forgiven and have eternal life, because they have already crossed over from death to life (John 5:24; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 3:24-26; 10:9).

By this one everlasting gospel, which proclaims Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes and a man's only righteousness before the face of God, all men are judged and accounted worthy of either eternal life or eternal death. This is the truly universal or catholic faith.

This great testing truth of the New Testament is not based on a few scattered texts, much less on a doubtful interpretation of a difficult scripture. But people are so prone to establish other tests. In the place of this bright

light of the gospel many want to take less certain things and make them tests of faith. Some of these tests rest on the interpretation of a single doubtful passage of Holy Writ, whether a certain view of the Supper or of baptism or of some calculation from an apocalyptic symbol.

In this category I must place the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14. I do not mind if the Adventist wants to think that his mathematical calculations, including the use of an obscure Karaite calendar, give him the exact prophetic reckoning. What concerns me is that this interpretation of a single scriptural passage, with no other scriptural witnesses and no specific New Testament confirmation, should be made an article of faith alongside faith in the sinless life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some Adventists think that believing this particular interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is just as important as believing in Christ's death and resurrection. October 22, 1844, is considered an event in salvation history which must be believed in the same way one believes that Christ is risen from the dead. The mentality which makes a certain interpretation of Daniel 8:14 an article of faith to be placed alongside the certainties of the New Testament is rank sectarianism. It is esoteric and cultic. This is proved by the fact that many Adventists will not really accept other Christians as sound in the faith if they do not believe that Jesus passed from one compartment in heaven to another in 1844.

Yet not one Adventist in a thousand would really know how to explain this traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 from the Bible. In fact, leading scholars like Raymond Cottrell and Don Neufeld have flatly said they do not believe that any Seventh-day Adventist can prove it from the Bible.

Think of all the obstacles one must surmount in attempting to prove the traditional view of 1844! One

must juggle texts from all over the Bible and leap across great gaps where evidence is wanting. When he finally reaches the end of a long and arduous road, he might well fear that someone will ask for one clear text to support the conclusion of the whole matter. This obstacle course has one advantage, however. It forces a person to become familiar with Old Testament history, church history and secular history. One must also study the tabernacle service in Leviticus, the book of Hebrews, and much about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. And though the research may not yield satisfactory support for the traditional position, it will at least have supplied a great deal of valuable information.

Let us consider a few of the points which must be established from the Bible if the traditional Adventist wants to reach the desired conclusion:

1. He must prove that 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices equal 2,300 full days when there is no conclusive evidence from Daniel 8:14 itself—and no other text of Scripture to confirm that it means full days.

2. He must not only prove that a day equals a year in prophecy but that an evening and a morning sacrifice equal one year.

3. In the face of the context which implies that the period would commence when the daily sacrifice was suspended, he must contend that it began in 457 B.C.—a date which had nothing to do with taking away the regular burnt offering.

4. He must prove that the “cleansing of the sanctuary” means cleansing it from the confessed sins of the saints when the context refers to “cleansing” it from the pollution of the desolator.

5. He must prove that confessed sins defile the sanctuary, that the blood of the individual sin offering was taken into the sanctuary, and that such blood was sin-laden and therefore defiled the holy places.

6. He must assume that the 490 years are cut off from the 2,300 years when there is nothing in Daniel 8 and 9 which requires this.

7. He must assume that the 2,300 years and the 490 years begin together although there is no proof of this.

8. He must maintain that the reconsecration of the sanctuary (Dan. 8:14) and the anointing of the sanctuary (Dan. 9:24) are not the same but are separated by nearly two thousand years.

9. He must prove that the “word” which is issued in Daniel 9:25 refers to a kingly decree and that Artaxerxes made such a decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem when there is no evidence that he did.

10. He must then prove that the cleansing of the sanctuary “commenced” (when Daniel 8:14 says nothing about “commencing”) not just in 1844 but on October 22, 1844. Since such detail is not in the Bible, he must show that the Karaite calendar is more reliable than the more orthodox Rabbinical calendar. This entire exercise, of course, depends on proving that the “cleansing” of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 is the same typified in Leviticus 16.

11. He must show that the day of atonement began in 1844, and he must explain why Christ’s great act of atonement is not the day of atonement but is separated from it by eighteen hundred years.

12. He must then show that there are two apartments in the heavenly sanctuary and that Christ moved from

the holy place to the most holy place in 1844. He must also explain that when the New Testament says Christ entered God's presence and sat down on the throne in the heavenly sanctuary, as Hebrews 9:12 says, this only means the first apartment in heaven.

13. Having proved all this, he must then prove that the judgment which began in heaven in 1844 was an "investigative judgment" only for the professed people of God, not a judgment of the wicked horn or of Babylon.

14. He must then show (or assume) that this is what Revelation 14:7 is describing, though it gives no such details on this trial of the saints.

How can we continue insisting that this elaborate and tortuous explanation of the meaning of Daniel 8:14 should be made a test of faith alongside the certainties of the Christian message? It is one thing to think our interpretation of a passage of Scripture is correct. It is surely another thing to refuse to fellowship with other believers who view this matter another way or to treat those who doubt our elaborate argumentation as apostate from the faith. Surely this is rank sectarianism.

The Judeo-Christian faith is a historical faith. The Exodus story was not the product of Israel's faith. It was the concrete historical event which gave birth to Israel's faith. Neither was the Exodus story the accidental product of the Jewish interpretation of some prophetic oracle. The Christ story was not the creation of the faith-experience of the primitive church. The incarnation and resurrection were concrete historical events which gave birth to the Christian faith and determined the way the apostles interpreted Old Testament Scripture. The fact of the resurrection does not depend on the interpretation of a few mysterious Old Testament texts.

Adventist faith in the 1844 date, however, is not a historical faith, as is the Judeo-Christian faith. The 1844 "event" does not rest on testimony concerning a concrete historical event. Rather, it rests on a unique interpretation of a single scriptural text. The "event" is the product of the faith-experience of the pioneer Adventists. If the first Christians had been like Adventists, with nothing to appeal to but their interpretation of Scripture, Christianity would not have been a historical religion.

10

The Gospel Is the End of the 1844 Schema

William Miller's generation was stirred by a worldwide conviction that the end of the world was near. Postmillennialism had placed the coming of Christ in the distant future, and the church had lost her eschatological consciousness. But many in Miller's day were aroused to look for and prepare for the coming of Christ. Not since the days of the apostles was there such a revival of eschatological consciousness in the church. Many of God's children looked for and loved the appearing of Jesus. Surely God would have had it thus, for this was more like primitive Christianity.

Like any generation which looks for the coming of Christ, the nineteenth-century Millerites saw the signs of His coming in the events of their day. Because they wanted Christ to come in their day, they looked for evidence that He was coming in their day. A century before them Bengel reckoned that Christ would come

about 1836.¹ Events such as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the decline of the papacy and the great meteoric shower of 1833 convinced them that men like Bengel were correct. How natural it was for these early Adventists to develop this whole apocalyptic schema to climax in their own day! It must have been quite exciting to calculate that the 2,300 "days" would end in 1843 (as Miller first believed). It is not difficult to believe an interpretation if you want to believe it. Miller and his associates "showed" that many things would climax in the 1840's. For instance, Miller showed that the seven times of Daniel 4 (2,520 years) would end in 1843. He even used the mysterious 666 to determine the date 1843. Josiah Litch, a Millerite preacher, calculated that the year-month-day-hour of the sixth trumpet would end on August 11, 1840. Quite remarkably, an event in the downfall of the Ottoman empire seemed to fit Litch's prediction. This was the heyday of historicism. The details of historical events in the nineteenth century were actually seen to be fulfilling biblical predictions. Even such parables of Jesus as the ten virgins were viewed as detailed predictions of events surrounding the Millerite movement. The pioneers saw their own history and experiences as fulfilling biblical predictions. It appeared to these Adventists that the Bible prophecies were not only focused on the nineteenth century but on the Adventists themselves.

In North America these fond advent hopes finally coalesced and concentrated on one day—October 22, 1844. The Adventists were bitterly disappointed, but the handful of pioneer Seventh-day Adventists refused to relinquish their earnest hopes of Christ's soon coming.

1. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1948), 2:709-11.

Obviously, Daniel 8:14 could no longer be used to show when Christ was going to come, but these few survivors from the Great Disappointment still used Daniel 8:14 to support their eschatological hopes. They believed (1) that they were in the last days, (2) that Christ was in the holy of holies and (3) that the final judgment was already present in history. Some of the arguments used to support these convictions were tenuous, involved and quite naive, but they were New Testament convictions. The nineteenth-century apocalyptic revival has served a useful and providential purpose. It has been a preparation for a renewal of the gospel. Käsemann has persuasively argued that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."² For about two hundred years Jewish apocalyptic flourished, preparing the way for the birth of the gospel. As its name suggests, Adventism is a modern-day apocalyptic movement which has helped prepare for a rebirth of the gospel in the Christian church. And this gospel now shows us, more clearly than nineteenth-century apocalyptic speculations could show us, (1) that we are in the last days, (2) that Christ is in the most holy place and (3) that the final judgment is already present in history.

Thus, traditional Adventism has been a "lesser light" groping after the "greater light" of the apostolic gospel. We should review our history with gratitude for God's graciousness. The apocalyptic schema has kept our eschatological consciousness alive. The law and the conviction that this is the judgment hour has served the pedagogic function of keeping us panting after the gospel. The renewal of the gospel in our midst should not be seen as a threat to what Adventism has tried to accomplish. It should be seen as the fulfillment of the movement's

2. Quoted in D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 23.

aspirations. To embrace this gospel is to come of age. While grateful for the grace of God in Adventism's childhood, we can now put away childish things.

Section III

The Gospel and Ellen G. White

Introduction

The rebirth of the gospel in the Protestant Reformation revolutionized the church's approach to the Bible. The inevitable corollary of the Reformation's *sola fide* (by faith alone) was *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone). As long as the church mixed man's sanctification with the article of righteousness by faith, it mixed the authority of its traditions with the authority of the Bible. As soon as the Reformation broke this Catholic synthesis of Christ's righteousness and the believer's regeneration, it broke the synthesis of the Bible and tradition. When Christ's righteousness was allowed to stand as the only basis of man's acceptance with God, the Bible stood as the only rule of faith and practice.

We need to clearly see why the gospel inevitably leads to the *sola Scriptura* principle. The Reformers affirmed the *sola Scriptura* principle under two heads—the all-sufficiency of the Bible and the clarity of the Bible. Let us see how both affirmations are corollaries of the New Testament gospel.

The New Testament gospel proclaims that the Old Testament has reached its transcendent fulfillment in Christ. He is presented as the goal of salvation history. In Him God has realized His purpose for the human race. God, who had spoken in varied and fragmentary ways by the prophets, has at last spoken by His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2, Weymouth). In Him God has given all and revealed all, for Jesus is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9, KJV). Jesus Christ is God's final Word to man. There is no way to move beyond the hearing of the New Testament gospel to some higher and fuller knowledge or experience of God. This is why the canon of Holy Scripture had to close with the apostolic gospel. This was the publication of God's last will and testament. If the canon is not closed, if the apostles did not preach the full truth of the gospel, if there is some *de novo* revelation yet to be given to the church, then Jesus is not God's Messiah and the apostles are false witnesses. We cannot confess the New Testament gospel, therefore, without confessing the all-sufficiency of the Bible.

The gospel also leads to the affirmation of the clarity of the Bible. There is nothing obscure about the gospel. It is a clear and certain light. It declares that the son of Mary is God's Son, who fulfills the entire Old Testament. His righteous life fulfilled the law for us, and His death on the cross made full satisfaction for our sins. He rose from the dead and is now enthroned as King at God's right hand, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead. Whoever believes this in his heart is forgiven, has eternal life and shall be saved forever if only he continues in the faith. This gospel of Christ is the truth of the Bible. It is transparently clear. What more could God have done for us when He acted for us in Christ, and what more could He have revealed to us? The tomb is now empty, the seals are broken, and God's secret is out. There is nothing obscure about the essential

truth of the Bible. The simple believer who is armed with the gospel is well-equipped to judge all doctrine and all teachers of doctrine, whether they be angels, popes, prophets or pastors.

When the bright light of the gospel is tarnished, the Bible is no longer clear. It becomes full of riddles and contradictions which must be explained and harmonized by extrabiblical authorities. Rome's premise is that the Bible is an obscure book—so obscure that it needs the papacy as an infallible interpreter.

Adventism has the Bible and the "Spirit of Prophecy." Adventism says that Ellen White gives "an inspired commentary on Scripture."¹ It tries to profess (at least to "outsiders") that it stands on the Bible alone, but, like Rome, it actually has two sources of authority—the Bible and an infallible interpreter. Just as traditional Adventism has added man's sanctification to the righteousness of faith, it has added an extrabiblical authority to the Word of God. The average Adventist does not think that the Bible is clear or easy to understand, but Ellen White is plain. She makes the Bible understandable.

At one time I thought that Ellen White was clearer than the Bible. Arthur White says so quite bluntly.² But it is sectarianism which makes the Bible difficult to read. For example, if the book of Hebrews teaches traditional Adventism, I must admit that it is an obscure book. In fact, without Ellen White it is so obscure that one is in danger of arriving at wrong conclusions. If the Bible teaches an investigative judgment beginning in 1844, I

1. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Biblical Interpretation," p. 7, in *Australasian Division Bible Conference: 1978*, Notebook Prepared by the Australasian Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2. See Arthur L. White, *Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings: A Reprint of Articles Published in the Adventist Review* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1978-1979), pp. 3-12.

confess that the Bible is so obscure that not one Adventist in a thousand could begin to prove this elaborate apocalyptic conundrum from the Scriptures. For years our family has read the Bible, especially the New Testament, from a good modern version. I have often been stunned with the startling clarity of certain passages and have wondered how I could have read traditional Adventism into them. If we remove the sectarian baggage and the pet concerns of different Christian groups and restore the centrality of the gospel, the Bible is clear. I have found the Bible to be much clearer than Ellen White. Should not the "greater light" be clearer than the "lesser light"? The Bible has a sharpness, a grandeur and a majesty far surpassing Ellen White—and I believe she would say "Amen" to that.

Mrs. White has been used as an extrabiblical authority because the Adventist community has not been clear on the gospel. With the present gospel confrontation, it is inevitable that the role of Ellen White come under review.

Mrs. White is not merely one of the pioneers of Adventism; she is Adventism. Adventism reads the Bible through the eyes of Ellen White and aspires to an ethical ideal expressed in her writings. The entire theology, life and worship of the church revolve around the personality and teachings of this remarkable woman.

Seventh-day Adventists have always believed in the presence of spiritual gifts in the church of the last days. Mrs. White's life and work have been considered a manifestation of these gifts. But Adventism has not applied Paul's instruction on spiritual gifts to Mrs. White (1 Cor. 12-14). Paul explains that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the edification and building up of the church. Yet he clearly warns the Corinthian church that the gifts can be abused and misused by the person with the gift or by the people among whom the gifts operate. The apostle shows

that the gifts should be exercised in love (1 Cor. 13), implying that the Corinthians were not always doing this. The gifts should also be subject to the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:32). If someone possesses the gift of prophecy, the church should only believe what he prophesies after submitting it to the test of God's Word. In another place Paul warns: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess. 5:19-22). In other words, spiritual gifts do not possess canonical authority for the church but must stand under the judgment of the canonical prophets and apostles. It seems, however, that when the early Seventh-day Adventists accepted Mrs. White's ministry as a genuine charismatic manifestation, they accepted everything she said as if it were the Word of God itself. And anyone inclined to test a single line of the "Spirit of Prophecy" by God's Word was regarded as doubting the voice of God's Spirit.³

The Corinthian church made an idol out of the spiritual gifts given the community by the Holy Spirit. This was their great danger. This has also been Adventism's danger. That Mrs. White was a charismatic person is not called into question. That she was a godly woman and one of the saints of the church is not called into question. But Adventism, like the early Corinthians, has idolized Mrs. White's charismatic manifestations. The community has created and nurtured a fantastic legend of Ellen White. In Anglo-Saxon Adventism, at least, Mrs. White so dominates the theology, worship and life of the church that it has become the cult of Ellen White.

3. See "The Bible Conference of 1919," sec. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History: July 30, 1919," *Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (May 1979): 37-40.

We need to reflect on what Hermann Sasse said of his own church: "The more Luther's teachings fade from the consciousness of the church, so much the more foolishly the cult of his person is promoted."⁴ We may well dread the day when the promised official biography of Ellen White's life is released. No doubt it will contain her personal tastes and opinions on every conceivable subject.

There is a vast gulf between the real Mrs. White and the Mrs. White of Adventist mythology. Of course, legends about the church's great saints are nothing new and may often be quite innocent. But the legends about Mrs. White undergird an elaborate structure of "Whitolatry."⁵

4. Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith* (1938; reprint ed., Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), p. 35.

5. I suggest that we ought to be less scornful of Roman Catholic Mariolatry. Lutherans, Calvinists, Wesleyans and other followers of great Christian figures would also find more profit in reflecting on their own situation than in scorning Adventism.

11

The Legend of the Inerrant Ellen G. White

When representative Adventist spokesmen are asked if they believe in the verbal inspiration or inerrancy¹ of Ellen White's writings, they say "No." It is now acknowledged that she made mistakes in historical detail and that her memory failed her on occasion. It is also officially affirmed that her writings are not part of the canon of Holy Scripture. These forthright statements are intended to assure other Christians that Adventists take a reasonable position on the writings of Ellen White.

An unsuspecting Christian scholar may be quite misled, however, if he declares that few Adventists today believe in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Ellen

1. It is difficult to avoid some ambiguity in using the word *inerrant*. The position of traditional Adventism is that neither the Bible nor Ellen White is inerrant in those technical details not essential to doctrinal integrity, but both the Bible and Ellen White are absolutely trustworthy and inerrant in all matters essential to doctrinal integrity. The reader will notice, therefore, that I have used the word *inerrant* both ways.

White. The fact is that informed Seventh-day Adventists do not hold the rigid fundamentalist view on the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of either the Bible or Ellen White.

The question of belief in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Ellen White's writings does not touch the real issue. And I suggest that Adventism has been quite willing to allow "outsiders" to be misled or misinformed on how Ellen White is regarded. Adventism should be asked, "Do you believe there is any difference in the degree of inspiration of the Bible and of Ellen White?" From the time Ellen White rebuked George Butler for suggesting that there are degrees of inspiration,² Adventism has said quite emphatically that there are no degrees of inspiration. Thus, with respect to the quality and kind of inspiration, Adventism believes that there is no difference between the Bible and Ellen White.

If traditional Adventists are asked whether they believe that Ellen White's writings are as inspired and inerrant

2. "I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the *Review*, neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college. When men venture to criticize the Word of God they venture on sacred, holy ground and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired. The testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in this" (E. G. White to R. A. Underwood, 18 Jan. 1889, written from Battle Creek, Michigan [Letter 22, 1889; Manuscript Release #271, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.]). Cf. George I. Butler, "Inspiration: Its Nature and Manner of Communication," *Review and Herald*, 8 Jan. 1884, p. 24; idem, "Inspiration: Differences in Degrees and Manner of Bestowment," *ibid.*, 15 Jan. 1884, p. 41; idem, "Inspiration, No. 3: Visions and Dreams," *ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1884, pp. 57-8; idem, "Inspiration, No. 4: Light through Visions the Principal Source of Bible Inspiration," *ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1884, pp. 73-4; idem, "Inspiration, No. 5: The Word of the Lord Came to Men through Visions," *ibid.*, 5 Feb. 1884, pp. 89-90; idem, "Inspiration, No. 6: How Were the Poetic and Historical Books of the Bible Written?" *ibid.*, 15 Apr. 1884, pp. 249-50; idem, "Inspiration, No. 7: The Books of Solomon, Job, etc.," *ibid.*, 22 Apr. 1884, pp. 265-67; idem, "Inspiration, No. 8: In What Sense Are the Scriptures Inspired?" *ibid.*, 6 May 1884, pp. 296-97; idem, "Inspiration, No. 9: Is There Any Degree of Imperfection in the Revelations of God to Man?" *ibid.*, 27 May 1884, pp. 344-46.

rant as the Bible, their answer is "Yes." Recently the *Adventist Review* published a series of articles by Arthur L. White, Mrs. White's grandson, in which he compared the inspiration of the Bible with Ellen White.³ His thesis was that Seventh-day Adventists have a unique insight into the nature of biblical inspiration because they have a demonstration of it in Ellen White. She is the norm for judging the nature of biblical inspiration. Arthur White said that Ellen White is even superior to the Bible writings in three practical respects: (1) We have her original autographs. (2) We have her writings in a modern language and therefore know exactly what she meant. (3) We have a fullness in her writings which is better than the fragmentary biblical documents.

To my knowledge Arthur White's thesis aroused no protest within the halls of traditional Adventism. Yet his thesis commits Adventism to the principle of judging the Bible by Ellen White. She is the model for the way biblical inspiration works. If blemishes, contradictions or distortions are found in Ellen White, they must then be imputed to the Bible.

If someone indicates that Mrs. White made historical mistakes, it is quickly pointed out that there are historical mistakes in the Bible. If someone shows that Mrs. White copied from other authors, it is pointed out that Matthew and Luke copied from Mark. This logic is being pressed to its bitter end. If Adventists are forced to acknowledge that Mrs. White taught something not supported by biblical exegesis, it is shown that the New Testament gave the Old Testament Scriptures another

3. See Arthur L. White, *Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings: A Reprint of Articles Published in the Adventist Review* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1978-1979), pp. 3-12.

meaning.⁴ One of the professors at Avondale College has argued that if New Testament authors can use the Old Testament with a creative freedom which sometimes borders on a violent contradiction of its Old Testament meaning, why cannot Ellen White be given the same liberty? (And we might ask, if Mrs. White does not have to be restricted to the meaning of Scripture, why insist that Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy must be bound to the meaning of Scripture?) This tendency to compare the inspiration of Ellen White with the inspiration of the Bible has become so insistent that Californian pastor and researcher, Walter Rea, has warned the leading brethren against the possibility of damning the Bible in order to vindicate Ellen White.

In its official publications to the church, Adventism persistently fosters the idea that Ellen White's writings on all matters of doctrine and precept are the product of the "Spirit of Prophecy" and are therefore as free from error as any human writings, including the Bible. And if her writings are superior to the Bible with respect to fullness and clarity, as Arthur White declares, it is obvious why they have been used as the authority to settle all questions on theology and ethics.

These facts are not frankly acknowledged to those outside the Adventist church. In fact, Adventism in this regard could be suspected of deceitfulness. It confesses one thing to other Christians—since it is very image conscious—and another thing to its own members. To the evangelicals it declares, "We test the writings of Ellen G. White by the Bible."⁵ But the insider is told

4. See Raymond F. Cottrell, "Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method," *Spectrum* 10, no. 4 (Mar. 1980), p. 22.

5. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), p. 90. "Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors."

that Mrs. White's writings are an inspired interpretation of the Bible.⁶ How dare one bring her writings under the judgment of the Bible if one thinks they are the inspired interpretation of the Bible?

Traditional Adventism does not settle theological questions by asking, "What does the Bible say," but by asking, "What does Mrs. White say?" If a Bible passage is used, Mrs. White determines what it means. Traditional Roman Catholicism has been severely criticized because it accepts the papacy as the infallible interpreter of Holy Scripture. Yet traditional Adventism claims just as much for Ellen White. Thousands of Seventh-day Ad-

6. "Among Seventh-day Adventists it is generally granted that the Holy Spirit functioned in the inspiration of the writings of E. G. White in the same manner as in that of the biblical prophets. The inspired writings of God's messenger to the Adventist Church, however, do not supersede the Bible nor are they an addition to the canon of Scripture. E. G. White herself maintains that the Bible is 'the test of all inspiration' and 'the test of experience.' Concerning the relation of the writings of E. G. White to the supreme authority of the Bible, she stated explicitly as follows: 'Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.' Since her writings are inspired as is Scripture they are a light as is Scripture but neither an addition to Scripture nor above or equal to Scripture. It is the purpose of the inspired testimony of E. G. White to direct people to the greater light of Scripture and to impress men's minds with its importance.

"On account of the inspiration of the writings of E. G. White Seventh-day Adventists rightly affirmed that these writings have a superior authority to other writings, Scripture alone excepted. Yet this does not mean that her writings share the primacy of the Bible. Her writings function in a subordinate role to Scripture, to give a clearer understanding of it, to exalt it, to attract minds to it, to call attention to neglected truths, to impress inspired truths already revealed, to awaken and impress minds, to bring people back to the Bible, to call attention to Bible principles, and to apply them to practical life. It is, therefore, no surprise that the writings of E. G. White have a specially honored place among Seventh-day Adventists for they provide an inspired commentary on Scripture and explicate its application to life. But E. G. White insists that they are 'not given to take the place of the Bible' and are not 'an addition to the word of God.' On account of the place of E. G. White in the understanding of Seventh-day Adventists her inspired writings are a constant source of information and orientation in the interpretation of the Bible. The careful exegete will constantly consult her inspired commentary on Scripture" (Gerhard F. Hasel, "Biblical Interpretation," p. 7, in *Australasian Division Bible Conference: 1978*, Notebook Prepared by the Australasian Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church).

ventists dare receive nothing, however plainly taught in Scripture, if it is contrary to the teaching of Ellen White. If the *Adventist Review* is an expression of traditional Adventism, it is fair to say that traditional Adventism only reads the Bible through the eyes of Ellen White. Furthermore, one would gather the impression from the *Adventist Review* that one would inevitably be deceived if he tried to read the Bible without the help of Ellen White. She tells the faithful Adventist what the Bible means at nearly every point.

Let us now examine this legend of the doctrinal inerrancy of Ellen White.

The Shut-Door Theory

All the pioneers, including Ellen White, not only believed but ardently taught the shut-door doctrine for at least seven years (1844-1851). The first half of *Early Writings* was written by Ellen White during these years. The shut door was a theory advanced to explain what had happened on October 22, 1844. It said that Jesus had ceased pleading for the fallen churches and for sinners in the first apartment of the sanctuary and had gone into the second apartment to plead only for the "little flock." Consequently, the early Seventh-day Adventists did not preach to the world or try to convert sinners. They even denounced those who tried to evangelize, and they dismissed all reports of further conversions as the work of Satan. They refused to believe there could be any genuine revival or evangelism anywhere outside their own ranks—which numbered about one hundred persons by 1849. This shut-door theory was held as an all-important "present truth." In fact, the early Seventh-

day Adventists were first called "'shut-door' believers."⁷

After about seven years, however, the pioneers, led by James and Ellen White, began to see that the shut-door theory was untenable. They therefore tried to discard this position. James White even eliminated some shut-door sentiments from a reprint of his wife's earlier works. Apparently, it was an embarrassing stage in their development which they chose to forget.

At this time Ellen White was not regarded as an inspired prophet whose pronouncements were as authoritative as the Bible. A change in teaching therefore posed no real problem for the Adventist community. They were only a small family of believers. Those who appreciate the virtues of their loved ones are not greatly troubled by their frailties. But when the legend of an inerrant prophet was fostered in the community in later years, some dissenters began to resurrect the earlier shut-door episode. An "all-or-nothing"⁸ tug-of-war then developed over Ellen White's authority. The dissenters felt they could invalidate Mrs. White's gift of prophecy if they could prove that she ever taught any doctrinal error in the exercise of her public ministry. The apologists were pushed to the point where they could not acknowledge the facts of their own history. They began to conceal the evidence that Mrs. White was ever involved in the ill-fated shut-door doctrine. Under the pressure of preserv-

7. Rolf J. Poehler, "' . . . And the Door Was Shut': Seventh-day Adventists and the Shut-Door Doctrine in the Decade after the Great Disappointment" (Paper presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the courses THST 690, Problems in Theology, and CHIS 874, Development of SDA Doctrines, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, February, 1978), p. 74. See also Robert D. Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 41-8.

8. In evaluating Ellen G. White, Adventists were drawn into the extreme alternatives of viewing her either as a true prophet who was completely reliable in all she said or as a false prophet.

ing the credibility of her public ministry, Mrs. White was drawn into the argument. She was less than candid about her involvement in the shut-door episode. A real tension therefore exists between what she and her husband said in 1847 and what she said in the 1880's.

1847 Statements

James White testified:

When she received her first vision, Dec. 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine, (where her parents then resided) had given up the midnight-cry, and shut door, as being in the past. It was then that the Lord shew her in vision, the error into which she and the band in Portland had fallen. She then related her vision to the band, and about sixty confessed their error, and acknowledged their 7th month experience to be the work of God.⁹

Ellen White testified:

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February, 1845.

While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Damon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their difference.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

9. James White, in *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (1847; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., n.d.), p. 22.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts.

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.

Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.¹⁰

These statements say that Mrs. White's vision corrected her error and made her give up disbelieving the shut-door doctrine.

1884 Statement

Ellen White testified:

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.¹¹

10. White to Bates, 13 July 1847, MS B-3-1847, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., quoted in Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question" (Statement prepared by Arthur L. White to serve as an appendix to his forthcoming biography of Ellen G. White), Exhibit 2, pp. 49-51.

11. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), p. 63.

This statement says that Mrs. White's vision corrected her error and made her give up believing the shut-door doctrine. The statements of 1847 and 1884 are in direct contradiction. Which are we to believe?

Throughout Seventh-day Adventist history, men like Uriah Smith, George Butler, J. N. Loughborough, A. G. Daniells, M. C. Wilcox, W. A. Spicer, F. D. Nichol and Arthur White have attempted to relieve Mrs. White of involvement in the shut-door doctrine. A. G. Daniells was more candid than the others. He admitted that Mrs. White believed the shut door but suggested that she never advocated it. Most apologists, however, claimed that Mrs. White was actively involved in evangelizing sinners from the beginning of her public ministry in 1844. This claim is an utter distortion of history.

In 1970 Arthur L. White said, "The documents now currently available firmly substantiate that Seventh-day Adventist pioneers did for some time hold shut door views."¹² What does Arthur White mean by the "documents now currently available"? These documents have always been available to men like Arthur White and F. D. Nichol. And they have long known of their existence. Furthermore, these documents were not voluntarily released so that the entire church could have access to the information. They were uncovered by those who dissented from the official position. Only then did the Ellen White Estate release them.

The shut-door episode has been a denominational cover-up. Leading Adventist authors have engaged in a conspiracy to hide the facts of early Adventist history. The simple truth of this early history, of course, would destroy the legend of Ellen White's doctrinal inerrancy.

12. White, "Shut Door Question," p. 7.

The Law in Galatians

A comparison of *Sketches from the Life of Paul*¹³ with *Selected Messages*¹⁴ clearly shows that Ellen White changed her position on the law in Galatians. Before 1888 she believed that the law in Galatians was essentially the ceremonial law. After 1888 she said that E. J. Waggoner was essentially right in his contention that the law in Galatians was the moral law.

In his book, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man*, David P. McMahon recounts the interesting history behind this controversy over the law in Galatians.¹⁵ As early as 1854, E. J. Waggoner's father, J. H. Waggoner, taught that the law in Galatians was the moral law. When Stephen Pierce challenged this view in 1856, James White, Ellen White and Uriah Smith sided with Pierce. James White withdrew the publication of Waggoner's book on *The Law of God: An Examination of the Testimony of both Testaments*, and Mrs. White sent a Testimony to Waggoner, telling him that he was wrong. When the controversy was renewed at the Minneapolis conference of 1888, Uriah Smith was shocked that Mrs. White departed from her earlier position.

Justification by Faith

Norval F. Pease has tried to show that before 1888 Ellen White stood virtually alone in teaching the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith to the Adventist

13. See Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek: Review & Herald, 1883). Reprinted in 1974 by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

14. See White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 234.

15. See David P. McMahon, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1979), pp. 51-91.

community.¹⁶ Pease found it difficult, however, to provide evidence for this position. Mrs. White wrote:

Through the merits of his blood, and obedience to the law of God, they could have the favor of God, and be brought into the beautiful garden, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life.¹⁷

The sinner, through repentance of his sins, faith in Christ, and obedience to the perfect law of God, has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him.¹⁸

These statements could easily be read, as they sometimes are, in support of a semi-Pelagian position.

Pease suggested that the book, *The Great Controversy* (first published in 1884), presents the clearest evidence of Ellen White's attitude toward justification by faith. But while this book is decidedly favorable to the Protestant Reformation, it fails to clarify the real issues between the Catholic and Protestant views of justification by faith. It is far too superficial and gives the misleading impression that, while Rome contended for a salvation by crass human works, the Reformers stood for salvation by God's grace. Paxton has amply documented that a number of Seventh-day Adventist authors have taken the Catholic position in their teachings on righteousness by faith¹⁹—yet all these authors have read and believed *The Great Controversy*.

16. See Norval Frederick Pease, "Justification and Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church before 1900," Masters thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1945.

17. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, *The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels* (1858; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1945), p. 23.

18. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 3:371.

19. See Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (1977; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978).

The best that can be said about the pre-1888 Ellen White is what the historian Philip Schaff said about the early Luther—that he understood the truth of righteousness by faith in his heart for some years before he was able to clearly articulate it. Ellen White's post-1888 articles on justification by faith, however, are much more Protestant.²⁰

The Two-Apartment Sanctuary Schema

The books *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *The Great Controversy* reflect the pioneer Adventist views on the two-apartment schema of the heavenly sanctuary. Mrs. White did not originate these views. They were developed from 1844 to 1857 by the arguments of Crosier, Bates, Andrews, Loughborough, Smith and James White. Mrs. White adopted the best of their arguments and used their texts. The visions of this charismatic young woman often confirmed positions advanced by the pioneers, but she did not originate any pioneer doctrinal position. The pioneers tried to draw their proof from the Bible at every point. Cottrell's thesis that the traditional Adventist doctrine of 1844 cannot be proved from the Bible²¹ would have been vigorously denied by all the pioneers, including Ellen White.

Several statements found in the post-1888 Ellen White indicate that she was moving toward a more biblical and

20. See White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, esp. sec. "Christ Our Righteousness," pp. 350-400.

21. See Cottrell, "Sanctuary Debate."

evangelical position.²² Some Adventist scholars are now using these statements to enlist Ellen White's support for the concept that Jesus began His ministry in the most holy place upon His ascension to heaven. If she actually taught this in her later ministry, these statements stand in definite tension with her pioneer stance. As a sound hermeneutic principle, however, we must not use incidental statements to contradict those made in a deliberately systematic context. Such books as *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *The Great Controversy* systematically present Mrs. White's sanctuary doctrine. Although there is evidence that her views matured and that she made statements in apparent harmony with the thought of Hebrews 9, we must also remember that Mrs. White evidently did not think it necessary to correct her earlier teaching. When she supervised the revision of

22. "The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898], p. 756).

"Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God" (idem, *Christ's Object Lessons* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1900], p. 386).

"Through Christ the hidden glory of the holy of holies was to stand revealed. He had suffered death for every man, and by this offering, the sons of men were to become the sons of God. With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, believers in Christ were to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. The mercy seat, upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all, is opened to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin, and through its medium, they are brought into fellowship with God. The veil is rent, the partition walls are broken down, the handwriting of ordinances is cancelled. By virtue of His blood the enmity is abolished" (idem, *Sons and Daughters of God* [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1955], p. 228).

"A new and living Way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all" (idem, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1956], 5:1109).

The Great Controversy in 1911, she saw no need to revise her teaching on the two-apartment schema.

Much depends on the current debate on Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9. Until recently, the discussion of Ellen White's inerrancy has focused on minor points such as her view of the sixth trumpet in *The Great Controversy* (which most Adventist scholars have long since abandoned),²³ the "daily" statement in *Early Writings*²⁴ (which is quite widely acknowledged to be mistaken), the confusion over the two Herods in *Early Writings*,²⁵ and the shut-door episode of early Seventh-day Adventism. But Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 are the nerve center of traditional Adventism. Mrs. White's authority on a cardinal doctrine is at stake. If Adventism admits what Hebrews 9 teaches, it must openly acknowledge that Mrs. White was not always correct in her doctrinal pronouncements. The debate over Hebrews 9 will decide whether the cult of Ellen White lives or dies.

Perhaps we should indicate how the shut-door doctrine established the two-apartment sanctuary schema in Adventism. At first the Sabbatarian Adventists believed in the shut door but not in an investigative judgment. They all believed that in 1844 Jesus rose up and shut the door to the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, where He had been pleading for sinners. He withdrew into the second apartment to plead only for His little band of saints. The "door of mercy was shut" to those who rejected the October 22 date.

When the passage of a few years made it impossible to maintain the shut-door explanation of the Disappoint-

23. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), pp. 334-35.

24. See Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1882), p. 75.

25. See *ibid.*, p. 185.

ment, the Adventists found a face-saving explanation. Instead of frankly confessing that they were wrong and thus endangering their credibility, they used the two-apartment sanctuary schema to reinterpret and justify the shut-door concept. While Jesus had indeed shut one door, they said, He had opened another, where sinners were now able to find Him. Thus, Ellen White reinterpreted the shut-door idea in *The Great Controversy*:

But clearer light came with the investigation of the sanctuary question. They now saw that they were correct in believing that the end of the 2300 days in 1844 marked an important crisis. But while it was true that that door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened, and forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy. One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another. There was still an "open door" to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ was ministering in the sinner's behalf.

Now was seen the application of those words of Christ in the Revelation, addressed to the church at this very time: "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Revelation 3:7, 8.²⁶

Revelation 3:7, 8 is a citation from Isaiah 22:22. The passage has nothing to do with opening and shutting sanctuary apartments. Mrs. White's statement was an attempt to relieve the Adventists of embarrassment for both the Disappointment and the shut-door fiasco. It teaches that a new way of salvation began in 1844: "[The] door of hope and mercy by which men had for

26. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 429-30.

eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened." Imagine coming to Spurgeon in the nineteenth century and saying, "Mr. Spurgeon, don't you know that we can no longer find access to God through the same door as Peter, Paul, Luther and Wesley found Him? Since October 22, 1844, a new door is opened through which we must find access to God!" When she was not on the defensive about 1844 and the shut door, Mrs. White did not believe or teach this. Indeed, she proclaimed one way to God through the one and only door, Jesus Christ.

In her chapter in *The Great Controversy* entitled "In the Holy of Holies," Mrs. White supported the pioneer position that Jesus began His ministry in the most holy place in 1844.²⁷ A mature Adventism surely cannot sanction such a sectarian and esoteric use of Scripture.

Other Matters

On a number of peripheral matters, Mrs. White appealed to the Bible to enjoin practices with no clear biblical support. For example, notwithstanding its hygienic superiority, vegetarianism is nowhere imposed upon either Jews or Christians. In fulfillment of his cultural mandate, man must intelligently decide what will best promote his well-being for the service of God and man. I think the evidence of general revelation favors vegetarianism for some people, although not for all. But we cannot appeal to special revelation to support this prac-

27. See *ibid.*, pp. 423f.

tice.²⁸ It is clear that the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and even Jesus Himself ate flesh food.

Mrs. White makes a questionable use of the laws regarding clean and unclean foods in Leviticus 11. If these laws are still binding on Christians, why are not the laws relating to the uncleanness of the dead and of women after childbirth also binding? These were all part of the religious cultus of the Old Testament. This Mosaic cultus was not imposed on the Gentile church (Acts 15). It is a different matter if one argues that pork should not be eaten because it is unhealthful. But the Old Testament concept of "unclean" does not mean "unhealthful." As far as the New Testament is concerned, Paul declares, "I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself" (Rom. 14:14).

Mrs. White was a great temperance crusader. But her attempt to prove that the Bible forbids all alcoholic beverages is dogmatically superficial and constitutes a biased use of Scripture. The Judeo-Christian religion is not one of the ascetic religions which forbid the use of any alcoholic beverage. The Bible forbids excess and drunkenness. While it speaks of the danger of strong drink, it does not absolutely forbid it.²⁹

Mrs. White was a woman of great piety. In her zeal to see the church reach the highest standard, she sometimes misused the Bible in encouraging or forbidding certain practices. If we are to persuade people to abstain from flesh or alcohol, we should not use the Bible in a

28. For example, Adventists often point out that meat was not a part of man's diet in Eden. But neither was wearing clothes man's mode of life in Eden. This earth today is not Eden, and therefore the Eden lifestyle is not necessarily a model for us today.

29. I suggest that William Barclay's *Ethics in a Permissive Society* is much truer to the actual data of the Bible than is Mrs. White. See William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 131-42.

questionable way to achieve what may otherwise be a worthy end.

For too long traditional Adventism has assumed that, if Mrs. White used the Bible in a certain way, it is also justified in using the Bible the same way. This attitude has often inhibited progress. It has hindered the adoption of sounder arguments for the excellent contribution which both Mrs. White and Adventism have made to better living.

The widely-held belief that Mrs. White never erred in any of her health counsel is also a legend. Says Donald R. McAdams in a recent article:

Some facts must be considered to have been established by Numbers in *Prophets of Health*: (1) Ellen White was a part of the nineteenth-century American health reform movement and was influenced by other health reformers. (2) During the course of her life, Ellen White's views on health reform changed. (3) Ellen White held some views about the laws of health that few Adventists today consider scientifically valid.³⁰

Mrs. White did not understand the biblical languages. She worked largely from the King James Version. Occasionally she appealed to a misleading rendering in the King James Version to establish a particular point not supported by the original language nor a good modern translation. For example, she used "when" in Acts 3:19³¹ to support the idea, first introduced by Crosier, that the blotting out of sins and refreshing were regarded by

30. Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum* 10, no. 4 (Mar. 1980): 33. Dr. McAdams is president of Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

31. Actually, in the King James Version of Acts 3:19 the word "when" is used in an old English meaning of "and then." Peter does not say that the blotting out of sins or refreshing is future.

Peter as future events.³² She used 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to prove that Paul told the early church that the coming of Christ was not near.³³ Mrs. White borrowed this argument from J. N. Andrews. Not only does it contradict explicit statements by Paul that the day of the Lord was at hand (e.g., Phil. 4:5), but it rests on a misleading rendering of 2 Thessalonians 2:3.³⁴

McAdams sums up the findings of a decade of corporate Ellen White research in these words:

The third point which recent Ellen White scholarship has established is that Ellen White was not inerrant. Inevitably, as she incorporated into her own articles and books contemporary ideas and the words of contemporary historians, health reformers and devotional writers, she passed along errors of fact and some of the misconceptions of her generation.³⁵

32. See White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 485, 611.

33. See *ibid.*, p. 356.

34. See Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, pp. 153-54.

35. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration," p. 39.

12

The Legend of Ellen G. White's Literary Independence

According to popular Adventist legend, Ellen White received the information for her books directly from God. The impression is thus given that she had a distinct advantage over all other authors. For example, most contemporary Adventists believe that the book, *The Great Controversy*, is based exclusively on Ellen White's visions. In the historical sections, however, Mrs. White freely borrowed material from historians. She apparently acknowledged this literary indebtedness in the Introduction to her book. But did she really?

The first edition of *The Great Controversy* was published in 1884. The chapters on Huss and Luther are so dependent on Wylie's *The History of Protestantism*¹

1. James A. Wylie, *Book Third: John Huss and the Hussite Wars*, in *The History of Protestantism* (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin, n.d. [c. 1874]), pp. 130-213.

and D'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*² that they merely present a précis of what these two authors wrote. In February 1973, Donald R. McAdams completed a 105-page study comparing the chapter on Huss and Jerome in Ellen White's *The Great Controversy* with James A. Wylie's account of Huss in *The History of Protestantism*. According to McAdams:

What we find when we examine the historical portions of the Great Controversy is that large sections are selective abridgements and adaptations of historians. What Ellen White was doing was not just borrowing paragraphs here and there that she ran across in her reading, but in fact following certain historians page after page, leaving out much material, but using their sequence, some of their ideas, and often their words. In the samples I have examined I have found no historical fact in her text that is not in their text. What we have in the handwritten manuscript appears to be an account based so closely on other historians that it does not even seem to have gone through an intermediary stage, but rather from the historians' printed page to Mrs. White's manuscript, including historical errors and moral exhortations.³

Yet the 1884 edition of *The Great Controversy* contains no quotation marks and acknowledges no literary indebtedness. On this incident McAdams states:

There was apparently no great outcry, for though few careful readers could miss the similarity, there must have been then, just as there are today, few careful readers. Nevertheless there was some reaction. J. H. Kellogg, in

2. J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 5 vols. in 1 (1846; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976).

3. Donald R. McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss" (Andrews University, reproduced privately by the author, Mar. 1974; revised by the author, Oct. 1977), p. 19.

an interview with G. W. Amadon and A. C. Bordeau on October 7, 1907, recalled that when the 1884 *Great Controversy* came out somebody called his attention to it right away:

"I could not help but know about it, [he said] because there was the little book, Wiley's [sic] 'History of the Waldenses' right there on the 'Review and Herald' book counter, and here was the 'Great Controversy' coming out with extracts from it that were scarcely disguised, some of them."

Kellogg's testimony is that he sent for W. C. White right away and asked for an explanation. The conversation he had with W. C. White, he reported to Amadon and Bordeau, probably 23 years later. We must doubt that Kellogg remembered the exact words, but the gist of the conversation is probably accurate enough for our purposes here.

"He [W. C. White] said, 'Don't you think that when Mother sees things that agree with what she has seen in vision, that it is all right for her to adopt it.' I said, 'No, not without giving credit for it. It may be all right for her to quote it and make use of it, but she ought to put quotation marks on [it] and tell where she got it and should say this was in harmony with what she had "seen."!' She had no right to incorporate it with what she had 'seen' and make it appear that she has seen it first of all. The preface says this book has been written by special illumination, that she has gotten new light by special inspiration; so people read things here, read those paragraphs, and they say, 'Here I saw that in Wiley's [sic] book.' And I said to Will, 'That will condemn your book, detract from the book and the character of it, and it never will do; it is wrong.' I said, 'I simply won't stand for it, and I want you to know that I won't, and that this thing ought to stop.' . . .

"They went right on selling it, but they changed the preface in the next edition (1888) so as to give a little bit of the loophole to crawl out of, giving a little bit of a hint in it, in a very mild and rather in a hidden way that the author had also profited by information obtained from various sources as well as from divine inspiration. That is my recollection. I remember I saw the correction and I

didn't like it. I said, 'That is only a crawl out, that is simply something put in so that the ordinary reader won't discover it at all but will see the larger statements there of special inspiration; so they will be fooled by that thing.'"⁴

The 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy* tried to rectify the situation with a brief statement of indebtedness to the historians. It was said that these historians were not cited as authority but only because they had expressed "in a convenient manner" what Ellen White had first seen in vision.⁵ Quotation marks were used for the direct quotations, but no references or acknowledgments were given until the 1911 edition.

In carefully comparing *The Great Controversy* with Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, McAdams concluded that every point Mrs. White mentioned on Huss could be found in Wylie. He therefore wondered exactly what Mrs. White had seen in vision. From reading the Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, one could readily conclude that the book contains special visionary information on the Reformers. Although this is the traditional Adventist view, the evidence indicates that it needs to be drastically modified.

After Mrs. White had written *Sketches from the Life of Paul* in 1883,⁶ allegations were made that much of her book had been borrowed from *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson.⁷ Mrs.

4. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

5. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1888), p. xi.

6. Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek: Review & Herald, 1883). Reprinted in 1974 by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

7. W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976).

White's book was subsequently withdrawn from publication.⁸ Francis D. Nichol took great pains to excuse Mrs. White,⁹ but in the 1919 Bible Conference A. G. Daniells acknowledged that mistakes were made in the publication of *Sketches from the Life of Paul*.¹⁰

The publisher's Preface to *Sketches* is particularly disturbing. It shows that even in 1883 there were efforts to foster an unrealistic legend. In this Preface the publishers stated: "The writer of this book, having received especial help from the Spirit of God, is able to throw light upon the teachings of Paul and their application to our own time, as no other authors are prepared to do."¹¹ With these and other words the publishers declared that, because of Mrs. White's charismatic endowments, *Sketches* was superior to all other books. No hint was given that Mrs. White borrowed much of the material from other authors.

The book's merit is like the righteousness of the saints. It exists more in the eye of the beholder than in empirical fact. Contrary to what the publishers of *Sketches* said, many better books have been written on the life of Paul.

The literary borrowings of *Sketches from the Life of Paul* and *The Great Controversy* have been known for years. It has been generally thought, however, that such borrowing was an exception. The legend has persisted

8. See "The Bible Conference of 1919," sec. "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible: August 1, 1919," *Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (May 1979): 51-2.

9. See Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges That Critics Have Brought against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1951), pp. 403-67.

10. See "Bible Conference of 1919," sec. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History: July 30, 1919," p. 34; sec. "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible: August 1, 1919," pp. 51-2.

11. Preface to White, *Sketches*, p. iii.

that most of Mrs. White's literary output was produced independently of other authors. This impression could easily be gained from Mrs. White's own statements.

Thus, Arthur White quotes his grandmother, who said, "My views were written independent of books or the opinions of others."¹² This statement relates to matters of health, but in view of her other statements, this denial of literary dependence may be extended to her writings in general. So the *Adventist Review* of August 9, 1979, quotes Herbert Camden Lacey, who declared, "The entire 'Desire of Ages' as it is now printed is, therefore, I hold, the product of Sister White's mind and heart, guided by the good Spirit of God."¹³

Mrs. White stated:

I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.¹⁴

Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own.¹⁵

No hint is given that she might have used the words of others or that God directed her to copy statements from the writings of others.

12. Ellen G. White, MS 27, 1867, quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1959), p. 16.

13. Lacey to S. Kaplan, 24 July 1936, White Estate Document File 508, quoted in *Adventist Review*, 9 Aug. 1979, p. 9.

14. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 5:67.

15. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), p. 37.

One of the most amazing statements from Mrs. White's pen was written from Switzerland in 1887:

I have not been in the habit of reading any doctrinal articles in the papers that my mind should not have any understanding of any one's ideas and views, and that not a mold of any man's theories should have any connection with that which I write. . . .

I have not read Elder Butler's pamphlet or any articles written by any of our writers and I do not mean to.¹⁶

If Mrs. White was suggesting that she was avoiding Adventist papers, surely her people could not imagine she was actually copying "Babylonian" material.

From statements like these, it is difficult not to gain the impression that Mrs. White was claiming literary independence for her ideas, thoughts and words. What are the facts? There were about four hundred titles in Mrs. White's library at the time of her death.¹⁷ Most of these were by non-Adventist authors. In the last few years Walter Rea has studied several of these books and has found hundreds of statements which Mrs. White copied and used in her own books. Furthermore, other researchers have discovered that Mrs. White extensively copied from books not found in her library.

It appears that many, if not all, of the quotable Ellen White sayings were copied from other authors. It is embarrassing to think of the "scholarly" papers and books Adventist students have written, lauding the literary excellence of Ellen White's choice statements and marveling that they could have been written by a woman with

16. Ellen G. White, Letter 37, 1887, to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, 18 Feb. 1887, written from Basel, Switzerland.

17. See "Books in the E. G. White Library in 1915: On Shelves in E. G. White Study and in the Office and Vault," taken from D. F. 884, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.

such a meager education.¹⁸ Apologists have denied that Mrs. White was dependent on her secretaries for the excellence of her choice statements. *No hint, absolutely none, was given that she was deeply dependent on the literary excellence of other authors to whom she invariably gave no credit at all.*

As the evidence of Mrs. White's literary indebtedness surfaces, some are claiming they have always known of these literary borrowings.¹⁹ But a recent two-day meeting of leaders and scholars in Glendale, California, reveals another story.²⁰ When Walter Rea presented evidence for the extent of Ellen White's copying, the brethren expressed amazement and fear of shock to the church unless the information were released in a way that would soften the blow. Shortly after this special committee met with Rea, the General Conference president acknowledged that "in her writing Ellen White used sources more extensively than we have heretofore been aware of or recognized."²¹

A few leaders, however, have always known of Ellen White's extensive copying from other authors. This in-

18. Paul B. Ricchiuti's recent book, *Ellen* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1977), is an example of this. He cites the descriptive passage about the eagle in the Alps found in *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), pages 118-119. Ricchiuti says that he once questioned whether the uneducated Ellen White could write such beautiful prose, but after "hard work and concentrated study," he declares himself "convinced that Ellen White did write the words I once questioned" (see Ricchiuti, *Ellen*, pp. 9-10). This passage from *Education* was actually borrowed from Daniel March (see Appendix).

19. See Kenneth H. Wood, "The Children Are New," *Adventist Review*, 12 June 1980, pp. 13-14.

20. See Neal C. Wilson letter of January 8, 1980, to G. Ralph Thompson, Chairman, and seventeen other members of the committee called to confer with Walter Rea at the Glendale Adventist Hospital on January 28 and 29, 1980. A complete taped record of this meeting is now available.

21. Neal C. Wilson, "This I Believe about Ellen G. White," *Adventist Review*, 20 Mar. 1980, p. 8.

formation has been deliberately withheld from the church. By laundering history, by releasing selected statements and by manipulating the flow of information, the legend of Ellen White has been fostered and carefully preserved.

W. W. Prescott, a prominent denominational educator and administrator, expressed his concern over this deception in a letter to W. C. White, dated April 6, 1915. Prescott wrote:

It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know that there are serious errors in our authorized books and yet make no special effort to correct them. The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements, and they use our books as sufficient authority in their sermons, but we let them go on year after year asserting things which we know to be untrue. I cannot feel that this is right. It seems to me that we are betraying our trust and deceiving the ministers and people. It appears to me that there is much more anxiety to prevent a possible shock to some trustful people than to correct error. . . .

The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practised in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. I have talked with you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner.²²

22. Prescott to White, 6 Apr. 1915, written from Takoma Park, D.C., D. F. 198, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.

Then, at the 1919 Bible Conference, President A. G. Daniells tried to stop the growing legend of Ellen White. But others were afraid that releasing the facts would cause too much of a shock to the church.²³

As the dammed-up evidence is about to burst on the church, some are working feverishly to shore up the legend. Arthur White and others are now doing exactly what Prescott complained about to Arthur White's father. They are writing articles in the church papers to prevent shock rather than to correct error. But perhaps a shock is the only thing that will shake a people from the sinful exclusivism so characteristic of the cult of Ellen White.

Arthur White now acknowledges that Mrs. White did consult other authors in writing *The Desire of Ages*. Why did we have to wait until 1979 to obtain this information? This information was not released voluntarily. Like the vital documents relating to the shut door, it was released only when the White Estate had no alternative. In the long run (and we are now at the end of the long run) these fanatical apologists will not prove to be Ellen White's friends. The life of this good woman, whose ministry was marked by so many evidences of God's blessing, deserves to be graced by something better than biased apologetics which will do more to discredit her than all the critics combined.

We do not yet know the full extent of Mrs. White's literary borrowings. They were certainly extensive. And new sources of her information and literary help continue to surface. It is clear that she could not have produced such a vast literary output unless she was a prodigious reader of other works and an intelligent copier of good ideas and statements. She and her principal helper,

23. See "Bible Conference of 1919," pp. 27-57.

Marian Davis, certainly recognized good statements and literary excellence in other authors. In fact, the borrowed statements were often edited and improved. Of course, they were no less "inspired" because they were copied. Truth is truth, irrespective of who said it first.

It is amazing what devotion to a legend and an idolatrous attitude toward Mrs. White can do to scholarly objectivity. For example, David Neff has written a paper entitled "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe."²⁴ After pages of scholarly detail, Neff reaches a conclusion which relieves traditional Adventism of any embarrassment in this matter. He says that Mrs. White borrowed Stowe's words but "was not appropriating another man's ideas."²⁵ Of course she was! Although there are differences between Mrs. White's view of inspiration and Stowe's, the heart of what she says, indeed the passages usually quoted, are taken directly from Stowe almost word for word.²⁶

Neither Neff nor any other intelligent Adventist would try to isolate words from thoughts if this involved the literary borrowings of any other author. There is no suggestion of deception here. It simply shows how devotion to a legend can compromise the common sense of a fine Christian scholar. The legend of Mrs. White's insulation from human influence has such a grasp on the mind that loyal Adventists feel compelled to maintain it at all costs—even where the evidence clearly indicates that

24. See David Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe" (revised 1979; originally submitted as a term paper for the course T519, Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, December 1973, under the title, "Ellen White's Alleged Literary and Theological Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe"). Consult the Appendix to see how Mrs. White copied some of her material on the nature of biblical inspiration from Calvin Stowe.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

26. See Appendix.

truth was not revealed to Mrs. White "immediately" but "mediately." Admittedly, Ellen White adapted Stowe's thoughts on inspiration to serve her own purpose and occasionally modified his views. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that Mrs. White secured the central thrust of her view on inspiration directly from Stowe.

How has the knowledge of Mrs. White's extensive literary borrowings remained hidden for one hundred years? Certain men have always been aware of it. But undesirable information is released only when it can no longer be hidden. Furthermore, this information is not released to correct error but to insulate the cult of Ellen White from any shocks. The whole procedure is so carefully orchestrated that the embarrassing information is actually used to further enhance the amazing legend of Ellen White. Soon we will have the legend of the scholarly Ellen White, who read widely and was directed of God to copy the choicest literature available to the Christian church.

The fact that this information could have been hidden from the community for so long indicates how much Adventism lives within itself. If Adventists had been as familiar with the Christian literature of their day as Mrs. White was, they would have known where she secured so much of her material. But Adventism believed that other Christian bodies became "Babylon" in 1844 and therefore had nothing to offer the "remnant," which had the "Spirit of Prophecy." Why go to polluted fountains when God Himself was speaking so directly to His people through Ellen White on practically every conceivable subject? How could the community know that Mrs. White was borrowing so much from outside authors when it rarely read those authors?

13

The Legend of the Impeccable Ellen G. White

In discussing the human side of Mrs. White, it would be easy to distort the picture by emphasizing certain features and minimizing others. It is beyond the scope of this review of Adventism to produce a "balanced" treatment of Mrs. White as a person. One must remember the mass of positive evidence which indicates what a great woman Mrs. White really was. It is no legend that she was a dedicated Christian, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and that she buttressed her prodigious life's work with great piety.

Adventists are not the only religious group to magnify the virtues and hide the human frailties of their founder. Lutherans, Calvinists and Wesleyans have all done the same—at least for several generations after the passing of their great founders. As the truth about their religious heroes began to surface, there was fear that these men would not be held in high esteem. But if anything, Luther and Wesley were appreciated more. I believe that

the same will hold true for Mrs. White when Adventists realize that she was a human being like the rest of us.

Her apologists have done Mrs. White and the cause of Adventism much harm. Nichol's book, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*,¹ twists and turns to prove that Mrs. White made no real mistakes in either her doctrinal pronouncements or in her ethical life. Failure to vindicate her from unjust charges may be a dereliction of duty, but to vindicate her against every conceivable criticism is most unfortunate. Some non-Adventist scholars who have read Nichol's book are even more concerned that Seventh-day Adventists are guilty of Whitolatry.² When Nichol tried to relieve Mrs. White of involvement in the shut-door error, he gave the impression that he was presenting all the known facts. But Nichol did not release all the vital documents in his possession. He knew of the devastating evidence in Mrs. White's letter to Bates in 1847, but he said nothing about it.³ And the White Estate saw no reason to say anything about it either.

The Ellen G. White files are not open to unrestricted research. Nothing is released if it is thought it might be damaging to the Ellen White legend. Even little incidents in her diary or letters which do not fit the legend are not released. There is, for example, the account of Mrs. White's taking her son Willie to Dansville for a

1. Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges That Critics Have Brought against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1951).

2. E.g., see Harold Lindsell, "What of Seventh-day Adventism?" pt. 1, *Christianity Today*, 31 Mar. 1958, pp. 6-8; idem, "What of Seventh-day Adventism?" pt. 2, *ibid.*, 14 Apr. 1958, pp. 13-15. See also James E. Bear, "The Bible and Modern Religions," *Interpretation* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1956): 47-71.

3. See Ronald L. Numbers, "VII. An Author Replies to His Critics," *Spectrum* 8, no. 2 (Jan. 1977): 36.

phrenological examination.⁴ In her diary she mentions friction with her husband, James, and in personal correspondence she confesses her mistake in publishing private Testimonies. The Swedish Adventist scholar, Ingemar Lindén, observes that while the Vatican files are now completely open to research, the files in the White Estate are still restricted.⁵

Although access to all the information on Mrs. White may be desirable, there is now sufficient information to challenge the popular legend of an impeccable Ellen White. Two items conspicuously challenge this legend. The first is her lack of candor on the shut-door episode, and the second is her failure to acknowledge her literary indebtedness.

Mrs. White was less than candid about her involvement in the shut-door error. There were, of course, extenuating circumstances. Her credibility was at stake, and, as she saw it, her credibility was bound up with the vindication of God's work. She was not willing to concede anything to the critics who wanted to prove she was a false prophet. She was faced with an "all-or-nothing" situation. Either all that she did was of God, or all that she did was of the devil. Given these alternatives, she felt that she had to vindicate her early shut-door posture. But her later defense of her position stands in definite tension with the historical facts.

Mrs. White was also less than candid about her extensive literary borrowings. She appeared to be overly sensitive to the suggestion that she received her informa-

4. See "Description of Character of Willie C. White, by James C. Jackson, M.D., Our Home, Dansville, N.Y., September 14, 1864 (DF 783, White Estate," quoted in Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976], p. 206).

5. See Ingemar S. Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-Genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 141-42.

tion from human sources. She was anxious for people to believe that she received her light directly from the Lord. Consequently, she habitually denied virtually all human influence. To illustrate, we cite the following evidence:

1. In 1847 Joseph Bates wrote to James White, inquiring about Ellen White's Bridegroom vision of February 1845. Bates wanted to know whether Ellen received the light on the coming of the Bridegroom and His shutting the door in 1844 from the visions alone or from other sources. Ellen White replied in her now famous letter to Bates of July 13, 1847:

At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had. I know not what time J. Turner got out his paper. I knew he had one out and one was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I did not read a word in it. I had been, and still was very sick. I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous. . . .

Previous to this [vision] I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom. . . . I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest. . . .

I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man.⁶

2. On March 14, 1858 Ellen White had her famous Great Controversy vision. That same year she published her first outline of *The Great Controversy* in volume one of *Spiritual Gifts*. Before writing out her vision, she related it to the believers at weekend services in Battle

6. White to Bates, 13 July 1847, MS B-3-1847, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., quoted in Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question" (Statement prepared by Arthur L. White to serve as an appendix to his forthcoming biography of Ellen G. White), Exhibit 2, pp. 49-51.

Creek. When J. N. Andrews, who was probably the most well read among the Adventists, heard Mrs. White describe the fall of Satan, the fall of man and the plan of salvation, it reminded him of Milton's great epic, *Paradise Lost*. He asked Mrs. White if she had ever read Milton's book. According to the traditional account, she replied that she had neither seen nor read it.⁷ Arthur White repeats the story in a letter of April 4, 1946:

After the Great Controversy vision was given to Sister White, Brother J. N. Andrews inquired as to whether she had ever read "Paradise Lost." When she told him she had not, he brought a copy to her home. This she did not open, but placed it high on a shelf, determining not to read it until after she had written what had been revealed to her.⁸

Although we do not have Ellen White's own word on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the story about her putting it high on a shelf came from her own family and was circulated in her day. This report epitomizes the legend of Mrs. White's literary independence. She did not want people to think that she received her light from human sources.

3. On June 5, 1863, Mrs. White had her first health-reform vision. As she related it in various places, some noticed remarkable similarities between what Mrs. White was saying and what such great American health reformers as William A. Alcott, Larkin B. Coles, Syl-

7. See Arthur L. White, "Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration II: The Role of the Visions and the Use of Historical Sources in the 'Great Controversy,'" (Paper presented by Arthur L. White, Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1978), pp. 13-16.

8. Arthur L. White, letter dated April 4, 1946. See also idem, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1959), p. 16.

vester Graham, James C. Jackson and Russell T. Trall were saying. On this matter Mrs. White wrote:

As I introduced the subject of health to friends . . . and spoke against drugs and flesh meats, and in favor of water, pure air, and a proper diet, the reply was often made, "You speak very nearly the opinions taught in the Laws of Life, and other publications, by Drs. Trall, Jackson, and others. Have you read that paper and those works?" My reply was that I had not, neither should I read them till I had fully written out my views, lest it should be said that I had received my light upon the subject of health from physicians, and not from the Lord.⁹

Mrs. White recorded her vision in volume four of *Spiritual Gifts* in the chapter entitled "Health."¹⁰ In 1865 Mrs. White published *How to Live* in six installments.¹¹ In addition to her own six articles, she included a number of articles from leading health reformers to show that they were advocating similar views. She did not thus acknowledge any literary dependence, however, for she wrote:

I did not read any works upon health until I had written *Spiritual Gifts*, Vols. iii and iv, *Appeal to Mothers*, and had sketched out most of my six articles in the six numbers of "How to Live." . . . I then searched the various works on Hygiene and was surprised to find them so nearly in harmony with what the Lord had revealed to me.¹²

9. Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," *Review and Herald*, 8 Oct. 1867, p. 260.

10. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, *Important Facts of Faith: Laws of Health, and Testimonies Nos. 1-10* (1864; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1945), pp. 120-51.

11. Ellen G. White, *Health; or, How to Live* (1865; reprint ed., Payson, Ariz.: Leaves-of-Autumn Books).

12. White, "Questions and Answers," p. 260.

It was in the same year that Mrs. White made this emphatic disclaimer: "My views were written independent of books or the opinions of others."¹³

4. The Spirit of Prophecy edition of *The Great Controversy* (1884) claimed the special illumination of the Holy Spirit and, as we have already pointed out, acknowledged no literary dependence on other authors.¹⁴ When some objected to Mrs. White's copying from other authors without giving them proper credit, the next edition of *The Great Controversy* (1888) acknowledged that historians were used but not, it should be noted, as sources of information. According to the Introduction, the information contained in *The Great Controversy* did not come from a human source. Historians were used merely because they had conveniently expressed what Mrs. White had already been shown by God.¹⁵ Her son, W. C. White, confirmed this when he said:

In the writing of her books, she has sometimes found it very difficult and laborious to put into language the scenes presented to her; and when she has found in the language of another a correct representation of the thought presented to her, she has sometimes copied sentences and paragraphs,—feeling that she had a perfect right to do this; that it was her privilege to utilize the correct statements of other writers, of the scenes that have been presented to her.¹⁶

13. Ellen G. White, MS 27, 1867, quoted in White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 16.

14. See Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Controversy* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1884).

15. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Oakland: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1888), p. xiv.

16. White to J. J. Gorrell, 13 May 1904, quoted in White, "Factual Concept of Inspiration II," p. 5.

She had read other histories of the Reformation. This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and the movements presented to her in vision. This is somewhat similar to the way in which the study of the Bible helps her to locate and describe the many *figurative representations* given to her regarding the development of the great controversy in our day between truth and error.¹⁷

W. C. White also made this emphatic disclaimer:

Of this you may be sure, because I know whereof I speak. Her use of the language of the historians was not for the sake of bringing into the book something that had not been revealed to her, but was an effort to utilize in the best language she could find, the description of scenes presented to her.¹⁸

5. Mrs. White declared that in her letters, articles and books she wrote only "what God has opened before me in vision."¹⁹ "I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them," she wrote in answer to questions about her inspiration, and then added, "The words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own."²⁰ Nothing is said about God directing her to find material from other authors. We also confront such disclaimers as these:

My views were written independent of books or the opinions of others.²¹

17. Quoted in "The 1911 Edition of the Great Controversy," p. 4, quoted in White, "Factual Concept of Inspiration II," p. 24.

18. W. C. White, letter dated July 25, 1919, quoted in White, "Factual Concept of Inspiration II," p. 22.

19. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), p. 29.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

21. White, MS 27, 1867, quoted in White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 16.

I have not been in the habit of reading any doctrinal articles in the papers that my mind should not have any understanding of any one's ideas and views, and that not a mold of any man's theories should have any connection with that which I write.²²

When we examine Mrs. White's disclaimers of any human influence in the Bridegroom vision, the Great Controversy vision and the health vision, or of receiving information from any human source, a clear pattern emerges. Mrs. White emphatically denied human influence in her writings.

However unpleasant the truth may be to us, we must confront the stubborn fact that Mrs. White failed to acknowledge human influence in her works. That God gave her light is not in question. The truth on anything ultimately comes from God. But the light did not all come directly from God apart from being mediated through any human influences. Let us review some of the incidents we have mentioned:

1. Even casual acquaintance with the post-1844 apocalyptic speculations reveals that Mrs. White's visionary information on the coming of the Bridegroom to the most holy place was not unique to her. There had been considerable discussion on this matter in a number of Adventist publications. Mrs. White was so certain that God had given her the information in a vision that she felt she had to deny any human influence. In view of the extensive borrowing in her later works, one wonders whether she was as insulated from the Bridegroom speculations as she would have us believe. She lived among those who applied every detail of Matthew 25 to the

22. Ellen G. White, Letter 37, 1887, to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, 18 Feb. 1887, written from Basel, Switzerland.

1844 experience. She was part of the milieu of intense apocalyptic speculation, and her early visions reflect this. Her vision of the Bridegroom contained substantially the same information that Joseph Turner had first presented in his paper and before the band of believers—and Mrs. White herself acknowledged this. At that time she and Turner were close friends. They lived in the same speculative apocalyptic milieu, and they had similar ideas.

2. Several studies have compared Ellen White's description of the origin of sin, the fall of Satan and the fall of man (as presented in *Spiritual Gifts* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*) with Milton's *Paradise Lost*.²³ Point after point of Ellen White's presentation follows the thought of Milton's great epic. We can be thankful that no one has found a statement from Mrs. White herself disclaiming dependence on Milton. It is obvious that she drew some of her ideas and inspiration from Milton. A person would have to be exceedingly naive to think that so many parallels in thought, sequence and expression were mere coincidence. Confronted with the evidence that she copiously borrowed from other authors, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that she borrowed from Milton. It is not the borrowing that concerns us here—all authors do this. Every human mind is programmed by other minds. And God can obviously impart truth through the selection of information from other authors. But it now becomes impossible to believe the legend that Mrs. White placed Milton's book high on a shelf so that she would not read it until she had finished writing out her visionary information.

23. E.g., see Ruth Elizabeth Burgeson, "A Comparative Study of the Fall of Man as Treated by John Milton and Ellen G. White" (Master's thesis, Pacific Union College, 1957).

I have met people who have expressed a fairly orthodox Christology or soteriology, yet they naively say that they formulated their theology solely by their own study. In reality, they have been dependent on theological categories of thought developed through centuries of work by the greatest minds in the church. Yet these Christians will say that they produced their theology themselves! They are not lying. Perhaps their consciousness of God's leading is so strong that they attribute to Him what has been mediated by human influences. Like all of us, including Ellen White, they are children of the fall. This distorts even their highest knowledge of truth. To that extent they are victims of their own delusion. Ellen White is no exception.

3. When Ellen White disclaimed reading anything from contemporary health reformers until she had recorded her own views, she insufficiently and incorrectly related certain pertinent facts. These have been documented by Ronald Numbers.²⁴ For example, Numbers induced the White Estate to admit that, if Mrs. White had not read Jackson's books before writing out her vision, she had nevertheless read some of his other material before her health-reform vision.²⁵ In the very article which Mrs. White claimed was written independently of the books or opinions of others, there are thoughts and expressions which reveal dependence on Coles' *Philosophy of Health*.²⁶ Numbers demonstrates this dependence on Coles.²⁷

24. See Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*; idem, "Author Replies," pp. 27-36.

25. See *A Critique of Prophetess of Health* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976); Arthur L. White to Theology and History Teachers, Andrews University, 25 Oct. 1976.

26. See White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:120-51.

27. See Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, p. 232, footnote 15.

Coles' *Philosophy of Health*²⁸ has scarcely a page from which some portion has not been borrowed by Ellen White. It was obviously well read and well used by her.

4. There is nothing objectionable about using historians in the historical sections of *The Great Controversy*. However, the legend that Ellen White did not secure her information from historians but merely used them to conveniently express what she had seen in vision is objectionable. If this were true, the historians must have known everything Mrs. White saw in vision, because the historical facts in *The Great Controversy* are also in the historians. Or were the visions responsible for the acknowledged historical mistakes which appear in *The Great Controversy*?

Robert W. Olson of the Ellen G. White Estate has acknowledged:

Mrs. White made several erroneous historical statements about Huss in the *Great Controversy*. . . .

I accept the fact that Mrs. White followed Wylie closely—very closely—from *Great Controversy* page 97 all the way to page 110. . . .

It is difficult for me to believe that the Lord gave Mrs. White a vision or a series of visions which, for fourteen pages, coincided in so many details with Wylie.²⁹

Thus, the White Estate now admits that Mrs. White secured such information from human sources rather than directly from God. This is vastly different from the old legend which claimed that she only used historians when they conveniently expressed what she had already

28. Larkin B. Coles, *Philosophy of Health: Natural Principles of Health and Cure; or, Health and Cure without Drugs* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields, 1853).

29. Robert W. Olson, "Questions and Problems Pertaining to Mrs. White's Writings on John Huss" (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1975), p. 4.

seen in vision. McAdams has recently summarized the matter as follows:

Ellen White took much material from other authors. And she did not use secular literary sources just to provide clear descriptions of historical events, health principles or other information revealed to her in vision; she also used these sources to provide information not seen in vision.³⁰

Despite the massive evidence of Mrs. White's literary dependence, Arthur White still struggles to maintain the old legend. In a paper prepared in 1978 he declared, "Ellen White did use the language of historians in describing scenes and events that had already been revealed to her."³¹

5. It is now indisputable that Mrs. White did not always leave other books on the shelf. Recent research has conclusively demonstrated that she extensively borrowed from other authors. More evidence is being uncovered with every passing month. For example, in Harris's book, *The Great Teacher*,³² there are gem passages on almost every page which have been mined by Ellen White. Many of her best statements have been borrowed from Harris. No matter how much the White Estate may try to prevent a reaction, many Adventists will feel they have been misled by the Ellen White legend when they read Harris's book. The legend that Mrs. White received her information independently of human influence has been forever exploded. She was not candid about her

30. Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum* 10, no. 4 (Mar. 1980): 39.

31. White, "Factual Concept of Inspiration II," p. 26.

32. John Harris, *The Great Teacher: Characteristics of Our Lord's Ministry*, 17th American ed. (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1870).

heavy dependence on other authors. She failed to appropriately acknowledge her literary indebtedness. And this was not an isolated aberration but a consistent pattern throughout her entire ministry.

Nichol argues that unacknowledged copying from other authors was an acceptable practice in the nineteenth century.³³ It is true that some health "prophets" and other crusaders sometimes copied other works and claimed them as their own—as no doubt some still do today. But it was proper for authors of the nineteenth century to acknowledge their literary indebtedness just as they are required to do today. Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, for instance, lists the sources used in producing his life of Christ.³⁴ In contrast, Ellen White's *The Desire of Ages* acknowledges no sources and gives no credit. Yet Mrs. White read Edersheim and even structured the outline and chapter headings of *The Desire of Ages* after his book.

As early as September 6, 1864, the church's official paper, the *Review and Herald*, condemned plagiarism when it said:

[Plagiarism] is a word that is used to signify "literary theft," or the taking the productions of another and passing them off as one's own. . . .

We are perfectly willing that pieces from the *Review*, or any of our books should be published to any extent, and all we ask is, that simple justice be done us, by due credit being given.³⁵

33. See Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 404-7.

34. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), pp. xx-xxvi.

35. "Plagiarism," *Review and Herald*, 6 Sept. 1864, p. 120.

It appears that Mrs. White required people who used her writings to acknowledge their literary indebtedness. In a letter to David Paulson, W. C. White wrote:

Mother instructs me to say to you that you may be free to select from her writings short articles for the *Life Boat*. Or you may make extracts from these MSS and from similar writings, in your articles, in each case giving the proper credit.³⁶

When complaints were first made about Mrs. White's failure to insert quotation marks and to give credit for copied material in *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, Daniells reported that she replied, "Why, I didn't know about quotations and credits. My secretary should have looked after that, and the publishing house should have looked after it."³⁷ Mrs. White's secretaries were blamed since Mrs. White was supposedly unfamiliar with quotation marks. This is incredible. Ellen White may have lacked formal education, but she was now a middle-aged woman with considerable experience and was obviously well read.

If Mrs. White learned that copying from other authors without using quotation marks or credits was unacceptable in her first book for the public, why did she continue this practice? It now appears that most of her literary borrowings occurred after the furor over *Sketches* and *The Great Controversy*. Apparently, even her critics did not discover her new literary borrowings. While her secretaries and publishers must share the blame for these indiscretions, it is unreasonable to suggest they should assume it all.

36. White to Paulson, 30 Jan. 1905.

37. "The Bible Conference of 1919," sec. "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible: August 1, 1919," *Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (May 1979): 52.

In an attempt to justify Mrs. White, some are emphasizing evidence of literary borrowing in the Bible. Again, the writings of Ellen White are compared with the Bible, and it is implied that their inspiration is of the same kind and quality. If some men are not careful, they may finally damn the Bible in order to bolster the legend of Ellen White.

It is true that there is evidence of literary borrowing by different biblical authors. But in such cases they used material that was the heritage and common property of the covenantal community. It was not private property, and there was no pretense of originality. With Mrs. White, however, the circumstances were much different. Without acknowledgment she used the literary product of those outside her own religious community, copyrighted it, and demanded royalties both for herself and her children. Right and wrong are to some extent historically conditioned, but we do not have to surmise the literary ethics demanded in Mrs. White's day. The facts are not ambiguous. She did not conform to acceptable literary practice.

Some have suggested that since all truth belongs to God, and since Mrs. White was God's prophet, she was not obligated to "pay tribute" when copying material from others. On the contrary, Mrs. White's claims to the "Spirit of Prophecy" made it doubly important for her to conform to acceptable literary ethics so that her writings would stand above reproach.

Surely Mrs. White knew that her people believed she was merely writing out what the Lord had shown her in vision. In answering questions on how she wrote her books and articles, she freely acknowledged the help of the Holy Spirit. But she never acknowledged the help of authors who belonged to what the little "remnant" had been taught were the churches of Babylon.

At first I attributed the cultivation of the Ellen White legend to her publishers and to the community who "claimed too much for these writings."³⁸ I assumed that Mrs. White would have discouraged any undue lauding of her prophetic gift and would have frowned on any tendency to make an Ellen White cult. At one time she did rebuke people for continually saying, "Sister White said," when they did not know what the Bible said.³⁹ At times she did urge people to settle doctrinal controversy by resorting to the Bible as the only rule of faith. Although her word had great authority in her community, she was not vain about her prophetic office. She did not use her influence for selfish purposes but to build up what she believed to be the work of God. If she was ever immoderate in anything, it was not for any mean, self-serving end. Every fiber of her being was devoted to the service of Jesus Christ. Yet, as human beings, our very devotion to God's work can prevent us from being entirely candid or from taking steps to restrain people from thinking more highly of us than they ought. The more our work is bound up with the success of God's work, the easier it becomes to confuse the carpenter with his tools. Despite all the positive things we can cite, there is too much evidence to resist the conclusion that Mrs. White did far too little to restrain the idolatrous attitude her people were developing toward her while she was still alive. She was swept along by the developing legend. Adventism was a product of Ellen White, and Ellen White was a product of Adventism. She helped foster the legend in the following ways:

38. *Ibid.*, sec. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History: July 30, 1919," p. 34.

39. *Spalding and Magan's Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Ellen G. White* (Payson, Ariz.: Leaves-of-Autumn Books), p. 170.

1. Mrs. White was inclined to be highly sensitive about any criticism of what she said or did. One gathers the impression that she would cringe whenever she felt the slightest personal rejection. She would fret and brood over this nonacceptance, then lash out in blistering Testimonies against the doubters.⁴⁰

When Mrs. White sided with Waggoner and Jones at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference, she was criticized by some of the leading men. No doubt she was on the side of the gospel, and they were against it. Yet we should not overlook the evidence that questioning her authority at Minneapolis also stirred her to lash out at the brethren for years afterward.

Mrs. White revealed her sensitivity in the Kellogg crisis. Pantheism was not the only issue, and there is reason to doubt that it was the main issue. As far as Daniells, Prescott and W. C. White were concerned, the issue was a power struggle with Kellogg and his associates for control of the great Adventist institutions. The triumvirate, as they were called, used Mrs. White in their fight with Kellogg. When Kellogg saw what they were doing, he said he would not accept everything in the Testimonies as direct from heaven.

When Mrs. White was told that Kellogg doubted her Testimonies, she reacted just as she had all through her life. Daniells seized the issue of "faith in the Tes-

40. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 5:62-84, for a public chastening of doubter Uriah Smith. See also Robert D. Brinsmead, sec. "Uriah Smith's View of Spiritual Gifts," *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 134-37. Perhaps it should be noted that it is in this Testimony, vehemently vindicating her own ministry, that Mrs. White declares, "I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne (p. 67). Yet in the very pages which follow (pp. 68-70) she has woven in words and thoughts copied from Daniel March's *Night Scenes in the Bible* (1868; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), pp. 201-4.

timonies" and used it to drive Kellogg out of the church. Kellogg remarked that in reality Daniells held the same view of Mrs. White's writings as he did. Kellogg knew that they bore the impress of a human influence as well as a divine.

The 1919 Bible Conference suggests that Daniells may have been rather hypocritical when he made "faith in the Testimonies" the great issue in the Kellogg crisis. Having helped consolidate an unrealistic legend of Ellen White, Daniells himself tried to undo it in 1919. But it was too late. It is ironical that Daniells was removed from office at the 1922 General Conference session, attended by some bitterness, because of rumors regarding his lack of faith in Ellen White.⁴¹ He himself was cut down with the sword he had forged against Kellogg.

2. Mrs. White must have known that people had an unrealistic, almost magical view of how she wrote her books. They thought she was not dependent upon any human influence. From the 1919 Bible Conference we learn that Daniells knew better. We also know from the 1915 Prescott letter to W. C. White that Prescott was pained to see what he said "amounts to deception" and "that no serious effort" was made "to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings."⁴² Did Mrs. White herself do anything to disabuse the minds of the people about the developing legend? Was she candid about the way she wrote her books? However painful it might be to recognize the truth, we must answer that she did not cor-

41. See Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference" (Paper presented at the meeting of Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Scholars in New York City, November 14, 1979).

42. Prescott to White, 6 Apr. 1915, written from Takoma Park, D.C., D. F. 198, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.

rect this wrong impression. She was not candid about her extensive literary borrowings. When one reads her denials of any human influence, when one reads how she attributed the information in her books only to the help of the Holy Spirit, when one can scarcely find any acknowledgment of literary indebtedness, one is forced to conclude that Mrs. White thought it best for the people to continue believing the legend. If Mrs. White and her helpers were involved in a conspiracy of silence over the sources for much of the information used to write her books, should we wholly blame her publishers and denominational promoters for the legend? Were they not, to some extent at least, merely following Mrs. White's own example?

3. Mrs. White was quite pleased to see such authors as Smith, Butler and Loughborough write Ellen White apologetics in an attempt to resolve such difficulties as her early shut-door expressions and her early statement on the "amalgamation of man and beast."⁴³ It did not seem to disturb Ellen White that Loughborough was quite irresponsible with the facts of history. There is no clearer illustration of the idolatrous attitude toward Mrs. White's writings than the publisher's attempt to explain her mistake on the two Herods. In *Early Writings* the very young Ellen White had written:

Herod's heart had grown still harder; and when he heard that Christ had risen, he was not much troubled. He took the life of James, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews, he took Peter also, intending to put him to death.⁴⁴

43. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, *Important Facts of Faith, in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old* (1864; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1945), p. 64.

44. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1882), pp. 185-86.

Anyone familiar with New Testament history realizes that the Herod who killed James was not the same Herod involved in the trial of Christ. The youthful Ellen White simply made an innocent and unimportant error. If this were any other author, Adventists would recognize the error as a mistake. But apparently the Adventist reader must not be allowed to entertain the dangerous illusion that Mrs. White could make even a trivial mistake. In the first edition of *Early Writings* the publishers therefore inserted a ridiculous footnote explaining that Mrs. White's statement did not mean that the two Herods were the same person but the same Herodian spirit. In this way the legend of Ellen White's inerrancy could be preserved for the faithful.

While she was alive, Mrs. White supervised the publication of all her books. She read and approved any editorial corrections and appended comments. She must have realized that she had confused the two Herods. And she must have approved the footnote which tried to justify the mistake by suggesting that it was not really a mistake after all. Obviously, she had a part in fostering the legend of an inerrant Ellen White. F. W. Wilcox declared, "If she were convinced of error in statement, she would have been the first and foremost to correct it."⁴⁵ But Mrs. White was apparently not as ready to confess error as Wilcox suggests. She was evidently too sensitive about her own credibility and too anxious for people to have implicit faith in everything she said.

4. The remaining evidence that Mrs. White played a part in cultivating the legend is the most sensitive and perhaps the most painful aspect of her personality. Mrs. White lived a long and fruitful life. She did many things

45. Francis M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus: A Review of the Work and Teachings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1944), p. 78.

and wrote many things. On the whole, we must say that her contribution was positive and uplifting. But like all the great leaders and saints in the history of the church, she was very human. She made mistakes—even exasperating mistakes. She was not always consistent. Many incidents have now been documented by various researchers to show this.⁴⁶ But in Mrs. White's entire public life of over seventy years, it is almost impossible to find one example in which she acknowledged that she had done

46. For example, in 1849, during the shut-door days, Mrs. White instructed the "little flock" not to seek medical help when they were sick:

"If any among us are sick, let us not dishonor God by applying to earthly physicians, but apply to the God of Israel. If we follow his directions (James 5:14, 15) the sick will be healed. God's promise cannot fail. Have faith in God, and trust wholly in him, that when Christ who is our life shall appear we may appear with him in glory" (Ellen G. White, "To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God" [broadside dated January 31, 1849, Topsham, Maine], from a copy in LLU-HR, quoted in Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, p. 32).

The reason for this counsel was not the poor state of the medical profession at that time. The counsel was related to the principle that trust in God ruled out seeking any medical assistance. This idea was as fanatical as the shut-door doctrine. A few years later Mrs. White took a saner view on both matters. In fact, after a Sister Prior had died of illness without seeking medical assistance, Mrs. White had a vision on the matter and condemned such medical neglect as "fanatical in the extreme" (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, *The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels* [1858; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1945], p. 134).

In 1858 Mrs. White severely reprimanded an Adventist for advocating abstinence from pork (see White, *Testimonies*, 1:205-6). Later, however, she reversed her position and united with the church in making abstinence from pork a test of church fellowship. One might have thought that she owed the brother an apology for denouncing him before the church for his no-pork doctrine. But no, a rationale to justify the rebuke was at hand. He was condemned because he had run ahead of the light—or was it because he had run ahead of the Whites?

Especially in her earlier days, Mrs. White was inclined to impose a far too somber view of life on young people. Playing checkers or chess was regarded as sinful. Students who played cricket or tennis were indulging in a species of idolatry (see Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1913], p. 350). When her own son lay dying of pneumonia at the age of sixteen, he did not want to live but welcomed death. The world seemed too wicked, and the standard of piety was so high that he feared he would not succeed. Death seemed to him to be the only escape.

wrong or made a mistake. There are some acknowledgments in her diary, but these were not for public consumption. Here, for instance, she admitted that she had done wrong in broadcasting Testimonies which rebuked private sins. But she made no public admission for this public mistake. At times even her own husband was constrained to admit that she had been needlessly severe on people. Not a few were left bleeding on the Adventist roadside after an encounter with Ellen White. But she never publicly acknowledged such instances of severity. I can find only one instance where she said, "I did wrong," and that was when she was so obviously wrong that she had no choice but to acknowledge it. And even then she blamed others as much as she could.⁴⁷ Though she was a woman of great piety, she was still human enough to make mistakes. And one of the greatest of these was not to acknowledge them.

Phillip Schaff once commented that Luther's followers often failed to exemplify his virtues, but in the unjust way they flayed their theological opponents, they copied, even glorified, his vices. I have also come to the painful conclusion that Seventh-day Adventism is notorious for the way it has copied one of Mrs. White's vices. As W. W. Prescott complained, Adventism is never disposed to acknowledge its mistakes—doctrinal or otherwise. Its belief in its special mission for God, a strong sense of its election which sometimes borders on a Messianic complex, and even its dedication to God's cause, which is mingled with a spirit of triumphalism, prevents Adventism, as it prevented Mrs. White, from saying, "We are sorry; we have been mistaken in this matter."

Even when doctrines were actually changed—as in the 1950's when the teaching on the sinful human nature of

47. See Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, p. 114.

Christ was repudiated⁴⁸—no acknowledgment was made about past teachings lest the people be shocked by the revelation that the church had made some significant mistakes. The shut-door error was never admitted either by Ellen White or by Adventism. And because of this failure, the shut door has remained a running sore in the movement. This concern for the credibility of what we believe to be God's work, even to the point of lack of candor, appears to be, at least partly, the legacy of Ellen White.

48. See *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), pp. 50-65, 647-60. "Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors."

14

The Legend of the Unique Ellen G. White

Traditional Adventism tends to have a childish view of the phenomenal aspects of Mrs. White. Accounts of her prophetic trances have been told over and over. Her visions have been compared with the visions of biblical prophets. The idea has been fostered that there has never been a person in the church like Ellen White—at least not since biblical times. God used men like Luther and Wesley, but not as mightily as He used Ellen White.

I want to say two things about the legend of Ellen White's uniqueness. In the first place, God spoke in Old Testament times in many and various ways (Heb. 1:1). Not all the prophets of the Old Testament fell into prophetic trances. The ministry of some was marked by more phenomenal manifestations. The ministry of others was merely to utter sober words of good sense. The latter ministered God's Word no less than the "ecstatic" prophets.

The principle of God's speaking in many and various ways applies no less to the Christian church. The childish Corinthians were inclined to magnify the more spectacular gifts of the Spirit such as the gift of ecstatic utterance. Paul had to remind them that even lowly Christians with only the gift of helping had just as much a gift of the Spirit as those with the more phenomenal gifts.

It is both childish and carnal to claim that Ellen White had an endowment of God's Spirit superior to the Reformers. There are ordinary manifestations of God's grace and extraordinary manifestations. God prefers to work in the ordinary way. Wesley wisely warned some of his friends at one time that the ordinary operations of God's grace are to be preferred above the extraordinary. When God works in an extraordinary way, it may not be a sign of His special favor. He may do it because of unbelief and the hardness of His people's hearts ("Tongues, then, are a sign . . . for unbelievers"—1 Cor. 14:22). Or He may do it to help His people in their special weakness or adversity.

With the Reformers, God worked through men well versed in the biblical languages. They had experience in theology and churchmanship. They were endowed with special talents and were men of massive learning. They did not need the extraordinary grace of visions and special revelations because they were well equipped to study God's Word and to walk in its unfolding light. That is how God prefers to work.

The situation of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers was much different. They were poor both in material wealth and educational endowments. They were from the lower socio-economic and educational strata of society. Coming from diverse religious backgrounds, they entertained serious heresies. Some did not even know whether there was a Trinity or whether Christ was truly divine. They were not familiar with the rich heritage of

Reformation theology. They were a few struggling survivors of the Great Disappointment of 1844. They had no theological training and no knowledge of the biblical languages. Half of them were mere youngsters. Among their elders was a pious farmer in his thirties and a retired sea captain in his early fifties. They had a King James Version of the Bible and little experience in studying it.

All the evidence indicates that the movement would have collapsed except for the charismatic influence of Ellen White. Although she was one of their number who reflected their limitations and prejudices, she also gave the movement cohesion and a remarkable sense of mission. I do not think anyone could truly appreciate the contribution of Ellen White without considering this background. It was she who inspired the pitiful little group of shut-door Adventists with an astonishing sense of world mission. She inspired them with a vision of personal and corporate self-development—hygienically, educationally and spiritually. Adventism caught from Ellen White a conviction of its election that almost matched the sense of election possessed by the Old Testament Jews. Adventism must not only preach the last message of mercy to all the world; it must also reach a standard of life, of practical sanctification in body (health), mind (education) and soul (spiritual life), that would lead the world. Mrs. White herself exemplified this sense of divine calling. She was so convinced of her calling as God's messenger that, like many great religious leaders, she was inclined to think that those who fought against anything she said were fighting against the Almighty.

In many respects Mrs. White merited the confidence of her peers and her people. While the other pioneers remained with their dry legalism and apocalyptic speculation, Mrs. White was enamored with Jesus Christ. Not

only was her spirituality superior to her contemporaries, but she exhibited a surprising doctrinal orthodoxy on the eternal verities of the Christian faith. She never took a stand against the Trinity as her husband and others did. While others were spiritually dwarfed by Arianism, she joined with some of the better thinkers of the movement in proclaiming the full deity of Jesus, whom she loved so ardently. While the other pioneers opposed an atonement on the cross, Ellen White did not hesitate to extol the virtues of Christ's atoning sacrifice. If it were not for Mrs. White, Adventism would probably have become a non-Christian cult like the Jehovah's Witnesses. That she escaped so many of the serious heresies of her contemporaries and helped in settling the church on the eternal verities of the Christian faith was a miracle. Anyone who says that Mrs. White did not write (or compile) some beautiful things about Jesus Christ and the Christian life either has not read Ellen White or is so prejudiced he cannot recognize self-attesting truth on its own merits.¹

Adventism rightly honors its profound debt to Ellen White. She sincerely attributed to her visions the great contribution she was able to make. From the evidence, I am inclined to believe that she had visions on those subjects and themes upon which her mind had previously been exercised—by hearing the brethren debate certain points, by reading certain materials,² by listening to various reports and by her own meditations. But whatever the truth may be, the visions served to sharpen her

1. For a sympathetic overview of Mrs. White's teaching, see Robert D. Brinsmead, *The Theology of Ellen G. White* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Present Truth, 1975).

2. An example is the statement cited in the Appendix which begins with "I saw"—meaning that Mrs. White was about to relate a vision. She must have previously read the thought in another author, however, because she repeats almost word for word what another author said.

perception and judgment to present more than one could normally expect from her native abilities, background and education.

Now let us return to a comparison of Ellen White with the Reformers. Adventism assumes that Mrs. White's extraordinary spiritual exercises mean that her work must have an authority superior to the Reformers. But is a charismatic experience superior to the revelation which comes from the study of God's Word? If God was gracious to those early Adventists by giving them a charismatic messenger, should not this be seen as an emergency measure to compensate for the impoverishment of that little group? After all, Mrs. White did say that, if the Adventists had been mature and skillful in the Word, they would not have needed her special ministry.³ And even when Ellen White herself became more mature and had learned to study good books, she did not have the same kind of spiritual exercises which conspicuously marked her early life. We could state this another way by saying that the early Ellen White was a typical apocalyptic mystic but moved toward a catholic orthodoxy as she matured.

Traditional Adventism supposes that what Mrs. White says is more authoritative than other sources because it assumes that her "visions" indicate *immediate* revelation—revelation directly from God. We question this assumption of immediacy, however, because it is the premise of Enthusiasm. God works through means, and hence *mediately*. For instance, if we were starving for food and prayed for help, God would answer our prayer by sending some creaturely help. But with Ellen White, most Adventists have held a rather mechanical and magical view of how she secured her in-

3. See Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1915), pp. 198-201.

formation. Some are now shocked to find that heaven's light also had to be *mediated* to her by contact with Christian friends and by the stimulation of Christian authors. The idea, therefore, that God worked *mediately* to enlighten Martin Luther but *immediately* to enlighten Ellen White is part of the legend of the unique Ellen White. God may work to enlighten human minds in various ways, but He nevertheless works *mediately*.

Another aspect of the legend of Ellen White's uniqueness needs to be corrected. Traditionally, Adventists have thought that no one like Ellen White has existed since Bible times. But at different times and in various places, other individuals have had visions and experiences almost identical to Ellen White. They also did not appear to breathe, and they kept their eyes open in the same kind of ecstatic trances which marked the experience of Ellen White.

In his book, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Lindblom presents several case histories of such individuals.⁴ His account of the so-called "sleeping preachers" of Finland in the nineteenth century and of Birgitta of Sweden in the thirteenth century makes fascinating reading, much of which is reminiscent of Ellen White. Neither the "sleeping preachers" nor Birgitta were pious frauds or religious hoaxes. They were pious women who had dreams, visions and even revelations about people's secret sins. On the whole, their influence was wholesome and edifying. But their unusual charismatic endowments did not invest what they said with canonical authority or make it inerrant. Adventists have been conditioned to believe that, when Mrs. White prefaced her remarks with "I saw," it placed them beyond the possibility of error.

4. See J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962).

15

Some Summarized Observations on Ellen G. White

1. From the beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have confessed that the ministry of Ellen White was a manifestation of spiritual gifts which God's Word promises for the edification of the church in the last days. If her work had remained in the category of spiritual gifts, Adventism might have been spared many of the problems associated with the growing legend of Ellen White.

Questions on Doctrine quite forthrightly says, "We test the writings of Ellen G. White by the Bible."¹ This statement does not mean, however, that Adventists critically judge everything Mrs. White says by the Bible. If someone in the community shows that the Bible teaches something different than Mrs. White (e.g., on Hebrews 9), there will be a storm of protest. "How dare this man

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), p. 90. "Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors."

think his interpretation of the Bible is superior to the inspired interpretation of Ellen White?" "If Mrs. White says the Bible means that, then it means that." "The Bible and Mrs. White are inspired in the same way, so they must be in harmony." Anyone, therefore, who presumes to judge what Mrs. White says by the Bible may quickly find himself out of a job, out of office or out of the church.

The Ballenger affair is an example of this. A. F. Ballenger's central thesis was that Hebrews 6:19, 20 and Hebrews 9-10 teach that Christ began His ministry in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension. He confessed that he could not reconcile what he understood the Bible to teach with Ellen White. Ellen White unsparingly condemned Ballenger's teaching because it was contrary to her 1844 experience. Not once did she cite the Bible to show where Ballenger was wrong. She claimed that he was making a wrong use of Scripture but offered no evidence except her own authority.² This satisfied most Adventists, but it did not satisfy Ballenger. Mrs. White's authority to oppose Ballenger did not rest on "The Bible says" but on "I am to say," "The Lord has instructed me."³ That answer has continued to satisfy traditional Adventism until this day. It will dare receive nothing, however plainly taught in Scripture, if it is contrary to Mrs. White.

Then is the Adventist hypocritical when he says, "We test Ellen White by the Bible?" No, for he means something quite different than testing everything she says by the Bible. He means that he uses the Bible to determine

2. Mrs. White effectively opposed the "holy-flesh" heresy in Indiana by using the sword of the Word (see Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 2 [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958], pp. 31-9).

3. See W. Richard Leshner, "Landmark Truth versus 'Specious Error,'" *Adventist Review*, 6 Mar. 1980, pp. 4-7.

whether Ellen White is a genuine messenger of God. Once he has determined that she is, he gives her the authority to tell him what the Bible is really saying.

The early Seventh-day Adventists were confronted with the phenomenon of Ellen White. They had to decide whether she was a genuine person or a fraud, whether her work was of God or of the devil. They decided that her ministry was a manifestation of spiritual gifts. But having made that judgment, they were gradually pressed to take an "all-or-nothing" stance on the question. They argued that God and Satan are not in partnership. Either *everything* she wrote was of God or it was of the devil. There was no middle ground. Having decided that her work was of God, the Adventists felt they would offend God if they did not fully accept everything Mrs. White said. And among the faithful this situation has continued until this day.

If the Advent body had carefully heeded Paul's instruction and warnings on spiritual gifts, they would have realized that a person may have a genuine spiritual gift and yet misuse it. The church must not only test whether a gift is genuine, but must also test its exercise at every point to see whether it is in harmony with God's Word.

As early as June 9, 1853, James White warned the church that spiritual gifts might get out of control and become a curse to the church.⁴ With the death of James White in 1881, no one in the church was strong enough to keep spiritual gifts within proper bounds. Mrs. White's word became absolute authority for everything from great doctrinal questions to such minor matters as whether two meals a day are better than three. And Mrs.

4. See James White, "Gifts of the Gospel Church," *Review and Herald*, 9 June 1853, pp. 13-14, quoted in part in Robert D. Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 129-30.

White was not disposed to have anyone question her word, as Uriah Smith and others soon found out. She saw her work as one with God's work. To question her was regarded as questioning God Himself. If Smith or Kellogg or anyone else questioned any of her Testimonies, they felt the wrath of the prophet. The legend of her prophetic authority grew, and she not only accepted it but had a significant part in creating it.

Adventism must realize that possession of a spiritual gift does not automatically guarantee that its exercise is in harmony with the Bible. Using the word "inspiration" for Mrs. White's gift does not relieve us of the obligation to test the "inspiration" at every point. "Inspiration" even in those who wrote the books of the Bible did not last twenty-four hours a day. Why then insist that every letter, sermon and book that Ellen White wrote was the product of an "inspiration" equal to the Bible? If this were so, she was not only equal to the prophets and apostles, but far greater.

2. Mrs. White's writings have been used as the authority to decide all kinds of questions. The church which sometimes says it has no creed but the Bible has burdened itself with the most elaborate creed in the history of Christianity—about fifty Ellen White books together with thousands of her letters and articles. For all practical purposes, her writings have taken the place of the Bible, and Adventism has therefore become a cult of Ellen White. While faith in Ellen White has helped consolidate the church, slavish dependence on Ellen White has placed the church years behind in biblical research.

3. Adventism has been very immature. It has looked to and leaned upon Mrs. White as a child depends on his mother. Such behavior may be good as long as one is a child. Mrs. White has given Adventism a sense of securi-

ty. People can turn to the "Spirit of Prophecy" for counsel on almost everything. Some even say that it offers a detailed blueprint to live by. As the winds of change are blowing over the church and people are being challenged to reevaluate Ellen White, many feel threatened. They are like a child afraid of losing his security blanket.

When I was a child, it was only right for me to do exactly what mother said. When I became a man, my relationship with my mother changed somewhat. I did not see everything through the eyes of my mother. In fact, I viewed some things quite differently. Yet I still remembered with gratitude and reverence her good counsel and helpful discipline.

4. Mrs. White's books and articles must stand on their own merit. Is not truth self-attesting? She might have been charismatic, but she was not omnicharismatic. She might have had a spiritual gift, but she did not have every spiritual gift. Adventism assumed that every new Ellen White book was going to be a best seller. While Ellen White has been a successful author in the Adventist community, her books have never had a great impact outside Adventism. I venture to say that other Adventist authors have been more successful in this respect than Ellen White—despite the fact that Adventists have publicly promoted her books with great vigor.

The writings of Mrs. White should be judged on their own merit. For example, her first book for the public—*Sketches from the Life of Paul*⁵—is not outstanding, though the publishers extolled it as if it were superior to all previous Christian books. Neither can *Prophecy and*

5. Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek: Review & Herald, 1883). Reprinted in 1974 by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

*Kings*⁶ be placed on a level with her better writing. It appears that she had little literary help when she wrote it. Compilations such as *Messages to Young People*⁷ contain so much law and so little gospel that their tendency is to discourage and demoralize rather than uplift.

Ellen White's best material on the Protestant message of justification by faith is found in the first volume of *Selected Messages*.⁸ Although she never attained the clarity of Calvin the writer or Spurgeon the preacher on the subject of justification, this material is written with great vigor and appeal. On the other hand, her presentation on righteousness by faith in *Christ's Object Lessons*,⁹ especially on the wedding garment, is confusing. This book, along with *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*,¹⁰ is so hazy on the important distinction between God's work for us (gospel) and in us (law) that it will drive many devout souls into the slough of despond.

*Steps to Christ*¹¹ is a good little devotional primer on the Christian life. The title is not an appropriate gospel title, but perhaps it is, after all, a fair expression of Arminian religion. It lacks, however, the more virile features of Pauline theology.

6. Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1917).

7. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1930).

8. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958).

9. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1900).

10. Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956).

11. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956).

*The Great Controversy*¹² is so saturated with a nineteenth-century world view that much of it is credible only to the reader who has first accepted Mrs. White as a prophet. This book is convincing only to Adventists. It tends to be more cultic than any of the books Mrs. White wrote for the public.

*The Desire of Ages*¹³ is probably Mrs. White's best book. It is the one I would prefer giving to a non-Adventist. But even *The Desire of Ages* has its strengths and weaknesses. Too many people read it without being disabused of the Roman error of salvation by inward grace. Mrs. White was too much of a nineteenth-century pietist to rise far above the idea of salvation by devotion to Christ. On the whole, Mrs. White's great emphasis was sanctification. She had a strong sense of the spirituality and breadth of God's law. She was unsurpassed as a disciplinary agent to prepare the church for the full disclosure of the gospel.

My comments are, of course, only fallible impressions—but at least I have read the materials quite thoroughly and have compared them with many works of other great Christian authors. Mrs. White wrote some beautiful things, and she wrote with great intensity and conviction. She wrote other things which are quite trite. At times she tended to speak too dogmatically on matters outside her competence. Yet we must acknowledge that she was no one-idea person. She gave her church an abundance to read and think about. But her books must stand on their own merit and be read without an idolatrous attitude based on the legend that she received everything she wrote directly from heaven. We have no

12. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911).

13. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898).

ground for saying that anything she wrote is free from error unless we have first tested it against the words of the Bible. My old Bible teacher at Avondale College used to say, "When you read other books, you need to sit on a hard chair. When you read Ellen White, you can relax and sit on a soft chair." That prescription can only make people weak in the back as well as weak in the head.

5. If Adventists will discard the legends and look at Ellen White, "warts and all," they will appreciate her truly great contribution to the church more than ever. It is not the Ellen White critics but the Ellen White apologists who have done her the greatest disservice.

Excursus on the Prophetic Spirit

God designs that a prophetic spirit should live in the church. It is also the responsibility of the church to nourish the prophetic spirit.

In Old Testament times God placed both priests and prophets in the covenantal community. The priest was the representative of the religious establishment and performed a necessary function. The priesthood was inclined to protect the system and the status quo. The prophet, on the other hand, was a charismatic person who spoke out against the sins of the nation and the people. He was the bearer of the Word of God, which came to Israel first as a word of judgment and then as a word of salvation. He was the great disturber in Israel and was generally regarded as the enemy of the "system"—that is, the religious establishment. Of course, some prophets were eager to serve the interests of the religious establishment. These sided against disturbers like Micaiah and Jeremiah. There was always a tension between the religious establishment and the true prophet. It was hazardous to be a prophet in those days, for many

of them lost their lives. The tension which existed between priest and prophet was by divine arrangement.

A Christian church made an ecclesiastical institution necessary. Yet God evidently desired that a prophetic spirit should live on in the church. Paul warned the church not to quench the living testimony (1 Thess. 5:19-21). It is interesting to notice that, while Paul himself opposed the excesses of the charismatic spirits in the Corinthian church, he did nothing to stifle the functioning of the prophetic spirit in the church.

Old Testament scholars seem to agree that, after the return from Babylon, the Jews finally stifled all manifestations of the prophetic spirit. This also happened in the Christian church. When the church became a great religious establishment, it tended to oppose all dissent—although often for very good reasons.

Yet from time to time even the powerful and monolithic religious establishment could not altogether stifle the prophetic spirit. Men and women were stirred by the Spirit of God to speak for God within the Christian community. These stood in the tradition of God's great disturbers. Such spirits were active even in the Dark Ages. Some of them tended to be mystics, and they reflected the limitations of their age. Yet they were voices to disturb the great church. Such a person was Birgitta of Sweden. She had visions and rebuked the sins of kings, popes, bishops and whole cities and nations. Hers was a truly prophetic spirit.¹

The Reformation was a breaking forth of the prophetic spirit. George W. Forell says:

In the Old Testament we read how prophets such as Amos would come down from the hills and try to reform

1. See J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962).

the corrupted church of the Old Testament. The Reformers are considered as following in these prophetic footsteps.²

Paul Tillich says, "The Protestant principle . . . is the prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-sufficiency and their destructive consequences."³ A. Roy Eckardt also declares, "Protestantism is in part a continuation of prophetic Judaism."⁴ And Tillich is right when he says of Luther, "He is one of the few great prophets of the Christian Church."⁵ Luther sometimes referred to himself, not without some humor, as the German prophet. To many in his generation, he was Elijah, the forerunner of the parousia. More than any other figure in the Reformation, Luther exemplified the prophetic spirit of Judaism.

The Reformation was the result of the proclamation of God's Word. Luther had no faith in political intrigue, in military might or in the aid of civil power. He said:

I put forward God's Word; I preached and wrote—this was all I did. And yet while I was asleep, or seated familiarly at table with Amsdorff and Melancthon, drinking and gossiping over our Wittemberg beer, the Word that I had preached overthrew popery, so that neither prince nor emperor has done it so much harm. And yet I did nothing: the Word alone did all.⁶

2. George Wolfgang Forell, *The Protestant Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 28.

3. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, abridged ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 163.

4. A. Roy Eckardt, "Christian Faith and the Jews," *Journal of Religion* 30, no. 4 (Oct. 1950): 244.

5. Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought from Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), p. 227.

6. Quoted in J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 5 vols. in 1 (1846; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 335.

Like the word which came to Israel through the ancient prophets, the word which came through the Reformers was a word of both judgment and salvation (Luther would say law and gospel). In Luther's protest against indulgences, in his identification of the papacy with antichrist and in his blistering attack on the hierarchy in his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*,⁷ we see a manifestation of the word of judgment. Schaff once said that God used Luther's intemperate rage to smash the power of the papacy.

Yet more than anything else, the Word resurrected in the Reformation was the word of salvation. Luther has been called "the first great, clear preacher of the righteousness of faith sent to the Christian church since the days of the apostle Paul."⁸ The Reformation was a manifestation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Like the cloud which was dark to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites, the message of the Reformation was judgment upon those who were arrogant in their own righteousness. But to those who were bruised by Satan and crushed by guilt, it was indeed good news (Isa. 61:1). There was a liberating freshness about the Reformation message of the justification of sinners by faith alone. Men had worn themselves out trying to become righteous enough to stand before God, and their consciences were never at ease. Now they heard that Christ had satisfied the law on their behalf and that His righteousness had been accepted for them in the presence of God.

Church historians rightly speak of Wesley also as one of the great prophets of the church. He was no ordinary

7. See John Dillenberger, ed., "The Pagan Servitude of the Church," *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961), pp. 249-359.

8. Julius Köstlin, *The Theology of Luther* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), 1:77f.

clergyman. Neither were Roger Williams, William Booth or William Miller. Some of these prophetic spirits were not called to their ministry through the normal or regular channels of the religious establishment. Sometimes they were regarded by the religious establishment of their day as heretics—and none of them were without some heresy. Church historians now speak of the prophetic ministry of the sects whom God raises up to arouse the church from without when He cannot arouse it from within. Like the pre-Christian sects within Judaism, many Christian sects are characterized by a dominant apocalyptic spirit. Adventism is such a sect.

According to Paul, administration is one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:28). The church cannot function without government and order. Organization is necessary. Seventh-day Adventism has had the gift of strong organization. Yet in the person of Ellen White we see a prophetic (apocalyptic) spirit at work in the movement. Mrs. White exhibited a restless, disturbing spirit within Adventism, a spirit which exalted the standard and cried out against all kinds of evil. Mrs. White was not always easy to live with—as the organization, her friends and at times even her own husband found out. Hers was an irrepressible prophetic spirit which acted as a godly goad to disturb the complacency and carnal slumber of the community. While she lived, no one, not even the organization, could entirely harness the prophetic spirit of Ellen White for their own ends.

With the death of Ellen White, however, the church hierarchy absorbed the prophetic spirit into the religious establishment and even forged Ellen White into an instrument to enhance the power and authority of the organization. This procedure has worked to make the prophetic spirit of none effect, for Mrs. White has actually become a part of the establishment. That was impossible as long as she was alive. The "system" which boasts

the possession of the "Spirit of Prophecy" and uses the "Spirit of Prophecy" to enhance its own image and authority actually quenches the prophetic spirit in the church. In this, of course, it is like any religious establishment. It is never natural for the "system" to welcome, much less tolerate, a prophetic spirit in the church. Any hierarchy is bent on maintaining the status quo, on upholding its prestige and on perpetuating itself.

We can safely presume that it is God's will that a living testimony, a prophetic spirit, live on within the church. This does not mean that it needs people with prophetic trances like Ellen White. But the schools which train theologians should be like schools of the prophets. The church needs theologians of vision who are moved by a prophetic spirit, men who are not mere puppets to an all-powerful religious establishment which can tolerate no voice of dissent. But generally the theologians have been so effectively absorbed into the system that no healthy tension remains between "priest" and "prophet." Administration is needed, but woe to the community when the government of the church tries to assume the prophetic office as well! Whenever the prophetic spirit is quenched, it is certain to return to the church with a vengeance proportionate to its suppression.

Section IV

The Gospel and Ethics

Introduction

Christian ethics addresses the questions, How should a Christian behave? What kind of life is pleasing to God? Only a few areas and aspects of ethics can be covered in this brief review. I shall concentrate on those which have particular relevance to Adventism.

First, I want to say something positive about the Adventist contribution to Christian sanctification. Adventism arose at a time when the Christian church seemed in danger of losing the biblical doctrine of a final judgment according to works. In his book, *The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl*, James Perry Martin traces the history of the judgment doctrine in Protestantism. He shows that, since the time of the Reformers, the importance of a final judgment has been receding from Protestant thinking. Rather than teaching justification by faith in a way which makes the judgment necessary, the tendency in Protestantism has been to teach justification by faith in a way which makes a final judgment almost totally irrelevant. The old Platonic idea of natural immortality and the Calvinistic

doctrine of predestination have also helped undermine the biblical emphasis on the final judgment.¹

Because it has been armed with the message, "The hour of His judgment is come," Adventism has been characterized by a vigorous moral imperative. Because it has been so strongly oriented to the Old Testament, Adventism has proclaimed that the God of biblical revelation is a God of law as well as a God of grace. Adventism stands somewhat consciously apart from a Protestantism weakened by such forms of antinomianism as relativism, situation ethics, Enthusiasm ("The Spirit tells me what to do") and once-saved-always-saved-ism. Protestantism has generally been so satiated with cheap grace that it takes for granted that God is gracious. It has lost the healthy biblical tension between judgment and salvation, wrath and mercy. A Protestant church which has become morally soft and flabby is poor soil for the gospel. A church without a strong moral imperative and the training of stern discipline seems to have no foundation on which to build a powerful gospel proclamation. Judaism was disciplined by the law for centuries as a preparation for the gospel (Gal. 3:24). Great gospel preachers like Luther and Wesley seemed to experience a time of struggle under the conviction of the awful demand of God's righteousness. In order to understand Paul, one almost has to be a devout Jew. And in order to understand Luther's gospel, one almost has to be a devout Catholic. I have therefore reached the conclusion that the best soil for the rebirth of the gospel today is Catholicism and Adventism. At least, the nearest thing to devout Judaism or Catholicism is devout Seventh-day Adventism. I do not say this in a pejorative sense but in a complimentary sense.

1. See James P. Martin, *The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963).

But the piety of Adventism is more Old Testamental than medieval Catholic. The Western church has been permeated by Grecian philosophy, reflected in such doctrines as a dualistic anthropology and the immortality of the soul. With these views the body is demeaned, and sanctification assumes a kind of super-spirituality. Hence the tendency to mysticism in Roman Catholic piety. Adventism, however, has a strong and healthy view of the wholistic man. Its view of sanctification is therefore far more practical and down-to-earth. Adventism's strong emphasis on the inexorable rule of law in God's universe, the goodness of creation, the wholistic nature of man and the resurrection of the body provides an Old Testamental (and biblical) view of life. Adventism's view of salvation is the salvation of the whole man. Its concept of redeemed life in the hereafter is concrete and winsome. In the last fifty years the best Christian scholarship has returned to the Hebraic view of man. It is only beginning to recover what Adventism has not only intellectually known, but practiced for more than a century. Today it is hard to find a good Christian scholar who subscribes to a dualistic anthropology. But in academia this more enlightened view of the *totus homo* seldom goes further than intellectual discussion.

I would be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge my great debt to the Adventist lifestyle. In the area of practical sanctification Adventism has made a great contribution to the Christian church. This aspect of Adventism needs to be appreciated and preserved, and at the same time it needs to be purified of elements which threaten to make that way of life more a curse than a blessing.

16

An Ethic of Grateful Celebration

Adventism tends to use the Bible as if it were a rule book on human behavior. Just as many conservative Christians have searched the Bible for abstract theological propositions, so Adventists have searched the Bible for ethical propositions. We have found proof texts for non-drinking, non-smoking, no jewelry wearing, vegetarianism (or at least no pork eating), tithe paying, Sabbath keeping and church organization. There are also spiritual directions for prayer, brotherly love, and unity in the church.

It is sometimes admitted that these ethical directions may require deep study in order to be clearly discerned. Adventists regard themselves as fortunate, however, because God has given them a “magnifying glass” through which to read the Bible so that they might see things they would not otherwise notice. As every Adventist is supposed to know, that “magnifying glass” is the “Spirit-of-Prophecy” writings of Ellen G. White. Here those ethical principles and directions are described in great clarity and detail.

The tendency to compile ethical directions from the Bible is transferred to the use of Ellen White. It is popularly believed that she provides a detailed blueprint of the God-pleasing life. In her writings the pious believer can find instruction on child training, household management, amusements, neighborhood witnessing, cooking, eating (how often, how much, what kind), church polity, tithe paying, wedding rings, temperance, hospitality, psychology, education, hygiene, medical practice, music, the devotional life, estate planning and even voting at the polls. And if one wants to "go all the way," he can dig into Ellen White letters and other stories to find out how to pickle olives or plant a tree and whether it is permissible to eat such things as chocolate cake, yellow cheese and jam. Some of my readers will have to be warned that I am not joking.

In all fairness to Ellen White, she did not write a number of books which bear her name. They are compilations of statements she made over a public ministry of seventy years. Mrs. White was a practical woman who took great interest in many things and wrote much good counsel. But when someone compiles all that she said on a subject, and faithful followers use this as a rule book, it becomes an ethical monstrosity. Some people are sensible enough to regard these compilations merely as counsel that may or may not be good for their own situation. But many pious people accept them all as the very word of the Lord. If Mrs. White said it, it is as much the law of God as the Ten Commandments. In all fairness it must be said that Ellen White could be quite resourceful and adaptable. She could personally discard any rule book if circumstances demanded. But many of her devout followers do not know that kind of freedom.

What should we say about this system of "propositional ethics"?¹ We must say that the Bible has no independent interest in ethics. If God wanted to provide a manual on ethical conduct, He could have easily done so. But the Bible is not an ethical manual any more than it is a systematic theology. The Bible is written as history. It is a story of God's redemptive acts. Biblical ethics are not artificially attached to this story. They are embedded in the story itself. These ethical principles are not little gold nuggets which must be dug out of solid rock so they can all be melted down together. When biblical ethics are removed from the context of redemptive history, they cease to be biblical ethics. In this respect Judeo-Christian ethics are absolutely unique. They cannot be duplicated by anyone not incorporated into the holy history of Israel—a history which has climaxed in Jesus Christ. As far as the Bible is concerned, ethics have no independent value and no meaning outside the saving deeds of God.

The Bible is a story of the mighty acts of God. In the Old Testament the Exodus event is the preeminent redemptive act. This event determines the way Israel should live. The preface to the Ten Commandments shows that Old Testament ethics do not have independent status: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Because the mighty Creator has become the Father, Husband, King and Covenantal Partner of His people by an act of sheer love and kindness, because He stands as their Protector and the Guarantor that Israel shall have

1. I have deliberately coined the term "propositional ethics" to describe this approach, which views the Bible as containing a system of ethics in propositional form—much as systematic theologians have used the Bible as if it contained abstract theological propositions. The entire concept of a bare "propositional revelation" (in either ethics or theology) is very unsatisfactory because it wrenches revelation loose from its redemptive-historical context.

everything ("I am . . . your God"), there is an implied *therefore*. "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). Deuteronomy is replete with examples of this indicative-imperative relationship. In short, God says, See how I have loved you, delivered you, given you this land, pledged to care for you and be your everlasting Friend and Covenantal Partner. Therefore you should trust and lovingly obey Me (Deut. 6:20, 21; 7:8-11; 10:19; 11:8).

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, the essence of worship is to rehearse (recount, remember, recite) the mighty acts of God, especially in the Exodus (Judges 5:11; Ps. 66, 78, 105, 106; Ps. 111:4). To the Old Testament saint, life was a grateful celebration of the Exodus. His religion was a religion of remembrance and gratitude. Everything he did was an expression of remembering the mighty acts of God and expressing his gratitude for his inclusion in that holy history.

That is why he kept the Sabbath. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15). Thus, Sabbath keeping had no meaning apart from the redemptive history of the Exodus. Unless a Jew was celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egypt (and looking forward to the eschatological exodus) on the seventh day, he was not keeping the Sabbath. There is some truth to the Protestant objection that the Sabbath was only for the Jew. In a sense, this is right. Unless a person was part of the holy history of the Exodus, he could not celebrate the Sabbath.

There were many other ways to celebrate the redemptive act of the Exodus. All the great feasts—Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles—were rehearsals (recitals, remembrances, re-presenta-

tions) of the Exodus (Ex. 12:27; 13:3-9; Lev. 23:41-43; Deut. 16:3, 10-13). The deliverance from Egypt is also the reason why Israel brought the firstfruits to the tabernacle (Deut. 26:1-10) and redeemed every firstborn child or animal (Ex. 13:2, 14-16). Every religious institution in Israel proclaimed one message: "Remember." "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand."

Not only did the Exodus determine the character of public and private worship; it determined the way Israel was to behave in everything. They were to be kind to strangers because they too were strangers in Egypt, and the Lord delivered them with a mighty hand. They were not to oppress the poor, because they were a poor people, and the Lord graciously delivered them. Every fiftieth year they were to forgive all debts in Israel, to release all bondmen and to restore all property to the original owner as a grateful celebration of the Exodus (Lev. 25). They were to act with justice, equity and mercy just as God had acted in the Exodus. They were not to eat or touch any unclean thing so that they might remember that they were a distinct people whom God had separated for Himself. Israel's ethics, therefore, were grounded in their redemptive history, colored by that history and expressive of that history. Such ethical behavior pointed away from itself and from the people to the gracious acts of God in their history. Suppose we could have visited a Hebrew family and asked them *why*—"Why do you worship like this, why are you so kind to strangers, why do you care for the poor and the orphans, why do you celebrate the Sabbath?" They would have given one answer: "We were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought us out with a mighty hand. Therefore do we do this."

Christian ethics have the same character. Non-Christians who claim to agree with the ethics of Christianity are stating a contradiction. Christian ethics cannot be truly duplicated by anyone who is not a Christian any more than a policeman's behavior can be truly duplicated by anyone who is not a policeman. The New Testament proclaims a new exodus of which the Old Testament Exodus was a type. The death-resurrection event is the mighty act of God which sums up and perfects redemptive history and supersedes the redemptive act of the Old Testament. Indeed, it is the eschatological deliverance to which the entire Old Testament looked forward. Now all that we do in public or private worship, in personal and social ethics, is to be done in the spirit of grateful celebration. All of life is to be an act of remembering and rehearsing our holy history—which is Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. We have been incorporated into this holy history. It is our own history. We have therefore died with Christ and have risen from the dead. And by faith-baptism we already live on the other side of judgment as sons of God and heirs of life eternal. This status is given us by the sheer overwhelming kindness of God. We have been saved from the darkness and bondage of Egypt and have been translated into the kingdom of light and liberty. Whatever we do now must be an act of remembering and showing our gratitude for this great and free salvation. This gospel of Christ must determine our ethics at every point.

The ethics of the New Testament are not different from the ethics of the Old. But in the Christ event God has given us a new definition of love and humility and service. It is a much clearer definition than could be given by the Old Testament Exodus. Just as the Old Testament event defined or refracted the behavior proper to covenantal life, so God's final act in Christ refracts the covenantal order of life to us.

For instance, Paul's Epistles abound with instruction on how we should live. For the most part, this instruction is found in the latter part of his Epistles. Paul does not present the gospel and then say, "Now let us consider the subject of Christian ethics." Rather, all his appeals on how to live are made on the basis of what God has done for us in Christ. It is in view of God's gospel mercies that we are to present our lives as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1-3). We are to forgive our brother because God has forgiven us for the sake of Christ (Col. 3:13). We are to be humble because Christ humbled Himself to be a servant and to die the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). We are to put to death the sinful nature because we have been incorporated into Christ's death (Col. 3:1-5). We are to act like sons of God because we are sons of God through faith in the gospel of grace. We are to strive to be holy because God counts us as holy—because we are baptized into Jesus Christ. In short, we are to act out what we already are by the gift of God. No one can understand what he should do until he understands who he is. Who we are determines what we do.

Paul virtually never appeals to the law—"Thou shalt not." When he demands certain behavior of the church, he appeals instead to the holy history of Christ, into which the church is incorporated, and from that standpoint then makes his ethical appeal. The basis of Christian ethics is not a code amplified in a book of rules. It is the love of God definitively revealed in the cross (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

If, therefore, Adventist Sabbath keeping is not a grateful celebration of God's redemption completed on the cross, it cannot be the Christian Sabbath. It has no meaning apart from a grateful remembrance of Calvary. But how can our ethics be based on redemption and thus be an ethic of gratitude unless the gospel of God's saving

deed is clearly announced. If ethics itself is so confused with the righteousness of faith that our righteousness is put in the place of Christ's substitutionary righteousness, how can we stand before God with an easy conscience? If we insist on calling our sanctified lifestyle "righteousness by faith" or make it any part of that glorious righteousness which reconciles us to God, how can there be an assurance of salvation and acceptance with God? If we continue preaching the "gospel" of what God is able to do for us if we do this and that, instead of announcing the finished work of Jesus Christ, how can there be a Sabbath celebration or any kind of ethics pleasing to God? "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23, KJV).

We all know that we ought to follow our Adventist way of life because of love for Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). But even that becomes a burdensome law to make us feel more guilty. I fear that far too much Adventism is an ethic of guilt. People are motivated by guilt to keep the Sabbath, to pay tithe, to be loyal to the denomination, to eat the right food, to eschew jewelry, to avoid worldly amusements. And yes, they are to do it all in love to Christ for giving them a salvation they are not sure they are going to get anyhow. The motivation of guilt will produce results. People are made to feel guilty for not witnessing with the *Signs of the Times*, for not giving enough money to support missions, for not going In-gathering and for enjoying themselves on the Sabbath. What if we can brag that Adventists give more money per capita than other churches and are almost as good as Jehovah's Witnesses in knocking on doors if the chief motivation behind this religious activity is guilt?

The Pauline Epistles do not present a motivation of guilt but a motivation of grace. Unless a religious group gives free course to the gospel, and unless its pulpits ring with the liberating proclamation of grace, the

religious group will become a religious slave camp. But wherever the gospel of God's saving deed is proclaimed, there is a community which exhibits an ethic of grateful celebration.

17

An Ethic of Faith and Love

Creation and redemption are works of God in which man makes no contribution. The Bible rings with the message that salvation is of the Lord. The Christian gospel declares that sinners are saved by grace alone—the doing and dying of Jesus plus nothing. Yet the mighty acts of God on our behalf demand an appropriate response. All who hear what God has done will be led to ask, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” (John 6:28). The Bible gives us a clear answer. God requires faith and love, or faith expressing itself through love (John 6:29; Gal. 5:6). This is the “whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

In his famous “Preface to the Old Testament” Luther was bold enough to write:

All other laws must and ought to be measured by faith and love. That is to say, the other laws are to be kept where their observance does not conflict with faith and love; but where they conflict with faith and love, they should be done away entirely. For this reason we read that David did not kill the murderer Joab [I Kings 2:5-6],

even though he had twice deserved death [II Sam. 3:27; 20:10]. And in II Samuel 14[:11] David promises the woman of Tekoa that her son shall not die for having slain his brother. Nor did David kill Absalom [II Sam. 14:21-24]. Moreover David himself ate of the holy bread of the priests, I Samuel 21[:6]. And Tamar thought the king might give her in marriage to her stepbrother, Amnon [II Sam. 13:13]. From these and similar incidents one sees plainly that the kings, priests, and heads of the people often transgressed the laws boldly, at the demand of faith and love. Therefore faith and love are always to be mistresses of the law and to have all laws in their power. For since all laws aim at faith and love, none of them can be valid, or be a law, if it conflicts with faith or love.

Even to the present day, the Jews are greatly in error when they hold so strictly and stubbornly to certain laws of Moses. They would rather let love and peace be destroyed than eat and drink with us, or do things of that kind. They do not properly regard the intention of the law; but to understand this is essential for all who live under laws, not for the Jews alone. Christ also says so in Matthew 12, that one might break the sabbath if an ox had fallen into a pit, and might rescue it. Now that was only a temporal necessity and injury. How much more ought one boldly to break all kinds of laws when bodily necessity demands it, provided that nothing is done against faith and love. Christ says that David did this very thing when he ate the holy bread, Mark 3[2:25-26].¹

When we look at the Decalogue, we see that the essential demand is for faith and love. The commandments are prefaced by the statement, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Then comes the commandment which stands at the head and undergirds all the rest: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). In

1. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American ed., vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament: I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 240-41.

his *Large Catechism* Luther beautifully explains that the essence of this commandment is faith.² Since God has acted for our redemption from the bondage of sin and death and the devil, we should trust Him and rely on Him as our supreme consolation and support in life and in death. We are not able to produce such a faith because, as sinners, we do not naturally fear, trust and love God. The command to trust God is not given apart from the gospel of His redemption. Rather, we are enabled to believe by the power of the gospel ("I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt"). So Luther declares in the Third Article of the Creed, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."³

Each commandment on the first side of the Decalogue enjoins faith. The fourth commandment begins with the word *remember*. God "has caused His wonders to be remembered" (Ps. 111:4). Psalms 105, 106 and 107 show that when God's people remember His great act of redemption from Egypt, they believe Him (Ps. 106:12). But as soon as they forget His mighty works, they go astray (Ps. 106:13, 21). We can only continue in the faith as we remember what has happened in holy history and what has been given to us. For this reason God has established it as an ordinance of life that we should work six days and then devote the seventh day to remembering and celebrating what He has done. The entire point of the Sabbath, therefore, is that we believe the gospel.

2. See Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, "Part First," "The First Commandment," in *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 581.

3. Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism*, "II. The Creed," "The Third Article," in *Triglot Concordia*, p. 545.

Thus, in the only New Testament commentary on the significance of the Sabbath, the writer to the Hebrews declares, "Now we who have believed enter that rest" (see Heb. 4:1-10).

Why is it that in Adventist tradition we say so much about the form of Sabbath keeping and so little about the spirit of Sabbath keeping. According to Hebrews 4, the spirit of Sabbath keeping is faith. What is the value of Sabbath keeping if we resist the gospel of righteousness by faith and corrupt it by mixing our own works (sanctification) with that righteousness which is nothing but a work already accomplished and finished?

I think Luther knew more about real Sabbath keeping than we realize. In his comment on the meaning of the Sabbath commandment in his *Small Catechism*, he says, "We should fear and love God that we not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it."⁴

The spirit of the Sabbath is proclaimed clearly and boldly in Hebrews 4: "We who have believed enter that rest. . . . On the seventh day God rested from all His work. . . . There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work [i.e., he believes], just as God did from His" (Heb. 4:3-10).

Just as faith is commanded in the first four commandments, so love to the neighbor is commanded in the other six.

In the New Testament it is even more plain that faith and love are everything so far as man's duty is concerned (Gal. 5:6). The apostle Paul writes statements like these in almost all his Epistles:

4. Ibid., "I. The Ten Commandments," "The Third Commandment," in *Trilog Concordia*, p. 541.

. . . your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.—Eph. 1:15.

We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven.—Col. 1:4, 5.

. . . your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love.—1 Thess. 1:3.

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love.—1 Thess. 3:6.

Your faith is growing more and more, and the love everyone of you has for each other is increasing.—2 Thess. 1:3.

. . . faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.—1 Tim. 1:14; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13.

So in Galatians 5:6 the apostle declares, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." When this passage is placed beside 1 Corinthians 7:19, it is clear that faith and love are the essence of keeping God's commandments: "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts."

Both in his gospel and in his Epistle, the apostle John has much to say about keeping God's commandments. Some of these texts have been favorite proof texts among Adventists. But John's real point is the same as Paul's, for in his Epistles John tells us repeatedly that God's commandments consist of faith in Jesus Christ and love for one another. The spirit of antichrist is to deny Christ and to hate the brother (1 John 2). So in 1 John 3:21-24 the apostle says:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.

In the context of the New Testament, obeying God is not a matter of keeping days and abstaining from certain foods. Whenever such an emphasis is given by Adventism, it is surely a distortion of the Christian message. When Peter declares that God gives the Holy Spirit "to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32), he is not talking about keeping the right day and eating the right food. It is clear that the unbelieving Jews were doing that and much more. To obey God in apostolic terminology means to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16, KJV; Gal. 3:2). The kind of obedience God commands is "obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5, KJV). So also, the disobedience which incurs God's wrath is unbelief (Heb. 3:17-19). "Everlasting destruction" will come upon those today who "do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:8, 9).

With regard to our relationship to others, the Bible is clear that he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the whole law (Rom. 13:8-10). "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

We must not conclude that the ethic of faith and love replaces another kind of ethic in the Old Testament. The ethic of faith and love may stand in bolder relief in the New Testament, but it is basically the same ethic as in the Old Testament. This raises the question whether Adventism is not only in danger of missing the essential New Testament ethical emphasis, but even the ethical

emphasis of the Old Testament. Consider this profound insight into Old Testament ethics by Emil Brunner:

From the beginning God's will is directed toward community. He regards men as bound together in solidarity, without detriment to the fact that he has to do with the individual in his conscience. He wills that they not be individuals but members of a whole. Individualism (*das Einzelsein*) is sin. The ethic of the Old Testament is social ethic throughout. Sin, in so far as its concrete expression comes into consideration, is above all sin against the fellow man, injustice to the other, denial of men's belonging together. In all mystical-idealistic religions, however, sin is above all lack of self-control, sensuousness.

In the Old Testament the latter conception plays a completely subordinate role over against sin as injustice to the brother, as denial of the Thou. In this respect, too, the Old Testament's characteristic emphasis upon personal relations comes to expression decisively. One does not sin—as the Greek, the ascetic, the mystic conceive it—against himself, but he sins against his fellow man by transgressing the divinely established bound that protects him. Thus the good is always a good related to community too: right relation to the brother, love of the neighbor, but not, however, some ascetic purity. Even the sexual ethos is not determined by the idea of purity, but by that of community.

The Old Testament is pervaded with a tremendous passion for community, with a powerful social ethos, the like of which the world has never known. But even here the idea is not that of some universal social scheme; rather, the Old Testament is governed solely by the idea of God's righteousness, God's order, and God's lordship. God wills to have a true People of God on earth. A People of God cannot result from the presence of pious individuals who by virtue of their piety also have community. Rather, piety from the outset is oriented toward community. God and the neighbor belong inseparably together. Within the community of the people God has deposited his Word; it is necessary to be an Israelite to know God. There are no private revelations. There is revelation of the living God only in living relationship with the people. God conceals

his Word and his salvation behind the man whom he calls, in order that anyone who wants to find him must also find his fellow man. And the Word which he finds in this manner is one that immediately binds the recipient to the community.

Hence the astonishing fact that in Israel there are no solitary religious individuals, no mystical anchorites, hermits, monks, and the like, who in other spiritual religions are the real pinnacles. Even the prophets are not of this kind. To be sure, they bear a burden which is laid upon them alone. But it is the burden of a message to the people; it is no individualistic salvation for their own souls. They do not withdraw in order to be alone, but—difficult as it is for them—they go again and again to the people and cling to them, they run after them like the true shepherd after his strayed sheep, they carry their burden as their own and lay it as their own before God. The notion that religion is a private affair is a mystical or idealistic idea, but it is never a biblical one. The public cry of a herald is what binds God and men, not an individual Yogi-exercise or an individual philosophical way to God. Worship is public, and what God wills to do is public. But in this publicness that which is most inward is fully preserved and unmistakably called forth. For this public Word goes to the conscience of the individual.⁵

There is no great emphasis in the Old Testament on private piety or pious asceticism.⁶ There are admonitions on self-discipline, but they certainly occupy a subordinate role.

5. Emil Brunner, "The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith," trans. Bernhard W. Anderson, in Bernhard W. Anderson, ed., *The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), pp. 262-63.

6. The Jewish religion of the Old Testament is not classed among the great mystical or ascetic religions. The Old Testament attitude toward creation was positive, for man was to use and enjoy all of God's gifts in fellowship with God. It was a very wholesome attitude to all of life, including human sexuality. Wine and strong drink were never strictly forbidden. The whole of life was to be lived in the spirit of praise to God and celebration. Ascetic abstinence in food, drink, work or sex was unknown to the spirit of Old Testament religion.

When the prophets bring covenantal lawsuit against the people of Israel, it is not generally for personal sins such as lack of self-discipline or indulgence of appetite. Isaiah, Micah and Amos tell the people that God loathes their assemblies of religious pomposity. The one great sin that brings down the judgment of God is sin against the neighbor. The appeal of the prophets is for social justice, mercy and benevolence. God desires this rather than some kind of personal religiosity. God wants man's service, not for Himself, but for the brother.

The spirit of the prophets is considered in Jesus' parable of the last judgment (Matt. 25). The sheep are not commended or the goats condemned for any private piety or lack of it. Jesus is not represented as asking, "What did you believe?" "What church did you attend?" or even, "What day did you keep?" We are not suggesting that these questions have no place, but they only have value if they help us love the neighbor. The judgment scene of Matthew 25 is what we might call substitution in reverse. Here Christ is not represented as standing in the place of man, but every needy soul stands in the place of Jesus Christ and represents Him. Jesus does not ask, "How did you treat Me, as the sinner's substitute?" but, "How did you treat the sinner, who lives in the world as My substitute?"

If our religion (including our arguments on last-day events) does not help us believe in Jesus Christ and trust in Him as our only righteousness before God, and if it does not help us accept people unconditionally and treat them as we would treat Jesus Christ, it is a fraudulent religion. No doubt the priest and the Levite who left the wounded man beside the road in Jesus' parable did so in order to be true to their religious principles. Those who crucified the Son of God wanted to hasten His death so they could reach home in time to keep the Sabbath. Many of us have been conditioned to think we please

God by maintaining our health reform principles even if it involves being unsociable and offending human beings for whom Christ died. We have not learned that to offend the stomach is nothing compared to offending the neighbor. In short, if we have principles which prevent us from believing in Christ for justification unto life eternal, if we have principles which cause us to neglect our neighbor in the interest of developing our personal merit with God, we had better let the devil have such principles. Faith in Christ and love to our fellow man are all that matter.

18

An Ethic of Freedom and Responsibility

God's salvation is a salvation from bondage to freedom. He does not want slaves but freeborn sons in His kingdom. People are prone to draw wrong conclusions from the "You shall nots" of the Ten Commandments. Because they are written largely in the form of simple prohibitions, they allow maximum freedom. A negative permits every possibility except for a single restriction. For instance, if your employer said, "You must not wear sweat shirts," you could choose from a whole variety of shirts or even wear none at all. But if he said, "You must wear sweat shirts," you would be quite restricted. The psalmist extolled God's law as a law of liberty (Ps. 119:45), and so did the apostle James (James 2:12).

The Ten Commandments are called "the words of the covenant" (Ex. 34:28, KJV). They are presented as the stipulations of the covenant between God and Israel. They are brief and comprehensive, a divine charter of liberty for a redeemed people. As we have already seen,

they simply demand faith and love from the human partner as the whole duty of man.

The assembly or church in the wilderness, however, was in its spiritual childhood. Having just left the darkness of Egypt, and having little understanding of the privileges of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, the people of God needed discipline. They were not ready for the full freedom of redeemed sons. God therefore appointed the special ministration of Moses to administer the covenant. Under this ministration there were many laws, statutes and judgments which applied the ten words of the covenant to the people in their historical and cultural situation. In the words of Luther, "He gives instructions for planting and tilling, marrying and fighting, governing children, servants, and households, buying and selling, borrowing and repaying, and for everything that is to be done both outwardly and inwardly. He goes so far that some of the prescriptions are to be regarded as foolish and useless."¹

According to the Jews, there were 613 of these laws—365 negative precepts and 248 positive ones.² After the Babylonian Exile, pious teachers tried to apply the law to different life situations. These counsels tended to be added to the body of law. By the time of Christ there were so many laws that a pious Jew could hardly move without fearing he would break some law or encounter some defilement. As Peter declared at the Jerusalem council, it was "a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

1. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American ed., vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament: I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 239.

2. See George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2:83.

In 2 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 3 and 4, Paul explains that this special ministration of Moses (sometimes simply called "the law" as in Romans 5:13, 20 and Galatians 3:19-24) was both an emergency measure and a temporary measure.

It was added because of transgressions [the emergency measure] until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come [the temporary measure]. . . . So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come [the New Testament gospel], we are no longer under the supervision of the law."
—Gal. 3:19, 24, 25.

Without the discipline of the Mosaic ministration of law, Israel would have sunk into pagan insensibility. The stern moral demands and the multitude of the law's requirements kept God's people sensitive to their sins and panting after grace. As Luther put it, "Moses . . . must constantly admonish, constantly drive, and knock himself out struggling with the people as [he would] with asses . . . [and he] makes them . . . long for grace."³

Just as there is an Old Testament ministration of law, so there is an Old Testament conscience. It does not attain to the freedom of a New Testament conscience. In Galatians 4:1-4 Paul explains that before the coming of Christ the people of God were like an heir during the time of his minority. The minor must be treated like a slave, ruled by all kinds of regulations, until he reaches mature and responsible sonship. (We also make rules for our children, such as, "Be in bed by 9 o'clock," "Don't leave the yard unless you tell us where you are going," "Eat all the vegetables before dessert," etc.) An Old Testament saint like Daniel could not eat food offered to idols with a good conscience, but Paul and those Jews

3. Martin Luther, "Preface to the Old Testament," *Luther's Works*, 35:241.

strong in the New Testament faith would not be troubled by such scruples. Spiritually speaking, the Old Testament conscience is more like the conscience of a child. Since such a conscience is weak and not exercised to discern good and evil, it tends to live by the rules laid down by Moses.

I suggest that Adventism has never grasped what Paul generally means by the expression "not under law" (Rom. 6:15; cf. Gal. 3:23, 25; 4:1-5, 21). The early Seventh-day Adventists, when pressed by their opponents with these "not under law" texts, argued that Paul was discussing the law of Old Testament ceremonies. At one time Adventists specialized in studies on the two laws as if the Bible made a clear distinction between ceremonial and moral laws. The better students in Adventism now recognize that the Bible does not always make this distinction as clearly as Adventists would like.

In the Old Testament community every law was in a sense a moral law, simply because God had commanded it. They made no distinction between moral and ceremonial laws. And Paul, who was skilled in the law, generally used the word "law" without the definite article. This means that he was discussing law in general and law as a principle.

In the 1888 era E. J. Waggoner abandoned the argument that the law in Galatians was the ceremonial law. He believed that the law in Galatians 3:19 was the moral law. And he said that "under the law" simply meant "under the condemnation of the law."⁴

After 1950, however, Adventist scholars realized that the "not-under-condemnation" definition was unsatis-

4. E. J. Waggoner, "Under the Law," *Signs of the Times*, 28 Aug. 1884, p. 520. See David P. McMahon, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1979), p. 33.

factory. Edward Heppenstall and the editors of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* more nearly approached the Pauline thought when they said that "under the law" meant "under law as a way of salvation."⁵ They said Paul taught that Christians do not rely on keeping the law for salvation, but they rely on grace. But although this is true, does it reach the heart of what Paul teaches in Galatians 3:19-25 and 4:1-5? Not really, for the Old Testament saint was not under a law method of salvation either. Yet in a certain sense, the entire covenantal community was under the law until the coming of Christ.

I suggest that "law" is a synonym for Moses and refers to the entire Mosaic ministration of law (2 Cor. 3). In the dispensation from Sinai to Christ, Moses administered the Ten Commandments. He expounded, explained and amplified them in a way suited to that period of salvation history. The constitution of the kingdom of God was in the hands of Moses. Yet Moses had prophesied that in the fullness of time God would raise up a new Moses to supersede his administration (Deut. 18:15). In the New Testament Moses is no longer the Torah—the instructor. In the Sermon on the Mount the constitution of the kingdom is in the hands of Jesus Christ, who supersedes Moses. The new Israel no longer looks to Moses to refract the meaning of the Ten Commandments, but it looks to Jesus Christ. By the gospel of His life, death and resurrection, He gives a new definition of what it means to trust God, love Him, and serve one another. So Paul declares:

Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the

5. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), 6:541, 960.

Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. —2 Cor. 3:7-17.

Returning to Paul's illustration of an heir who is growing up, we see that, with the coming of Christ and the New Testament gospel, the covenantal community reaches maturity. The community now enjoys a freedom (and also a responsibility) unknown under the former dispensation. Thus, the apostle says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

The New Testament believer is offered an assurance of sonship with God and a freedom of conscience of which the Old Testament community knew little. Very few things were retained from the Mosaic administration (Acts 15). But this freedom was not given the mature covenant community in order to lower the standard of holiness, but to achieve a greater reflection of the character of God. To illustrate, when a child learns to play the piano, he is disciplined by many elementary

rules. But when he becomes a mature pianist, he must transcend many of these early restrictions. In fact, he has to do this to become a creative musician who can express his own personality in his renditions.

This is not a situation ethic or a mystical spirit ethic. There are absolutes in the New Testament, because Christian ethics still moves within the structure of the Ten Commandments. Yet there are few absolutes, and these are not refracted by Moses but by the Spirit, who comes to the community clothed in the gospel of Christ. The testimony of Jesus is a greater light than the testimony of Moses. Thus, Christ is now the Lord of the Sabbath. We should not run to Moses to find out how to keep the Sabbath, but to the gospel of Christ! Those ringing words from Calvary, "It is finished," ought to teach us something about entering God's rest (Heb. 4:3-10).

Paul makes no attempt to develop a blueprint for right and wrong. He knows that the Christian believer cannot live by a rule book if he is to live creatively for the glory of God. Moreover, no one could make enough laws to embrace every situation in life—as our ever-expanding corpus of secular laws clearly demonstrates.

Apparently, the freedom offered the New Testament community in the gospel was too much for many in the churches. It was not long before some wanted to impose numerous regulations on the Christian community (Gal. 4; Col. 2). Paul protests:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle

notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.—Col. 2:16-23; cf. Gal. 4:8-11.

By the sixteenth century the church was bogged down in a system of spiritual and ecclesiastical regulations as elaborate as Judaism. No one could get rid of his bad conscience.

All this leads us to conclude that the new freedom of the gospel is more difficult to handle than living by a checklist. People generally want the security of a religion that carefully defines what is permissible and what is prohibited. With the passage of time, the list of taboos grows. Breaking the cultic taboo of a particular group is often worse than committing a sin against faith and love.

In Dostoyevsky's book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, there is a parable about Jesus returning to the earth. The inquisitor has Him arrested, but then goes to Him secretly and explains that people do not want the freedom He comes to bring. They want the neurotic comfort of rules. "Christ, he said, must not start again all that old business about freedom and grace and commitment and responsibility. Let things be, let the church with its laws handle them. Will Jesus please go away.'"⁶

6. William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), p. 80.

To live in the gospel maturity of New Testament freedom not only allows greater spontaneity and creativity in Christian existence, but it demands greater responsibility. This is why many prefer the easier (and more childish) way of having all their duties defined by a religious system. To live as Paul envisages is to live in a way that is open to the gospel and the application of that gospel in the rough and tumble of daily existence. Because life is not so precisely regimented for the mature gospel believer, he must pray without ceasing as he exercises his conscience to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14). He must seek for a constant inward renewing so that he will be able "to test and approve what God's will is" (Rom. 12:2). Rather than accept the responsibility which such freedom brings, many would prefer the security of a rule-book religion.

We are not describing a situation ethic in which the structure of covenantal life, comprehended in the Ten Commandments, is abandoned and man is left to live without the guidance of any absolute boundaries. Because we are finite and sinful, God has mercifully posted warning signs on the boundaries of human freedom. We must not allow religious teachers to thrust on us either a Judaistic rule-book religion or an unstructured ethic of Enthusiasm.⁷ A Christian ethic must sail between the bar of legalism and the rocks of antinomianism.

On one hand, the freedom which the gospel brings emancipates the believer from a host of rules and regulations with which ecclesiastical systems burden people. On the other hand, gospel freedom does not put him in bondage to his emancipation. The Christian is therefore free to submit to all kinds of rules and regulations. And he may sometimes do this for the sake of the brother

7. Enthusiasm is the idea that the Spirit works upon the heart immediately and apart from means such as the Word and the law of the Lord.

with a weak conscience. The believer does not flaunt his emancipation before those weak in the faith lest they be emboldened to sin against conscience and be destroyed (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8, 9).

Though faith may make all things lawful, love dictates that all things are not expedient. So the ethic of freedom and responsibility is the ethic of faith and love expressed in Luther's famous paradox that faith makes the Christian a free lord of all and subject to no one, but love makes the Christian a subject and servant of all.⁸

The Seventh-day Adventist Situation

In light of our Adventist situation, we must now reflect upon the principles of the Old Testament and of the New Testament conscience, the ministration of Moses and the ministration of the gospel.

If I were asked to identify the strength of Adventism, I would say that it consists in a strong orientation to the Old Testament. An Old Testament view of the creation of man, a strong sense of history and of eschatological hope, and a belief that God is a God of law and of righteousness constitute a great background or framework for the gospel.

But if I were asked to identify the weakness of Adventism, I would also reply, It is very Old Testamental. Adventism reflects the ethic of the Old Testament more than the ethic of the New Testament. It generally reflects an Old Testament conscience rather than a New Testament conscience. However, let me add that, while an Old Testament conscience is the conscience of a community in its spiritual childhood, it is still a biblical con-

8. See Martin Luther, "Martin Luther's Treatise on Christian Liberty [The Freedom of a Christian]," *Luther's Works*, vol. 31, *Career of the Reformer: I*, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), pp. 343-77.

science. But a conscience which tries to function with a New Testament that is cut loose from its Old Testament roots may not be a biblical conscience at all.

A sketch of Adventist history will explain what we mean by the Adventist conscience. Historically, Adventism took a strong stand on the wholeness of man (which is contrary to all dualistic notions) and on the binding claims of God's law (which is contrary to all antinomian sentiments). This is nothing to be ashamed of. It is the strength of Adventism. Yet early Adventism was marked by gross immaturity. The pioneer generation was not preoccupied with New Testament religion. It was sub-apostolic. It had not matured evangelically. The community was like a spiritual minor. Adventism believed that God had placed a "spiritual gift" within its community in the ministry of Ellen G. White. This "spiritual gift" came to be called the "testimony of Jesus" or the "Spirit of Prophecy" (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). Ellen White's great emphasis was on sanctification. She believed that God had given her the spirit of discernment to rebuke secret sin in the community and to exalt the standard of the law of God. She seemed to equate her ministry with Elijah and John the Baptist.⁹ Even when she called herself "the Lord's messenger,"¹⁰ she seemed to be borrowing the scriptural imagery of a John the Baptist. And like John the Baptist, she called her ministry a "lesser light" to lead to the "greater light."¹¹ Ellen White was (and is) the acknowledged prophet of Adventism. She exercised her prophetic role to amplify,

9. See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), pp. 410-12.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11. Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1953), p. 125; *idem*, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1946), p. 257.

expound and apply the law of God to her community. For this reason, Adventists often speak of her writings as a "magnifying glass," and in a sense this figure of speech is very appropriate.

We should not, however, miss the Adventist point in calling Ellen White's ministry the "testimony of Jesus" or the "Spirit of Prophecy." This has been traditionally regarded as one of the two great identifying marks of the "remnant church." The other identifying mark is the keeping of God's commandments (Rev. 12:17). However, in its zeal to prove that Mrs. White's gift makes it the "remnant church," Adventism has missed the real meaning of the "testimony of Jesus." This recurring Johannine expression is an equivalent for the gospel. Those who bear the "testimony of Jesus" are those who bear witness to Jesus—they preach the gospel. Revelation 14:12 also calls this the "faith of Jesus" (KJV).

Under the new and better ministration of the Spirit, Moses is no longer the administrator to expound, amplify and apply the law of God to the covenantal community. The Spirit, clothed with Christ's gospel, does this far more effectively than Moses could ever do. The gospel is therefore the "magnifying glass" on the law of God. It gives us a new definition of what it means to love and serve God and man. Thus, when Paul expounds Christian duty in his Epistles, he does it in the light of the death-resurrection event.

Since Adventism has called the writings of Ellen White the "testimony of Jesus," Ellen White has become a substitute for the gospel in the Adventist community. Since it has not had the full light of the New Testament gospel to expound, amplify and apply what it means to keep the commandments of God, it has had Ellen White to do this. I do not suggest this in a derogatory sense. Mrs. White performed her function very effectively—but only as a lesser light. Like Moses

or the Torah given to ancient Israel, her ministry was an emergency measure without which Adventism could not have survived (Gal. 3:19-24). Even the imagery of a John the Baptist which surrounds her mission points to her pedagogic function (Gal. 3:24). Her ministry is not the end but the means to the end. The coming of the full light of the New Testament gospel to the Adventist community must therefore mark the end of the Ellen White cult.

For Adventism, Mrs. White has been a spiritual mother in Israel to reprove and advise. Her counsels on every aspect of life, given over a period of seventy years in a massive outpouring of books, letters and articles, have been treasured, gathered and compiled. Unfortunately, this material has often been treated as absolute law. The tendency to use the Bible as a manual on ethics has thus been carried over into Ellen White's writings. Her writings are popularly called the "blueprint." It is believed that the Holy Spirit has given Adventists the "blueprint" school, the "blueprint" diet, the "blueprint" home, the "blueprint" sanitarium, the "blueprint" evangelistic program, the "blueprint" for character building, child training, healthful living and church polity. Nothing of importance has been left out. Adventism has been grateful toward God and prideful toward man for its fortune in possessing an exhaustive "blueprint." This writer has heard Arthur White preach what could be suspected as his favorite sermon on the "Adventists' Advantage."

While Judaism had hundreds of commandments, Adventism has made the writings of Ellen White into a "divine blueprint" with thousands of commandments. In all fairness we should say that, when she counseled someone, Mrs. White rarely advised him to do more than three or four things. But when counsel given over seventy years to countless people is compiled, a single person

cannot possibly cope with it all—especially when the distinction between counsel and absolute law is generally blurred. Yet thousands of conscientious souls accept it all as absolute law. “Helpful” compilations are always adding further detail to the “blueprint,” defining what the believer must become in order to be ready for the coming of Jesus. Few people have read it all. Fewer could remember it all. And without contradiction, none could do it all. But the idea persists that this is what God has commanded His people through Ellen White; this is what He expects; and they will not get “the latter rain,” “seal of God” or be ready to stand in the great day of God unless it is all done. Of course, the “gospel” that it can all be achieved with the aid of God’s Spirit or by the power of His indwelling life is freely proclaimed. Those who preach this “blueprint” religion would be horrified at the suggestion that their message smacks of Judaistic legalism. Theories and techniques on how to overcome (there is supposed to be a “blueprint” on this too) are legion. Adventism staggers under a crushing load, and the burden of guilt on the people is intolerable.

As in the days of Christ, those who sit in Moses’ seat bind burdens on the people which are too heavy to be borne, but they will not lift the burden themselves even with their little finger. Dedicated Adventists are grinding themselves to death under the crushing burden of living up to Ellen White. Too many people are filled with guilt because they cannot do it at all. They are like dried-up old prunes with a distorted view of life, no sense of humor and a bad conscience. Yet the taskmasters who drive them fear nothing so much as the prospect that these poor sheep will hear the gospel of salvation by Christ’s substitution, representation and imputation. I believe the groaning of many people has reached to heaven, and God in His mercy has released upon the com-

munity the mighty winds of the gospel which will blow down these prison walls and let the oppressed go free.

This is not a matter of despising good counsel. Every Adventist knows that Mrs. White gave counsel on education, medical work, the use of medicines, food, tithing, ingathering, country living, child training, evangelism and many other matters. But if people are to retain their spiritual sanity, they must distinguish between counsel and absolute law. Counsel is historically and circumstantially conditioned. If Mrs. White says, “Don’t send your children to a public school,” it must be remembered that this may be good counsel in normal circumstances. But we all know that we are often thrust into abnormal circumstances. To use Mrs. White’s own counsel, “Circumstances alter cases.”¹² Sometimes we may be like Daniel and his companions, who had no choice but to attend the Babylonian school. At times we are thrust into circumstances where we must do the best we can in a bad situation. Instead of being crippled by a bad conscience because we cannot carry out the “Spirit of Prophecy,” it is better to do what Luther counselled the timid Melanchthon—“sin bravely.”

It is useless to ask Adventists in a place like Denmark to practice Mrs. White’s counsel on country living. This is now impossible except for registered farmers. There is no absolute law on when, where and how to send children to school. There is no absolute law on when, how and what to eat. There may be circumstances when failing to preserve life by eating pork or taking a dangerous drug would be a sin against faith and love. The Bible says, “A live dog is better off than a dead lion” (Eccl. 9:4). There is no absolute law on where to live. There is no absolute law on when, where and how to pay tithe. In fact, as far as

12. Ellen G. White, Letter 267, 1905, to G. F. Watson, president of the Colorado Conference (MS No. 109).

the New Testament is concerned, there is no absolute law on tithing at all. Like vegetarianism and total abstinence, tithing may be a good thing. Common sense and the Spirit, who is the Spirit of order, would indicate that normally a church authority should handle tithe. But a Christian is not bound to follow a rule irrespective of the circumstances which prevail. For that matter, Mrs. White herself was quite resourceful and knew how to ignore the rule book when circumstances required. On occasion she did not send her tithe through regular channels but appropriated it for other causes. Moreover, she recommended that others do the same.¹³ She justified breaking the normal rule by saying, "Circumstances alter cases." At another time she said, "Why don't the people use common sense?"¹⁴ The gospel restores to the believer the freedom to act like a person created in the image of God rather than to act like a robot who obeys a mechanical rule. Too often we are motivated by guilt to keep the Sabbath, to pay tithe, to eat the right food, to refrain from wearing jewelry and to try to witness with the *Signs of the Times*. Even the affirmation, "We do this to show our love for Christ," only adds to the burden of guilt. After one brother heard the gospel, he excitedly told others that he was saved by grace and did not have to go out witnessing anymore. Yet he expressed the liberating freedom of the gospel by witnessing in his own creative way.

13. "Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so. I commend those sisters who have placed their tithe where it is most needed to help to do a work that is being left undone" (ibid.).

14. "The Bible Conference of 1919," sec. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History: July 30, 1919," *Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (May 1979), p. 40.

The "blueprint" approach to ethics, which tries to precisely define Christian duty, is always dehumanizing. It may exalt loyalty to principles, but like the religion of the Pharisees, it upholds principles before helping people. No doubt the priest and Levite who walked by the wounded man in Jesus' parable were upholding their religious principles. Jesus was told not to heal on the Sabbath out of respect for religious principles. Maintaining our pharisaical religious principles at the risk of our own life would not be so bad, but we often ill-treat other people in the name of such religious principles.

I was brought up to believe that tea and coffee drinking were sin. After all, Mrs. White said so. One very hot day another student and I were doing some contract work for a farmer during college vacation. He was a gregarious and friendly fellow. My friend and I were way down in a valley eradicating blackberries when we saw him coming with a pail of tea. His wife had prepared it for us, and he had to walk a long way to bring it. But we had to be true to our principles irrespective of what that did to his feelings. There was no way we could accept the poor fellow's hospitality. No doubt he wanted to sit under a gum tree with us and chat. I shall never forget his pained astonishment when we tried to explain that we could not drink the tea with him for religious reasons. Would he have been impressed with our religion? Hardly! I was just too pious for my own good. I put the welfare of my wretched stomach and my stupid religious principles before the welfare of that man. But in reality, the welfare of my stomach was not at stake at all. A simple herbal drink would not have measurably affected my body. I suppose I knew that. Then I must have imputed some moral defilement to an ordinary amoral substance. Why could I not have accepted the proffered hospitality and perhaps tactfully suggested that next time he bring

an even better drink—pure water. But I kept my principles intact and sinned against love.

I still believe in health reform and follow a vegetarian way of life. But I have learned that in some circumstances it would be clearly selfish not to become, as Paul says, “all things to all men.” Adventists generally do not socialize with other people, not even other Christians. Food is no small barrier. People who do not eat together do not become close friends.

It is astonishing to think that the preexistent Christ and His angels could come to this smelly old earth, crawling with sin and filth, and eat a calf that was killed by the hand of Abraham.

I am not suggesting that social demands pose no problems for gastronomical puritans like some of us are. I know that nothing is unclean of itself. Yet I find it as impossible to eat a pig as to eat a dog. Although I am not bound to some practices by cultic religious reasons, I am still inhibited by psychological, hygienic and cultural barriers. I do not mind people having pity on my culture, but I do not want them to have pity on my religion. If I must refrain from an article of food, it will not be for any cultic religious reason. This approach will not discredit my faith among other Christians.

In short, ethics is far more than can be comprehended by any blueprint or book of rules and regulations. If faith and love demand it, we must break all rules and regulations. And if faith and love require it, we should submit to any number of them. To flout a rule or regulation within a community for the sake of the abstract principle of freedom is to fall into the bondage of our own emancipation. Freedom has a twin sister whose name is Responsibility.

19

An Ethic of Forgiveness

A good musician must not only strike the right notes; he must correctly interpret the feeling and spirit of the composer's work as well. It has been said that Beethoven was not troubled if a musician made some technical mistake, but he became angry if the musician misinterpreted the spirit of his composition.

Christian theology is somewhat the same. We should, of course, strive to be theologically and ethically correct, but technical correctness is not nearly as important as a true representation of the spirit of Christianity. The good Samaritan's theology was not as technically correct as the theology of the priest or Levite, but the spirit of his religion was far more in harmony with the spirit of heaven.

The spirit of pharisaical religion was so alien to the spirit of Jesus. The Pharisees magnified things small and minimized things great. It was a religion which caused them to despise others (Luke 18:9, KJV). They could greet each other, but not those who failed to fit their own mold. They did not appreciate that, above

everything else, the spirit of heaven was the spirit of forgiveness. If they had understood the Old Testament, they would have understood that biblical ethics is an ethic of forgiveness. God wanted Israel to be a forgiven community and a forgiving community. The Pharisees were neither.

Many of Jesus' most important parables were directed against the unforgiving spirit of the Pharisees. These included the parable of the unforgiving servant, the prodigal son (or more truly, the parable of the unforgiving elder brother, who is the main character of the story), the two debtors and, of course, the story about the Pharisee and the tax collector. The fact that Jesus forgave sin and fellowshiped with all the wrong people was an offense to the Pharisees. The chief article of the Pharisees' faith certainly was not the forgiveness of sin either in their relationship to God or to others.

If Seventh-day Adventists believe Mrs. White, they should particularly heed those parables directed against the unforgiving spirit of pharisaical religion. According to *Christ's Object Lessons*,¹ the Pharisees represent the Laodicean (or Seventh-day Adventist)² church. The religion of Laodicea is not a religion of forgiveness, and therefore its ethic is not an ethic of forgiveness.

Before we look at this great Laodicean malady any further, let us consider what Luther again and again called the chief article of the Christian faith—the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations, he designated that gospel simply as “repentance and forgiveness of sins . . . in His name” (Luke 24:47). When Jesus gave the cup of the new

1. See Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1941), p. 158.

2. See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), p. 92.

covenant to His disciples, He called it “My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28). The early Christian sermons recorded in Acts had at their heart the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. And such forgiveness was attended by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43, 44). When Paul speaks of redemption, he calls it “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). When John wishes to designate the chief characteristic of the Christian community, he says it is a community which lives by the forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:7-10).

The Apostles' Creed is the greatest of all Christian creeds, yet it sums up the doctrine of salvation in one simple sentence: “I believe in . . . the forgiveness of sins.”³ Its framers obviously believed that this was the chief article of the Christian faith. Luther declared:

If the great, sublime article called the forgiveness of sins is correctly understood, it makes one a genuine Christian and gives one eternal life. This is the very reason why it must be taught in Christendom with unflagging diligence and without ceasing, so that people may learn to understand it plainly, clearly, and discriminatingly. For to do so is the one, supreme, and most difficult task of Christians. As long as we live here below, we shall have enough to do to learn this article. No one need look for anything new, anything higher and better. . . .

To believe in the forgiveness of sins through Christ is the highest article of our faith. . . .

For when this article is gone, the church is gone, and no error can be resisted, because without this article the Holy Spirit neither will nor can be with us. . . .

No article of faith is more difficult to believe than the article which says: I believe the forgiveness of sins. . . .

3. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes* (1877; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 2:45.

I am completely steeped in, and saturated with, the article of the forgiveness of sins.⁴

Adventism generally has not reflected this type of religion. This is not to say that the article of forgiveness of sins is lacking in Adventism, because without it no community would be Christian. In traditional Adventism's theological symphony the note of forgiveness is struck, but it is not a dominant note. The theological symphony does not breathe the spirit of forgiveness. It may have a role, but it is a very subordinate role. When a person attends an Adventist "evangelistic" meeting, for instance, the usual high point is that the pope is the antichrist. (This has been true of Adventist public "evangelism" in Australia for years.) The preoccupation is with Bible prophecy indicating that Rome is bad (Babylon) and Adventism is good (the "remnant"). Saturday is the day for worship for those who wish to avoid the mark of the beast, and vegetarian food is for those who want to be translated. No wonder the church has problems with paranoid people! Such "evangelism" attracts this type of people.

To compensate for the overt legalism in Adventism, preachers proclaim what is called "righteousness by faith." But in traditional Adventism this does not mean the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins (imputed righteousness), as the Reformation understood it to mean. It means forgiveness plus sanctification by inward grace—and mostly the latter. Sanctification subordinates and drastically demeans the grace of forgiveness.⁵ So when traditional Adventism confesses that it is

4. Ewald M. Plass, comp., *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1:514-15, 518, 522.

5. See Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), pp. 13f.

saved by the righteousness of faith or that by this righteousness we stand approved on the day of judgment, it does not mean the righteousness of Jesus' doing and dying alone or the forgiveness of sins alone. It means salvation by a mixture of God's grace and the believer's good character.

Forgiveness of sins is not emphatically denied, but it is "forgiveness for past sins only"—something good and necessary for beginners but not sufficient for the saints. The saints are warned not to rest too heavily on forgiveness but to acquire enough righteousness by inward sanctification to stand in the investigative judgment. The forgiveness of sins is frequently damned with soft praise or qualified with "buts" and "ands" as if a Christian's fellowship with God cannot always be grounded on forgiveness. A prominent exponent of "righteousness by faith" uses an illustration which classically represents the traditionalist mentality. He relates that, when he was a child, he lived in a house with a leaky roof. When it rained, buckets were used to catch the offending water. But one day his father did something better than catching the water in a bucket. He plugged the leaks. Thus, if Adventists will pursue sanctification, they can plug the leaks of sin and dispense with the buckets of forgiveness. Adventist tradition believes that during the final "time of trouble" preceding the Lord's coming, the saints will have no Mediator in the sanctuary and must therefore learn how to live without the forgiveness of sins.

The biblical doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is also denied by traditional Adventism's unbiblical distinction between present forgiveness and a future blotting out of sins in the investigative judgment. God's forgiveness is so qualified, hedged about and threatened by the investigative judgment that it is not biblical forgiveness at all.

The traditional Adventist consciousness is afraid to give the central biblical article of forgiveness full and free utterance lest it undermine Adventism's special emphasis. If forgiveness is proclaimed too forcefully, there is a fear that it will weaken the moral imperative and cause people to become secure and lazy in the sunshine of divine grace.

In 1890 Mrs. White lashed out at those who opposed the justification-by-faith revival. She declared:

The true religion, the only religion of the Bible, that teaches forgiveness only through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, that advocates righteousness by the faith of the Son of God, has been slighted, spoken against, ridiculed, and rejected. It has been denounced as leading to enthusiasm and fanaticism.⁶

Are we still afraid to let the gospel loose in the church? Of course, there is always a risk that some will misuse the gospel and abuse the freedom it announces. But it is the risk that Adventism must now take, or it will perish.

Righteousness by faith means that in this life our fellowship with God always rests entirely on forgiveness. However high we may scale the Alpine heights of holiness, our personal righteousness will fall far short of that unflawed righteousness which the law demands. Apart from the cloud of forgiveness which must cover even the blemishes of his best deeds, the holiest man would be as condemned as the vilest sinner. Righteousness by faith means that, apart from forgiveness, none keep God's law perfectly. In this life we must keep running after grace and begging for this mercy. Luther said that he would need forgiveness more on his last day than on his first day. The only way to walk the road to glory is to be

6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 468.

bowed down with a sense of God's mercy. The only way we can do any work pleasing to God is to do it while living under the heaven of His forgiveness. There is no higher or better faith than the one which never ceases to say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

Rather than weakening the moral imperative, the forgiveness of sins is the mother of all true sanctification. He who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:42-47). The greatest incentive to stop sinning is the fact that God has forgiven us. Thus, Jesus' directive, "Go now and leave your life of sin," is prefaced by His forgiving love—"Neither do I condemn you" (John 8:11). The cross shows us that, while forgiveness is free, it is not cheap. It cost us nothing, but it cost God everything. He who grasps such a forgiveness cannot take sin lightly. Paul's doctrine of justification shows us that forgiveness is not a divine amnesty which sidesteps the law; it is a forgiveness which honors the claims of the law while justifying the repentant sinner (Rom. 3:24-31). Nothing exalts the law so much as the way of divine forgiveness (Rom. 3:31). Ellen White expressed this well when she said, "The absence of devotion, piety, and sanctification of the outer man comes through denying Jesus Christ our righteousness."⁷

A failure to make the article of forgiveness central results in a lack of sanctificational motivation. And an emphasis on sanctification which is not kept subordinate to the forgiveness of sins also produces the wrong kind of sanctification. An ethic removed from the oven of the gospel changes color. It is not an ethic of forgiveness—an ethic saturated with the spirit of forgiveness. It is therefore a religion of Pharisaism, a religion which denounces others ("All other churches are Babylon") and

7. Ellen G. White, MS 36, 1890, in *Review and Herald*, 24 Feb. 1977, p. 1.

exalts self ("We alone constitute the remnant church"). It may place great emphasis on self-discipline and personal piety, but it fails to see that the essence of sanctification is a forgiving spirit.

So far as the teaching of the Bible is concerned, the one who forgives and is merciful to others will never be lost (Matt. 5:7; 6:14; James 2:13). If there is an aspect of sanctification to be prized, therefore, this is surely it. Without such holiness, no one will see God (Heb. 12:14). But a man will never be a forgiving man unless he is a forgiven man. Only he who lives by forgiveness will have a forgiving spirit. Here is justification and sanctification. The reason why Laodicea is not a forgiving community is because it is not a forgiven community. It is like the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray. He only offered a thank offering for his supposed righteousness. He did not ask for mercy, and he had none to give the poor tax collector.

Years ago Mrs. White complained, "The persecution that is carried on among church members is a most terrible thing."⁸ Adventism tends to be notoriously lacking in patience and tolerance toward those who deviate in any way from the good old tradition. When Richard Hammill told *Christianity Today*, "The church has a history of being gentle with its creative people,"⁹ he certainly gave some of those creative people a hearty laugh.

The glory of the Christian community, declared Luther, is that it is full of the forgiveness of sins. If Adventism would stop damning this chief article of the Christian faith with soft praise, it might become a forgiving community. We desperately need an ethic of forgiveness. It would be better to stand in the judgment with pork in

8. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 186.

9. Edward E. Plowman, "The Shaking Up of Adventism?" *Christianity Today*, 8 Feb. 1980, p. 64.

our stomachs and forgiveness in our hearts than to stand in the judgment with soybeans in our stomachs and no forgiveness in our hearts. If our religion does not help us to be merciful and tolerant toward those who do not precisely fit our little religious ghetto, we have missed the entire spirit of biblical religion.

Section V

The Gospel and the Church

20

The New Testament Idea of the Church

The gospel—or lack of it—always determines the kind of religious community any people will form. When the apostolic gospel broke upon Judaism, it inevitably revolutionized that covenantal community. It was no longer a cult withdrawn from the world but a movement going out into the world. It was no longer a priestly hierarchy but a brotherhood. It was no longer a venerated religious establishment but a vibrant missionary movement.

The New Testament word generally translated “church” means an *assembly*. Like most great New Testament words, it has an Old Testament background. The assembly of the covenantal community before God at Sinai constituted the church of the Old Testament (Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 10:4). In the New Testament the church is the assembly of those who have been gathered by the call of the gospel and the Holy Spirit into the new-covenant community.

The New Testament more frequently uses other terms to describe the reality of the church. (Ten New Testament books do not even use the word *church* at all.) The assembly of Christians is called the saints, the sanctified, believers, disciples, servants, witnesses, the people of God, the temple, the household or family of God, the brotherhood, the bride of Christ, the vineyard, the flock and, perhaps most significantly of all, the body of Christ.

The New Testament views the church in two different ways—as the universal company of all true Christians and as the local assembly of believers. The company of all true Christians is often called the universal (catholic) or invisible church. The church in this sense consists of all those who believe in Christ. It is the universal assembly of all those whose sins have been forgiven. Augustus Strong defines it as “the whole company of regenerate persons in all times and ages, in heaven and on earth (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:22, 23; 3:10; 5:24, 25; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23).”¹ Ellen White obviously uses the word *church* in this sense when she says, “From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth.”² Francis Pieper says:

The Christian Church is composed of all those, and only those, in whom the Holy Spirit has worked the faith that for the sake of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction their sins are forgiven.

Nothing else makes one a member of the Church: neither holding membership in a church body, nor outward use of the means of grace, nor profession of the Christian faith, nor filling an office in the Church, nor zeal for a moral life in imitation of Christ, nor any immediate

1. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (1907; reprint ed., Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1974), p. 887.

2. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 11.

regeneration or submergence in God of which the “enthusiasts” of all shades talk. Only personal faith in the forgiveness of sins which was purchased by Christ’s *satisfactio vicaria* and is proclaimed and dispensed in the Gospel makes one a member of the Christian Church. Acts 5:14 tells us that believers in the Lord were added, προσετίθεντο πιστεύοντες τῷ Κυρίῳ, namely, to the Christian church at Jerusalem. Nothing but that by which man comes to Christ and is justified before God, by which he enters into the communion of God’s grace and becomes a child of God, that is, nothing but faith in the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24), makes man a member of the Christian Church.³

This is why Luther could say that the article of justification by faith “begets, nourishes, sustains, keeps, and defends the Church; and without it the Church of God could not subsist an hour.”⁴ Hermann Sasse says:

For the church does not live by morals, by the knowledge and observance of God’s law. Nor does it live by religion, by lofty experiences of the divine and an awareness of the mysteries of God. It lives solely by the forgiveness of sins.⁵

No wicked, unregenerate, unbelieving person is a member of this general assembly. But anyone who believes the gospel may not be denied membership in the Christian church. “Of him who rejects the Gospel, membership in the Christian Church may not be asserted. Excommunication pronounced against true be-

3. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:397.

4. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 398.

5. Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith* (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), p. 69.

lievers does not deprive them of membership in the Church."⁶

The New Testament also speaks of the church in the sense of the local assembly or local fellowship of believers.⁷ It is here that the universal, invisible church becomes visible. The existence of a local congregation which elects officers, appoints a ministry and disciplines its members is of divine arrangement and is mandatory. While it is biblical to insist that there is no salvation outside the Christian church, it is unbiblical to insist that there is no salvation outside a visible church.

Accordingly, he who restricts salvation to fellowship with any visible Church therewith overthrows the article of the justification of a poor sinner in the sight of God by faith alone in Jesus Christ.⁸

Whether the New Testament term "church" is applied to the universal invisible assembly or to the local visible assembly, it always designates a congregation or a community. The term is never applied to any organizational apparatus, ecclesiastic institution, or governing synod or conference. Neither does the New Testament call any building the "church" or the "house of God," as we often do today. When the New Testament speaks of the "building" or "house of God," it means the living congregation (Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 3:6; 1 Peter 2:4, 5). No denomination can be called the "church" in a scriptural sense. A Christian must (and does) have membership in the universal church, and he should (normally) have participating membership in a local assembly of believers. There is no biblical command to belong to any denomina-

6. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:399.

7. The New English Bible quite correctly substitutes the word "congregation" for "church" in Matthew 18:17.

8. C. F. W. Walther, quoted in Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:425.

tion. Local churches may by common consent unite in a synod or conference of churches, but there is no definite command for this in the Word of God. The power and responsibility to discipline members, to establish an ordained ministry and to elect elders and deacons resides with the local assembly.

The Christian Church has no authority to ordain any article of faith, never has ordained and never will ordain one. The Church of God has no power to enact any precept as to good works, never has done it, never will do it. All articles of faith are fully established in Holy Writ, so that there is no need of ordaining even one more. All precepts of good works are fully prescribed in Holy Writ, so that there is no need of appointing even one more.⁹

Christ has commissioned neither some one person (Pope, princes, governors, presidents, etc.), nor a college of persons (bishops, pastors, board of directors, consistories, parliaments, conferences, synods, councils, etc.) to decide and ordain ecclesiastical matters for the Church in any way binding the conscience. When the Papacy demands recognition as *iure divino* the supreme binding authority in the whole Christian Church ("the supreme power delivered to the Sovereign Pontiffs in the universal Church," Waterworth, p. 101), it displays one of the marks which identify the Papacy as the Antichrist prophesied in Scripture. When the civil government, whether an autocracy, a monarchy, a democracy, or of whatever form, claims a *ius circa sacra sive in sacra*, we call it Caesaropapism. In general, when the power to make binding decisions and laws in the Church is said to inhere in any body of men, be they ecclesiastics or laymen or a mixed board, this is not a Christian, but a Papistic or Caesaropapistic position, because in the Christian Church God's Word is the only authority and all Christians are and remain responsible directly to God for all they believe and do.

9. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:430-31.

Of course, the Church is free to take care of some things through representatives chosen by it for this purpose. Thus the elders or the church council can represent a congregation, and conferences, synods, councils, etc., can represent other Christians and small or large groups of congregations. But if we ask what authority or power these representatives, these *ecclesiae representativae*, have, the answer is: With respect to the congregation and the individual Christians they always have only advisory power. [The *Handbook of The Lutheran Church*—Missouri Synod, 1949, Art. VII, says of the relation of Synod to the congregations: "In its relation to its members Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned."] The order that obtains in the Christian Church is this: If the question at issue pertains to matters taught and decided in God's Word, the Christian position is that no man and no assembly of men, no matter how learned and renowned they may be, can decide for a Christian what is Scriptural doctrine. This matter every single Christian must decide for himself on the basis of the clear, infallible Word of God.

Let us hear Luther on this subject. He comments on 1 Pet. 3:15 ("Be ready always to give an answer to every man"): "St. Peter spoke these words to all Christians, pastors, laymen, men, women, young, old, and of whatever state they may be; hence every Christian should know the foundation and reason of his faith and be able to give his reason and, when called upon, to answer. . . .

Again Luther writes: "Human authorities and teachers have decreed and ordained that the judging of doctrine should be restricted to the bishops and learned and councils; whatever they resolved, all the world should regard as canonical and as articles of faith. . . . Christ takes the opposite stand, denies to bishops, learned, and councils both authority and power to judge the doctrine and in-

stead gives it to each individual Christian and all of them collectively when He says, John 10:4: 'My sheep know My voice,' likewise v. 5: 'A stranger will My sheep not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.' Here you certainly see clearly whose is the right to judge of the doctrine. Bishops, Pope, the learned, and everyone has power to teach, but the sheep are to judge whether they teach the voice of Christ or the voice of strangers. . . . Therefore we let the bishops and councils resolve and decree what they will; but where we have God's Word before us, it is for us to decide, and not for them, whether their teaching is right or wrong; and they shall let us rule and shall obey our word." (St. L. X:1540.)

. . . .
The doctrine, which unfortunately intruded also into the Lutheran Church, that in discussions of doctrine the laymen may listen and ask questions, but not judge and vote, is a bald Papistic outrage. [Luther takes a very determined stand against this abomination. He says: "To judge and to decide in matters of doctrine is the prerogative of absolutely all Christians, and so much so that he is accursed who infringes on this right by a hairbreadth."] Advocates of this doctrine *eo ipso* manifest that they have lost all understanding and judgment in regard to the Christian Church and the prerogatives of the Christians.¹⁰

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 427-29, 434.

21

The Roman Catholic Idea of the Church

The Roman Catholic concept of the church is simply the extension of its view of the way God saves men. When the believer's regeneration was mixed with the forensic righteousness of faith, it was inevitable that human tradition should be mixed with the Bible and that faith in the church should be mixed with faith in Christ. Every problem in the church stems from its neglect of the gospel.

In the second century the concept of the church became increasingly associated with the external institution and the rule of the bishops. The institution or external organization tended to assume all the functions of the church until the cultic organization itself became identified with the church. The church was conceived of as the organization rather than as the community.

This identification of the church with the external organization was paralleled by the development of a hierarchical church government. The local assembly lost the

privilege and responsibility of self-government. The ministry was ordained and appointed by the superior hierarchy rather than by the local assembly. All matters of faith were likewise decided by the ecclesiastical elite, and the central church government assumed the right to decree laws binding on the local assemblies and on the consciences of individual Christians. The ministry belonged to the hierarchal caste which ruled the congregation.

In the Roman Catholic concept the church is said to consist of the *ecclesia docens* (those who rule and teach) and the *ecclesia audiens* (those who hear and obey). But the *ecclesia audiens* is only regarded as part of the church insofar as it submits to the ruling hierarchy. In the final analysis, the hierarchy is the church, and people remain in this church only so long as they submit to the office of the papacy. The church was therefore restricted to the cultic organization. It ceased to be truly catholic.

A wide gulf separated the clergy from the laity. The clergy ruled. The laity had no voice in the government of the church or in judging articles of faith. The ministry were not *in* the congregation but *above* the congregation.

This institution inevitably became an arrogant, triumphalistic religious establishment. What it could not institutionalize, it destroyed. Absorbing all the activities of the church into itself, it stifled the prophetic spirit because it tried to be both "priest and prophet." It could brook no rival and demanded total submission of everyone to the hierarchy. It opposed the gospel for the simple reason that (as one church historian put it) "a triumphalistic ecclesiology and the gospel are never compatible." It therefore became unrepentable and unreformable—a proud, persecuting, bloodthirsty church.

22

The Reformation Idea of the Church

Luther did not consciously set out to reform the church. Others before him tried to do this but were unsuccessful.

How often has the church been reformed "according to God's Word"! How often have rules been culled from the Scriptures in the belief that God willed that His church should be organized and governed, that the life of the congregation and of its members should be regulated and fixed, according to these rules! How very different these rules have been! Episcopal or presbyterian or congregational polities have been esteemed as divinely ordained and have been read out of the New Testament. How often has the attempt been made to reestablish the pure church of the New Testament! How differently were the ideals conceived, and how pitifully did the efforts to realize them end! The Lutheran Reformation, in the first instance, has nothing whatsoever to do with all these attempts at reform. For the Lutheran Reformation, in its essential nature, is nothing else than a *rediscovery of the Gospel*. . . .

Consequently, this discovery constitutes the reformation of the church. It revealed once again that truth by which alone the church lives.¹

The Roman Catholic concept of the church was the inevitable extension of Catholicism's perversion of the gospel. It was the fruit of its understanding of how God saves man. It lost the New Testament understanding that salvation by grace means salvation by undeserved kindness—that is to say, the free acceptance of unacceptable people. Instead, it conceived of grace as a supernatural transforming power which renders men pleasing to God. And as C. Cyril Eastwood pointed out, "When grace is thought of as a supernatural transforming power, it is necessary to believe in a hierarchy which possesses this authority and power [in the sacraments]."²

The rediscovery of the gospel not only revolutionized the understanding of how God saves men, but the understanding of the church as well. The Roman doctrine of the church was seen as a perversion of the biblical message of justification by faith alone. The Reformers declared that the church is created by the preaching of the gospel. Said Luther, "Where the word is, there is faith; and where faith is, there is the true church."³ The Augsburg Confession (1530) also declared, "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."⁴

1. Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith* (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), p. 69.

2. C. Cyril Eastwood, "Luther's Conception of the Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2, no. 1 (Mar. 1958): 24.

3. Quoted in P. D. L. Avis, "'The True Church' in Reformation Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30, no. 4 (1977): 323.

4. Augsburg Confession, "Article VII: Of the Church," *Concordia, or Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Ev. Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 13.

Whereas in Romanism the church was essentially the hierarchal organization, with the Reformers the church was essentially a community. Whereas in the Roman system the authority to rule and teach was vested in the hierarchy, in Protestantism it was vested in the priesthood of all believers. Luther declared that all believers alike have the authority to preach, baptize, administer the Supper and judge doctrines. It was for the sake of order in the church that all did not exercise the office of the public ministry or administer the sacraments. But the priesthood of all believers in the local congregation were to elect one of their own to the ministry. He would therefore function as a minister in the congregation and not as a minister above the congregation. If the minister (or bishop) did not preach the gospel, the congregation must either depose him or remove themselves from his ministry. This was Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

Whereas the Roman papacy had reserved for itself the right to interpret the Scriptures for the people, the Reformation gave the Bible to all the people and declared that every believer must study the Scriptures for himself and, by the aid of the Holy Spirit and in counsel with the body of believers, determine what the true faith is.

Luther restored the idea of the servant nature of the church. It was no longer to be the proud, triumphalistic church which demanded submission, but the poor, suffering church which wielded no power but the power of the gospel.

If the Reformation has done nothing else, it has clarified what is perhaps the most important theological question in this or in any other age. *Do we find the truth by submitting to the church, or do we find the church by submitting to the truth?* Rome defends the first possibility, while the Reformers defend the second. But a choice *must*

be made; the option is forced. Rome contends that the truth is where the church is, while the Reformers contend that the church is where the truth is.

If Rome is right, we have only one course before us, and that is to recant our Reformation heritage and return with haste to the papal fold.⁵

5. Edward J. Carnell, *The Case for Biblical Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 26.

23

The Adventist Idea of the Church

In many respects, the traditional Adventist idea of the church is remarkably like the Roman Catholic idea of the church. The two systems are astonishingly alike. This should not really surprise us when we realize that ecclesiology is an extension of soteriology. That is to say, any group's doctrine of the church will be determined by its view of how God saves men. A sound doctrine of the church presupposes a sound doctrine of justification by faith. If a group is astray on justification, it will be astray on its understanding of the church. As Francis Pieper says: "The doctrine of the Church is of such a nature that if a person erred earlier, all his doctrinal errors will reappear in his teaching concerning the Church."¹

1. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:402.

In his book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, Geoffrey J. Paxton showed that much of traditional Adventist soteriology is more in harmony with Romanism than with Protestantism.² For instance, calling the inward work of sanctification righteousness by faith is clearly a Roman Catholic position. A Roman-like soteriology will be reflected in a Roman-like ecclesiology.³ A number of the features of Adventist ecclesiology resemble the Roman system:

Hierarchism

A hierarchy is an "organized body of persons, especially sacred persons, graded so that those of each rank control or direct those below them."⁴ In a hierarchy the government of the church is in the hands of a ruling body of ecclesiastics instead of the priesthood of all believers.

In a civil case before the California courts,⁵ the General Conference president testified that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a hierarchal church and that he was its "first minister." When this claim was challenged in court, the church leadership went on to say:

Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and

2. See Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (1977; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978).

3. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 2, *Human Destiny* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 105.

4. *The Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Henry C. Wyld (London: Amalgamated Press), p. 549.

5. Merikay Silver versus the Pacific Press Publishing Association, Filed January 31, 1973, Civil Action #C-73, 0168 CBR. See *Spectrum* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 45.

the term "hierarchy" was used in a pejorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the Church's part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread antipope among conservative protestant denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned.⁶

It was the view of the Reformation that the means of grace (the Word and sacraments) were given to the assembly of believers and not to a governing hierarchy. Accordingly, the assembly of believers had the authority to appoint one of their number to the public ministry on their behalf.

Francis Pieper expresses the Lutheran position when he says, "To them [the assembly of believers], and to nobody else, is the authority given to appoint pastors."⁷ The Lutheran view is that local churches may voluntarily unite in a synod or conference. The synod or conference may act for the local assembly in certain matters, but the power of such synods or conferences is "only advisory power."⁸ Augustus Strong, a Reformed Baptist, says that "no ecclesiastical authority higher than that of the local church is recognized in the New Testament."⁹ He also says that the idea that all local churches must be subject to some supreme authority is

6. U. S. District Court, Northern District of California, Reply Brief for Defendants in Support of Their Motion for Summary Judgment, March 3, 1975, *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission et al., Plaintiff, vs. Pacific Press Publishing Association et al., Defendants*, Civ. No. 74-2025 CBR, p. 4. For a review of this litigation and a further reference to Adventist hierarchism, see Tom Dybdahl, "Court Verdict on Pacific Press Case," *Spectrum* 11, no. 1 (July 1980): 14-17.

7. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:413.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 433.

9. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (1907; reprint ed., Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1974), p. 920.

the Romanist view of church government.¹⁰ The Reformers generally maintained that a minister not appointed by the local congregation is not a minister after the biblical order.

In the Adventist situation the minister is appointed by the conference administration. He is not elected by the assembly of believers. Technically, the local church has the right of consent, but even this has generally become a formality rather than a real congregational option. This means that the minister represents the hierarchy and feels responsible to it rather than representing and feeling responsible to the priesthood of all believers. This tends to place the minister above the congregation rather than in the congregation.

Adventism affirms the principle of the priesthood of all believers in the matter of disciplining church members. But even here the Reformation principles exist more in theory than in actual practice. The hierarchy often has its officials preside in local church meetings when the membership of certain persons is called into question. In fact, the hierarchy may well be responsible for initiating such action. It may warn the local church that, unless it takes appropriate disciplinary action, the entire church may find itself severed from the denomination.

The principle of the priesthood of all believers has not been nourished and therefore has never flourished in Adventism. After the 1975 General Conference session in Vienna, *Spectrum* showed that lay people have less voice in the actual operation of the Adventist church than in any other recognized Protestant denomination.¹¹

10. See *ibid.*, p. 908.

11. See Alvin L. Kwiram, "How the General Conference Election Works," *Spectrum* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 17-22. See also note by Roberta J. Moore in the same article (p. 19).

There are occasional efforts to involve lay people in programs of the church, but these are more in the nature of a token or patronizing gesture.

Institutionalism

With its gift of strong organization, Adventism has become a strong institutional church. It has more impressive institutions in relation to the size of its actual membership than most denominations. Without detracting from the good accomplished by fine institutions, we need to acknowledge some of the dangerous tendencies in Adventist institutionalism.

In the first place, the same identification of the organization with the church which marked the development of the Roman Catholic system has to a large extent taken place in Adventism. That is to say, the church is regarded as the organization rather than the community. In the Protestant principle, however, the organization is not a church.

Adventism began as a movement. In its Millerite phase it was a dynamic movement. Anyone who argues that a movement cannot effectively function without a strong hierarchal government should consider that institutionalism was scarcely evident in the most dynamic phase of Adventism. The movement also enjoyed greater unity and harmony than has existed since. As Adventism has become more and more institutionalized, the spirit of the movement has been stifled. The hierarchal institution has tended to assume control over all aspects of the church's life. It is only natural, therefore, that in popular Adventist parlance the omnipresent organization should be called "the church." What it cannot absorb into itself or bring under its control it tries to destroy. It stifles the prophetic spirit since it tries to be

both "priest" and "prophet." The theology of the church is controlled by the governing hierarchy. Adventism has largely become a right-wing conservative establishment rather than a movement. A movement depends on the dynamic expression of a prophetic spirit. Thus, a religious establishment and a movement are not compatible.

Institutionalism does not always encourage the aggressive missionary spirit of a movement. Instead of reaching out to the world, institutionalism concentrates the faithful in large religious centers. North American Adventism, for instance, is largely confined to a few large Adventist "ghettos" which cluster around Adventist institutions. Nearly all the money and talent is drained from the little churches and conveyed to these centers, while many little churches are impoverished and ready to die. Adventists are born, married, employed and buried in their religious ghettos. They may even be delivered into the world by an Adventist doctor, educated by Adventist teachers, employed by an Adventist institution or para-institution, fed by special Adventist food products and finally buried by an Adventist undertaker. Some venture out during the working day to earn their daily bread, but creep back into the security of their holy city at night. These Adventist centers are a world within the world, where Adventists live, move and have their being. Here they find not only their religious life, but their social life, their educational life and very often their vocational life.

Rather than facing the problem of raising children in a hostile world, many Adventist families move to one of these Adventist meccas. Here their children grow up in an Adventist world. This offers attractive advantages to Adventist people, but the insulation of an Adventist community is not an unmitigated blessing. Institu-

tionalism breeds isolationism. And isolationism results in stagnation and inbreeding.

In the religious ghetto the Adventist is not only isolated from the pagan world; he is isolated from the rest of the Christian community. Adventists have far too little vital exchange with other Christians. For most Adventists, their denomination is not just *a* church but *the* church, and they rarely think of the church in a wider sense than their own group. Consequently, all theological discussions and controversies tend to involve matters which only concern Adventists. Theology therefore tends to become more and more esoteric and less and less relevant to anyone outside the cult.

Even nature teaches us that inbreeding tends to produce genetic monstrosities. A recent Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly on last-day events represents the spiritual inbreeding which has led to an embarrassing exhibition of esoteric Adventist paranoia. Hopefully, few non-Adventists saw this rehearsal of the coming eschatological drama in which Adventism occupies the center stage while the rest of the world, including the deceived Christian church, is arrayed in violent confrontation with the flaming Adventist messengers.¹²

Isolationism also leads to stagnation. The greatest nations and cultures have never developed in isolation. For centuries, Western Europe dominated civilization because it enjoyed the stimulation and cross-fertilization which come from the clashing and integration of many cultures. The United States has been a melting pot of many nationalities, ideas and cultures. This has brought problems and created tensions, but it has made a greater nation.

12. See Fernando Chaij, *Be Ready!* Adult Sabbath School Lesson, No. 336, April-June 1979 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1979).

We do not dispute the necessity for a religious group to preserve its distinctive identity. But without the challenge of adequate interchange with the rest of the Christian church, that group will be impoverished and dwarfed. No person or nation can live to itself. Traditional Adventism displays the attitude of Laodicea far too much—"I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing" (Rev. 3:17). For too long traditional Adventism has fostered the attitude which says, "We have the truth. All other Christian churches are Babylon. They have nothing to teach us." When a group feels that no other branch of the Christian church can contribute to its enrichment, then that group can make no contribution to the rest of the Christian church. Rather, let us be thankful for those creative people and for the prophetic spirits who disturb us. Surely this is better than enjoying the peace of the cemetery.

Institutionalism is also associated with another crippling tendency. This is the development of a top-heavy, nonproductive, resource-consuming bureaucracy. Religious institutions are not immune to the tendency to become self-perpetuating bureaucracies whose primary concern is their own safety, aggrandizement and glory. As the bureaucracy expands, more and more of the church's resources are consumed by administration, and very little actually reaches the "front lines." We should remember that Jonathan and his armorbearer once accomplished more fighting and inflicted more losses on the enemy than Saul's entire military establishment.

Of course, nations cannot dispense with military establishments, and denominations cannot do without religious bureaucracies. But something needs to disturb a system choked with unproductive bureaucratic drones. There is nothing particularly sacred about an organization. It should only be an instrument which a community uses to unite its efforts, to prevent wasteful duplication

and to promote more efficient returns. It should only be a "servant" which exists for the benefit of the community. In Adventism, however, the vast proportion of the resources are merely feeding a self-perpetuating bureaucracy. Only a trickle of the resources ever supports productive missionary work.

Authoritarianism

The Adventist community is ruled by an authoritarian hierarchy that demands a loyalty from the people which no denomination has a right to demand and no other genuine Protestant community would tolerate. An authoritarian view of the church is promoted by a selective use of Ellen White statements while ignoring her counsel against the abuse of ecclesiastical authority.

Who could deny that Adventism exhibits the same wide gulf between the clergy and laity which developed in the history of the Catholic Church? The clergy are not ministers *in* the congregation but ministers *above* the congregation. They are generally (thank God for the exceptions) not the servant representatives of the local assembly in which they preside, because they are not appointed by and are not under the authority of the priesthood of believers. They are sent into the local assemblies as representatives of the hierarchy. They are appointed by it and are answerable only to it. Sometimes it seems that everything possible is done to promote and preserve a wide gulf between the clergy and the laity.

For the most part, Adventism is now a religious establishment, not a movement. A virile movement fosters and encourages creative people and nourishes the "prophetic spirit." Such people are sometimes disturbingly innovative and perhaps even difficult to live with at times. But while traditional Adventism may piously

recite Ellen White's ideal that education should produce thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men's thought, the system does not easily tolerate those who will not merge into the dull gray of mediocrity and conformity.

I suppose it is only natural that Israel should continue opposing the prophetic spirits—the false ones as well as the true ones. And since there are many false ones, authoritarianism accomplishes a worthwhile service. But the truth lives because it cannot die. The more severely it is beaten and crucified, the more gloriously it will demonstrate that it is the truth. Like Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*, it ever pursues us with "unhurrying chase, and unperturbèd pace."¹³ Authoritarianism is useful in that it pours water over the sacrifice and thereby adds luster to the miracle of the unquenchable fire of the truth. We should therefore never be spitefully angry or peevishly frustrated by religious authoritarianism. It is the inevitable expression of human nature.

All human institutions—political, economic, educational, social and religious—gravitate in the same direction and tend to the same end. The same tendency will be operative in any organization, no matter how lofty its aims and objectives or how glorious its beginning. Some of the pioneers sensed this and were therefore reluctant to begin another religious organization. They expressed the fear that it might go the way of all such organizations and eventually exhibit the persecuting spirit of the papacy. Although their fears were justified, they were not right in opposing organization. The situation is much like parents deciding to bring children into the world. Inevitably the children will be sinful. But the parents take the risk anyway and trust in God's merciful

13. Quoted in Burton Stevenson, *The Home Book of Quotations: Classical and Modern*, 10th ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1967), p. 794.

intervention. That too is our hope. God, not man, has the last word.

Triumphalism

Traditional Adventism thinks of its denomination not merely as "a church" but as "the church." It makes claims for its denomination that no Protestant church has ever made or ever could make.

Traditional Adventism claims that this denomination is the only true church. All other churches are "Babylon." Therefore, the Adventist denomination is the only legitimate visible church in all the world. Such claims have only been made by cults—and of course, Rome is the greatest cult of all.

Traditional Adventism identifies its denomination with the biblical remnant. The main proof texts for this claim are Revelation 12:17 and 19:10. It is therefore said that the remnant must keep all ten commandments and have a prophet. Given these criteria, Adventism *alone* qualifies as "the remnant church."

The remnant, however, first appears as an Old Testament concept. The remnant is the line of the faithful. In salvation history this line narrows until it becomes one Person. Jesus Christ alone qualifies as the faithful Servant of Yahweh. He is the Branch, the Elect, the Righteous One and the Remnant. He is also the Church—for He is its Head, and as Calvin pointed out, a body cannot be known by looking at its feet. It is only as sinners are incorporated into Christ by saving faith that they are included in the Branch, the Elect, the Righteous, the Church or the Remnant. It is manifestly absurd to suggest that one could be "in Christ" and not among the elect, the righteous or the remnant.

New Testament Christians saw themselves as the eschatological remnant by virtue of their faith-union with Christ. So Paul declared, "At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:5). Paul then shows that this claim to belong to the remnant gives no sanction for arrogance: "You stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid" (Rom. 11:20). Faith alone in the gospel made the Gentiles part of the end-time remnant. The Jews had the Ten Commandments, kept the Sabbath and boasted the possession of more than one prophet. Yet they were excluded from the remnant because they rebelled against the gospel.

The Johannine expression "testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17) is an equivalent for the gospel (see Rev. 1:2, 5, 9; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3, 7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 22:16; 22:20; cf. Luke 24:48; John 15:26, 27; Acts 1:8; 2:32; 5:32; 22:18; 1 Cor. 1:6; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:8). To hold the testimony of Jesus means to bear witness that He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and that we are saved by faith in His righteousness alone. This is the spirit of all prophecy (see Rev. 19:10; cf. John 5:39; Acts 10:43; 1 Peter 1:10, 11). It would be tragic to arrogantly claim to be the remnant church while resisting that which alone makes anyone a part of the remnant—the gospel of Christ or, as John calls it, the testimony of Jesus.

Traditional Adventism claims that its denomination is "the last church." It is confident that no other organization could ever take its place as the only true church. It opposes the idea of "unconditional election" for individuals but seems to believe in an "unconditional election" for its denomination.

It is very difficult to relate this claim of being "the last church" to any biblical category of thought. The Bible never uses the word *church* to designate a religious organization, for the church is a community. As for "the last church," the New Testament speaks of Christ as

"the last Adam" and the apostolic age as "the last days" (1 Cor. 15:45; Heb. 1:2; 9:26). Since Jesus promised that He would be with the church which He founded until the end and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it, we can safely conclude that it was "the last church." To identify "the last church" with an external religious organization or denomination is to move out of the world of biblical thought altogether.

The Bible presents no precise rules on forming a church organization. It only commands order in the church. Reading a particular form of church organization back into the Bible is wishful thinking. Except for a few principles, God has left the community of believers to adopt a form of organization which may best suit its historical and cultural situation. There is nothing sacrosanct about a particular form of organization. The community is free to modify, change or even bury it in favor of another as the need may arise.

Traditional Adventism is fond of quoting Ellen White's statement that "the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard."¹⁴ This entire section of *Testimonies to Ministers*, including the above words, is a literary borrowing from the Protestant author, John Harris.¹⁵ It is an excellent statement on the church. Harris, however, was not talking about the Adventist denomination but about the Christian church in the biblical sense of the term. Traditional Adventism takes this beautiful concept of God's supreme regard for

14. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 15.

15. "But the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is that only object on earth on which he bestows his supreme regard" (John Harris, *The Great Teacher: Characteristics of Our Lord's Ministry*, 17th American ed. [Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1870], p. 160).

His church and applies it to the external religious institution.

When the Bible declares that Christ gave His life for the church, it does not mean that He died for an ecclesiastical structure. To confuse the church with the ecclesiastical structure is nothing short of tragic.

Traditional Adventism comes very close to the Roman Catholic idea of restricting salvation to its own fold. Just as Rome today acknowledges that there are true Christians ("separated brethren") outside its fold, so Adventism acknowledges that God has true children ("honest in heart") scattered through the different religious bodies. Before the end comes, however, it is said that all who will be saved must leave these other religious bodies and join the Adventist fold. On the premise that the Adventist Church is the "remnant" and that the Bible says there is salvation only in the remnant (Joel 2:32, KJV), what other conclusion is possible?

An indulgence is presently granted "outsiders" who have not heard the Adventist message. No such indulgence, however, is granted Adventists who fail to submit to the ecclesiastical system. For Adventists, salvation is not by faith only but by grace plus loyalty to the denomination. It has been claimed that, if the church excommunicates a person, his name is automatically removed from the book of life. Such control over the book of life is identical with Rome's triumphalistic claims.

Traditional Adventism declares that its denomination alone bears the last message of mercy to the world. Preaching the gospel to all the world so that Christ may come means preaching the Adventist version of the "gospel" to the world. It is popularly believed that all other churches are wrong and that the Adventist Church alone is right. This is implicit in its Babylon-Remnant concept. The typical church member lives securely in his religious ghetto, rarely reading anything but Adventist

literature. He is confident that he has arrived at the holy city of truth, while all other Christians who are ignorant of the "special truths" for these last days remain outside. Of course, many informed people in the Advent movement know better. They realize that theological courses in Adventist schools are dependent on non-Adventist books.

The triumphalism of traditional Adventism is reinforced by constant drumming on such themes as the identifying marks of the remnant church. Again and again the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterlies and the *Adventist Review* marshal proof-text evidence to prove that the Adventist denomination alone is the remnant, the last and only true church. If only as much effort were expended in identifying the true gospel! Calvin aptly commented that you cannot know a body by looking at its feet but only by looking at its head. Christ is the Head of the church, and the only way to know the church is to know its Head.

Traditional Adventism sees itself in the center of the final eschatological drama. It directly, even exclusively, applies many of the prophecies to itself. It alone gives the last message of mercy. It alone will compose the 144,000. It alone vindicates God's character in its eschatological condition of perfection. It will bear the brunt of the dragon's wrath. The entire Christian church will persecute the Adventists. Eventually, all Sunday keepers will be driven by a consuming passion to persecute Adventists. In the "time of trouble" the rest of the world, especially other Christians, will pursue the Adventist saints, who are hiding in the hills. Adventists take this view of the imminent future very seriously.

In 1957 a German Lutheran, Kurt Hutten, published the book, *Die Glaubenswelt des Sektierers* (The Faith

World of the Sectarian),¹⁶ which described the mentality of sectarian groups. In the Appendix of his book, *The Four Major Cults*, Anthony A. Hoekema has summarized Kurt Hutten's perceptive description of the mentality of sectarian groups. Hoekema's final point is striking:

The last distinctive trait of the cult I would like to mention is this: the cult plays a central role in the eschatological climax of history. The cult is convinced that it has been called into existence by God for the purpose of filling in some gap in the truth which has been neglected by the ordinary churches. The birth of the cult thus marks the final climax of sacred history, the beginning of the latter days. Eschatology thus plays a determinative role in the theology of the cult: it becomes the arena in which the glorification of the cult will complete itself. The cult is therefore the messenger and way-preparer for the imminent return of Christ; it is God's partner in the drama of the end-time; it is the ark of safety for the coming flood; it is the instrument of divine judgment on unbelievers; it shall finally triumph in the sight of all the world as the group particularly favored by God.

This type of procedure Hutten calls a cultic perversion of Biblical eschatology. Whenever the cult has developed an eschatology, he continues, it places itself in the very center of it. The drama of the last things thus becomes the means whereby the cult is glorified and all its enemies are overwhelmingly defeated. Though the cult may now be small and insignificant, when the final climax of history arrives, it will receive from God the place of honor it deserves as a reward for its faithfulness to His commandments. The antithesis between God and Satan which has run through history will in the last days reach its climax as an antithesis between the cult and the rest of mankind, particularly the church.¹⁷

16. Kurt Hutten, *Die Glaubenswelt des Sektierers* (Hamburg: Furche, 1957).

17. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 385-86.

An irony of the nineteenth-century situation should not be overlooked. While nineteenth-century Adventists often emphasized their coming persecution by Catholics, the Catholics were virtually the only group in America who were actually persecuted.¹⁸

Ecclesiolatry

Ecclesiolatry and the spirit of Protestantism are inimical. Says Robert McAfee Brown:

The earliest Christians could proclaim their faith with the two words *kurios Christos*—"Christ is Lord." This is the most positive and direct way of describing the spirit of Protestantism—it is allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord. . . .

The historian Herbert Butterfield concludes his *Christianity and History* with the provocative advice, "Hold to Christ, and for the rest be totally uncommitted." If properly understood, that assertion could almost be said to epitomize the spirit of Protestantism, for it affirms the Lordship of Christ and excludes the possibility of rival "lords." To be "totally committed" to anyone other than Christ, is in fact to dethrone Christ, and to enthrone some rival in his place.

"You shall have no other gods before me."

It is always our temptation to enthrone some rival in his place. And against this temptation stands the first commandment, a commandment that expresses the spirit of Protestantism from another perspective: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). To put "other gods" before the Lord is to succumb to the sin of idolatry, the worshipping of "idols" or false gods. The theme has been elaborated by Paul Tillich in what he calls "the Prot-

18. See Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960), pp. 141, 232-33.

estant principle." This is the insistence that no partial object of loyalty may be transformed into an ultimate object of loyalty; nothing man-made, or less than divine, may be treated as though it were divine. . . .

It is relatively easy for Protestants to point a prophetic finger at "secular" idolatries, to call down judgment on those who say, "My country right or wrong," "My political party right or wrong," "My corporation right or wrong," or "My labor union right or wrong." It is less easy for Protestants to remember that there is as great or even greater error in saying, "My church, right or wrong." The eye of judgment must be turned inward as well as outward; the church must recognize that *in its own life* it betrays the Lordship of Christ and breaks the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me."¹⁹

Ecclesiolatry means giving the church an allegiance which belongs only to God. It means placing a faith in the church that should only be placed in God. It means making a golden calf out of a denomination.

At creation, man was given dominion over the created order (Gen. 1:28, 29). Only God was above man, and only God was entitled to his worship. Everything in the created order was placed under man's feet. Everything was to be used for his optimum development and his maximum enjoyment. Man was created to be king, to be enslaved by nothing. All things were to be his servants. In harmony with man's original rights which have now been redeemed by Christ, the religious institutions should be the servant of the priesthood of all believers.

Sinful man, however, worships the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). This is the great sin described in Romans 1 and Revelation 14:7, 9. It is the sin which arouses God's wrath. Romans 1:25 says that

19. Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 41-4.

not only does man worship the creature, but he serves the creature. Idolatry makes the sinner the bondservant of the created order. The wrath of God is manifested in giving the idolater over to the bondage of his god—whether that god be money, pleasure, nature, family or church. He who worships the creature is therefore enslaved by the creature. He bears the "mark of the beast," just as it was the custom for slaves to bear the brand of their owners.

Revelation 14 is supposed to be the reason for Adventism's existence. Here is a solemn warning against worshipping the beast or his image and receiving his mark. In Revelation 13 the beast is shown to be antichrist. He puts himself in the place of Christ and demands the worship of men. The symbolism of the beast has a broader meaning than we have often supposed. John declares that there are many antichrists (1 John 2:18). The Jewish Sanhedrin was an antichrist. It fulfilled many of the specifications of Daniel's little-horn power. When the Caesars of pagan Rome deified themselves and demanded worship on pain of death, they made themselves antichrist. The great totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, Nazism and Communism, have sought a control over the total man which belongs only to God. They also have exhibited the spirit which says, "'Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?'" (Rev. 13:4). (These words are a devilish parody of the words recorded in Exodus 15:3, 11: "'The Lord is a warrior; . . . Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?'")

But worse than a state system which puts itself in the place of God is an ecclesiastical system which puts itself in the place of God. This is why the papacy especially qualifies as the great antichrist. Revelation 14 not only warns us against worshipping the beast, but against worshipping any likeness of the beast. Any religious group which assumes to warn others with the message of Reve-

lation 14 ought at least to heed the warning itself. The group which assumes, "It could never happen to us," would do well to ask, "Lord, is it we?"

In Revelation 14 it is clear that the only way to escape the idolatry which arouses God's anger is to embrace the gospel (Rev. 14:6). To have faith in Christ's righteousness alone is to "fear God and give Him glory." Faith is that true worship which ought to be rendered solely to the Creator. If we oppose the gospel of justification by faith, we also shall be found among the false worshipers of Revelation 14.

When any ecclesiastical structure demands a faith, submission and loyalty that should only be given to God, it makes an image to the beast. Ecclesiolatry provokes the wrath of God. It is a wrath which even now is manifested in giving its worshipers over to be enslaved by the object of their worship. When any creature becomes an idol, it becomes a tyrant. Instead of the external institution being controlled by the community, the community is controlled by the institution. It has dominion over the faith and conscience of people. It is no longer a servant which must give an account to those who give it life, but it is a master which is an object of devotion.

Ecclesiolatry also leads to persecution. This is not because those who do this are bad people any more than the men who conducted the Inquisition were bad people. Bad doctrine—especially a bad ecclesiology—makes good people behave like this. If the system must be preserved, protected and glorified at all costs, then people must be treated without compassion. The solitary individual must die rather than that the system perish. People are sacrificed because the integrity of the system must be preserved.

The Adventist is particularly susceptible to ecclesiastical pressure because his church is his world within the world. Here he finds his social, educational, religious and often his economic life. Most Protestants can leave one church and join another without great trauma. Not so an Adventist. He feels he has nowhere else to go. His church is supposed to be the remnant, the last church, the only "ship" going through to the kingdom. Furthermore, Adventists have been conditioned to ostracize all who deviate from the system. Instead of fighting "heresy" with the sword of the Word, the institution often resorts to social and religious pressure.

The greatest instrument of coercion in traditional Adventism is guilt. The two greatest motivational forces in the world are guilt and grace. Where the gospel is not paramount, guilt is the instrument by which we motivate ourselves and others. Unless we live by the gospel, we manipulate ourselves and others by means of guilt. We think that if we are made to feel sufficiently guilty about overeating or devotional laziness, we will be stirred to make an effort at reform. We also try to manipulate our spouse or children by making them feel guilty ("How could you do this to me?" "What, leaving already?" "Have you forgotten me?") Guilt will drive a missionary to compass land and sea to make a single convert. Rome has learned to harness the power of guilt. It upholds a standard of morality which it knows its people do not practice. But it makes them feel guilty, and so long as they feel guilty, they will need the church and keep supporting it. Rome has always complained that justification by faith alone severs the nerve of the moral imperative. But she is really concerned with people who are no longer guilty and can therefore no longer be manipulated.

If the Adventist community does not live by the gospel, it is guilt which makes people keep the Sabbath, pay

tithe, refrain from wearing jewelry, go Ingathering and conform to the system. Sermons which exhort people to conform to certain behavior are generally intended to make people feel guilty enough to elicit the desired response. Luther would call this a confounding of law and gospel. Law, of course, must be preached, and law always makes us feel guilty (Rom. 3:19, 20). Making people feel guilty, however, should not allow the preacher to manipulate their behavior. It should help make clear that the behavior of Jesus is the sinner's only righteousness before God. Christ removes guilt and opens the door to the motivation of grace.

Ellen White is Adventism's greatest instrument for making people feel guilty. "Mrs. White says" is used to make the faithful feel guilty about a vast number of things. And so long as they feel guilty, they are subjects of ecclesiastical manipulation.

24

The Implications of the Gospel for Ecclesiology

The revival of the gospel within the Adventist community has profound implications for ecclesiology. A correct doctrine of the church presupposes a correct doctrine of justification by faith alone.

D'Aubigné describes the Reformation of the sixteenth century in terms of a threefold triumph—a triumph of faith over works in the matter of salvation, a triumph of the Bible over all extrabiblical authorities and the triumph of the priesthood of all believers over the religious hierarchy.

The gospel restores church government to the priesthood of all believers. Hierarchism always flourishes where salvation is by sanctification, but it withers where salvation is by justification. The gospel restores the means of grace to the priesthood of all believers and exalts the authority of the local assembly to elect or depose its ministry.

Wherever the gospel is given free course, the church is no longer seen as the external organization but as the living community. Indeed, the church is found wherever the gospel is preached and believed. The truth is not found by submission to the church, but the church is found by submission to the truth. The organization becomes the instrument and servant of the community, and all the officials of the organization are subject and answerable to the priesthood of all believers.

The gospel is the end of triumphalism. A theology of glory breeds a proud, arrogant, persecuting church, but the theology of the cross restores the concept of the humble, suffering, servant church which lives by the forgiveness of sins and breathes the spirit of forgiving love. There is nothing so obnoxious as an arrogant, triumphalistic missionary. The gospel is the end of that Messianic complex which sees ourselves as God's favorites. The gospel makes us ready to acknowledge and confess our mistakes. Adventists embracing the gospel are beginning to realize that Adventism has nourished its share of heresies—crude time setting, the shut-door doctrine, the denial of the Trinity, of the full deity of Christ and of the complete atonement on the cross, the projection of a heretical two-apartment schema into heaven, an immature concept of a pre-advent judgment, a Roman Catholic-like view of righteousness by faith, an extrabiblical authority, a hopelessly outdated prophetic schema focused on the nineteenth century, and a view of the church which does not do justice to the claim of being the last-day heirs of the Protestant Reformation. God has certainly allowed us proud Laodiceans to make enough mistakes to keep us humble. We can now approach other Christians as repentant sinners who have embraced the gospel. The gospel allows us to have a sense of humor. When we do not take ourselves too

seriously, we can even laugh at our strutting triumphalism.

The gospel means the end of all self-vindication. We no longer have to prove that "we are the remnant." If we preach the gospel, our identity ought to become self-evident.

The gospel delivers us from ecclesiolatry. In a certain sense we are believers in Christ and not the church. He who believes the gospel cannot be enslaved by an organizational structure. Faith makes him a free lord of all and subject to none. Love alone makes him a free servant and subject to all. The gospel believer cannot be manipulated by ecclesiastical pressure, because he has been delivered from guilt. When a witch doctor fears he may lose control over his people, he prattles his superstitions and rattles his bones. The people hear and creep back into their house of bondage. No doubt we also will be hearing a lot of old bones rattling from now on. No doubt we will hear that "The church is going through," "This is the last church," "If you leave the ship, you cannot be saved," "This organization is the object of God's supreme regard," "Mrs. White says," "Whatsoever the church binds on earth shall be bound in heaven."

Luther declared that those who constantly chatter "the church, the church" do not know what the church is. The gospel begets, nourishes and defends the church. Therefore, the church is where the gospel is. And he who stands where the gospel is will be found in that church outside of which none will be saved.

The gospel will restore to the priesthood of all believers the right and responsibility to withdraw themselves and their financial support from any minister or structure not preaching the gospel. As faithful stewards, they will no longer be bound by traditional conventions or legalistic restrictions not commanded in God's Word. Under the leadership of the Spirit, they will use their

creative initiative and common sense to adapt their fellowship in the gospel to whatever forms the crisis may demand. They will certainly not have a guilty conscience for refusing to support those who do not support the gospel. When true stewardship is practiced by the local assembly, the vast proportion of their resources will no longer be used to support an unproductive bureaucracy.

It seems that, in the crisis now upon Adventism, gospel-believing Adventists will rally around gospel-preaching pastors in a more congregational form of church life. Individualism is a poor alternative to hierarchism. The gospel does not sanction ecclesiastical antinomianism any more than it sanctions ethical antinomianism. It strengthens the community rather than weakens it, and gathers the sheep rather than scattering them abroad.

Section VI

The Gospel and Prophecy

25

The Inadequacy of the Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Schema

From the beginning, Adventism has seen itself as a prophetic movement. Actually, it is a product of the remarkable nineteenth-century apocalyptic revival. Much of Adventism's literature and evangelistic effort focuses on Daniel and Revelation.

Traditional Adventism's elaborate apocalyptic schema was developed in the nineteenth century. The pioneer expositors were products of their age. They never dreamed that their children would see the twentieth century, much less the twenty-first century.

The pioneer method of interpreting prophecy was a simplistic historicism which concentrated on events in the nineteenth century. This, of course, is understandable. By showing that events of the nineteenth century fulfilled biblical predictions, they were able to convince many that they were living at the very end of time. The Lisbon earthquake, the French Revolution, the meteoric

shower of 1833, the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and other events in their era were seen as the last signs of Christ's coming. They also lived in the world of Ussher's chronology, which supposed that the Bible presents an infallibly complete and accurate chronology reaching back to creation. They were inclined to read the poetic oracles of the prophets as if they were simple predictions of events in the nineteenth century. The mysterious apocalyptic numbers were regarded as mathematical predictions to be calculated not only to the year, but sometimes to the very day. Their view of prophecy and its fulfillment was inclined to be rather magical and rationalistic.

In this prophetic schema, nineteenth-century Adventists saw themselves in the center of the prophetic drama. They were the virgins of Christ's parable (Matt. 25). Their prophetic charts fulfilled Habakkuk's prophecy on writing the vision plainly. And Revelation 10 was a direct prophecy of the sweet Millerite message and their bitter disappointment. The birth of their movement inaugurated the "last days." In short, they were inclined to read their own experience into the prophecies of the Bible. Since they were Americans, we should not be surprised that they saw proof of America's place in prophecy. Since the Sabbath was also their big discovery, they saw it everywhere in their study of last-day events.

This use of prophecy is not to be entirely discounted. The early Christians also applied Revelation to events in their own day and thus received much comfort. Adventism's problem is that it adopted a narrow historicism which excluded the application of the same prophecy to other situations. Adventism tied its prophetic schema to the nineteenth century. Everything was frozen in the nineteenth-century mold.

Time renders a severe verdict on simplistic historicism. The pioneers, for instance, were adamant about the

shut door, but time soon made it obsolete. It has taken longer to demonstrate the inadequacy of other interpretations, but time will bury them as it has buried many other confident predictions. Sermons on the Lisbon earthquake and the falling of the stars have become increasingly irrelevant in the twentieth century. Thoughtful people of today listen to traditional Adventist expositions and wonder why Bible prophecy says so much about the French Revolution (Rev. 11) and so little about the great Communist Revolution of the twentieth century. Traditional Adventism still looks over its shoulder to the world of the nineteenth century and tries to preach about nineteenth-century events with a nineteenth-century world view which has little relevance to a generation on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

Not only has the passing of time made our nineteenth-century prophetic schema less relevant, but the vast increase in biblical knowledge of the last fifty years calls much of that schema into question. It is impossible to continue reading the Bible like nineteenth-century men. The eschatology of New Testament thought has only been recovered in this present century. Research in the field of apocalyptic literature has given us a better understanding of the world of apocalyptic thought, the meaning of symbols and the use of mysterious numbers. Archeologists and chronologists have thrown much more light on Bible times. We now know that we cannot expect an Old Testament author to write history which conforms to the canons of modern historiography. We now understand far more about the differences between Hebrew and Greek thought. Knowledge of biblical languages has increased, and more accurate translations of the Bible are now available to us. We cannot expect our doctrines to rest on the peculiarities of the King James Version. Most of this advancement in biblical science

has occurred in spite of us, but we cannot continue pretending that it changes nothing. It certainly does. Some of our traditional arguments rest on faulty history, faulty grammar, faulty information on chronology and the faulty idea that we could read the poetic oracles of an oriental book as if they were the coldly scientific prose of a nineteenth-century Westerner.

The fact is that we have squeezed all the mileage possible out of this nineteenth-century vehicle of evangelism. We cannot canonize the historicism of nineteenth-century Adventism unless we want Adventism to become an anachronism like the Flat Earth Society.

If the book of Revelation were a series of predictions on such events as the invasion of the Turks, the French Revolution, the rise of the United States of America and the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, what sense could it have made to Christians of the first century, who were exhorted to read and understand the book? Furthermore, if interpreting Revelation simply involves arranging the pieces of a historical jigsaw puzzle, where is the "revelation of Jesus Christ" which the book is supposed to present? The "spirit of prophecy" is its testimony or witness to Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:10; 12:17). Prophecy is a vehicle for the gospel. The spirit of prophecy is to establish the claim of the Son of God as Lord of history rather than to establish Adventism's place in the nineteenth-century sun.

26

The End of Traditional Adventism

In order to understand the present crisis in Adventism, we need to understand the history of its formative years. Adventism was the product of the Millerite movement. Miller and his associates thought that, by using the mysterious numbers of the apocalyptic books of the Bible, they could compute the exact year of the Lord's coming.¹ They were not the first to do this, however. As A.D. 1000 drew near, there was a great dread and anticipation of Christ's coming, with much speculation about "times and seasons." In the religious excitement of the Reformation, some of the more unstable elements set dates for the Lord's coming. The same thing happened during the Wesleyan revivals. All these attempts to calculate the time, however, ended in disaster.

1. See Ingemar S. Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-Genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 36-76. See also idem, "1844 and the Shut-Door Problem in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (1980), p. 6.

The Millerites were not content to compute the exact year when the world would end. During the final twelve months of that movement, hardly a day in the calendar was not chosen as the very day for the second advent. Their arguments and reasonings were often farfetched and bizarre. Again and again the Adventists were disappointed. Yet it seemed that they had to purge their system of speculation in one grand climax of expectation. Their hopes finally centered on October 22, 1844.

Notwithstanding the clear biblical warning that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's coming and that the church is not to speculate on the times and seasons, the Adventists adamantly proclaimed the very day of His coming. They not only believed it, but they made it a test of salvation. To reject the October 22 date was to be lost. The Millerites were "so convinced of their truth that those who continued to disagree with them were increasingly seen as blind, unintelligent, and dishonest. They became more strident, more self-righteous, and the feeling of exclusive possession of truth was widespread."² By the summer of 1844 the Millerites were calling all the opposing churches and parties "Babylon," and many even made separation from these "harlot churches" a test of salvation along with acceptance of the October 22 date.

While many may have rejected the Advent message from unworthy motives, it is simply not true that all who did were hypocrites or rejecters of God's Spirit, as Mrs. White's *The Great Controversy* and other pioneer Seventh-day Adventist works would have us believe. I have read too many sensible and reasoned refutations of Miller's date setting to accept the blanket condemnation

2. David T. Arthur, "Millerism," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), p. 161.

of all who disagreed with him. Thousands of Christians were engaged in other great Christian endeavors and scarcely noticed what the Millerites were doing in New York and the New England states. Other Christians who earnestly believed in Christ's second coming and in being prepared for the day of God could not be persuaded by Miller's unique arguments. Miller made a contribution in those areas in which he preached the ancient faith. His heresy was found in those teachings which were unique.

The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism probably numbered less than twenty significant persons. They were a handful of survivors from the shipwreck of the Great Disappointment. Most were youthful, they knew little theology, and they entertained serious heresies on the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

The pioneers refused to accept the Disappointment. James and Ellen White, for instance, continued to justify the date setting of the Millerite movement. Even though God's Word warns no man to set dates for Christ's coming, the Whites affirmed that God made the preaching of time "a test" and even hid His hand over a mistake in the prophetic reckoning until the summer of 1844.³ The pioneers always believed that the October 22 date was supported by irrefutable evidence—even though arguments used to establish the time of the year were both farfetched and faulty.

After the Disappointment, the leaders of the Millerite movement acknowledged that their preaching of a definite time was wrong. But the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism insisted that God had made it a test. They tried to justify the preaching of time by suggesting that the Bridegroom had come to the marriage and had shut

3. See Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1882), pp. 74, 232, 234-35.

the door of mercy to all rejecters of the Advent message. They became known as "shut-door Adventists." For nearly ten years they held the ridiculous position that Christ had ceased His intercession for the wicked world and the fallen churches. They denounced the "open-door Adventists" as Laodiceans and members of the synagogue of Satan. They discounted all reports of further conversions as the work of Satan and called all new Christian converts "strange children."⁴

Froom and others have tried to argue that the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers belonged to the moderate rather than the radical shut-door group. Yet the shut-door doctrine itself was radical. And there is now no question about Mrs. White's involvement in these shut-door views. On one occasion she even "saw" that Adventists who joined their little group would have to be baptized into the faith of the shut door.⁵ The shut door was considered an all-important "present truth."

The unique features of Seventh-day Adventist theology all stem from the fanatical shut-door doctrine:

4. David Arnold, "The Shut Door Explained," *Present Truth*, Dec. 1849, p. 45.

5. "Then I saw those whose hands are now engaged in making up the breach and are standing in the gaps, that have formally since '44 broken the Commandments of God and have so far followed the pope as to keep the first day instead of the seventh, would have to go into the water and be baptised in the faith of the shut door and keeping the commandments of God and in the faith of Jesus coming to sit on the throne of his Father David and to redeem Israel" (Ellen G. White, "Mrs. White's Vision in Oswego, N.Y. Dated July 29, 1850," copied by Hiram Edson, p. 3, reproduced in Fernand Fisel and Anthony DeFranco, "Three Early Visions of Mrs. E. G. White Copied by Hiram Edson: An Evaluation" [n.d.]. Original manuscript labeled: Yr. 1850, No W 58; Title: Oswego Vision [Manuscript Copied by Hiram Edson]; Author: White, Ellen Gould [Harmon] 1827-1915; cf. *Spalding and Magan's Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Ellen G. White* [Payson, Ariz.: Leaves-of-Autumn Books], pp. 1-4). In this connection it is interesting that, although Ellen Harmon (White) was baptized by immersion in 1842 (see *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, ed. Don F. Neufeld [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1966], p. 1406), she was later rebaptized by James White: "On receiving baptism at my hands, at an early period of her experience . . ."

The Two-Apartment Schema. Crosier himself declared that he wrote his famous Day Star Extra article on the sanctuary in order to support the doctrine of the shut door.⁶ The pioneers at first contended that Christ ceased to intercede for sinners and the fallen churches when He left the first apartment. He withdrew within the second veil to plead only for those who had passed within that veil with Him. Thus, the two-apartment schema grew out of the shut-door delusion and was used to reinforce it.

The Investigative Judgment. After the passage of seven years made it impossible for the pioneers to maintain their shut-door position, they reinterpreted the two-apartment schema with the novel doctrine of the investigative judgment. This represented still another effort to justify their October 22 date setting and their shut-door doctrine.

The Special Resurrection. James White was the first to propose that the Adventists would be alive to see Christ come anyway. A special resurrection for them would take place shortly before the return of Christ.⁷ This would evidently vindicate the Advent expectations and compensate for the Great Disappointment.

(James White, *Life Incidents in Connection with the Great Advent Movement* [Battle Creek: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1868], pp. 272-73). For a report of a similar experience, see Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, Maine: I. C. Wellcome, 1874), p. 403.

6. "The above named persons appear to me insincere in quoting from that article, (1) because they know that it was written for the express purpose of explaining and proving the doctrine of the 'shut door,' which they now, I understand, disclaim" (O. R. L. Crosier, in *Harbinger*, 5 Mar. 1853, quoted in *Review and Herald*, 17 Mar. 1853, p. 176).

7. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 637.

The Day and Hour of Jesus' Coming. The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism never acknowledged the error of setting a date for Christ's coming in 1844. When Adventist opponents cited the words of Jesus, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man," the Millerites replied with an alternative translation, "But that day and hour no man maketh known." Thus, they implied that God the Father would make the exact time known to His children. During the shut-door days, James White proposed that the voice of God would yet make known the precise day and hour of Christ's coming shortly before His return. Mrs. White confirmed this in a vision, and it became traditional Adventist dogma.

The Close of Probation. The pioneers at first believed that the Bridegroom came to the marriage on October 22 and shut the door. They thus believed that the events of 1844 literally fulfilled the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. This was, of course, a fantastic interpretation of a parable. Christ's coming to the marriage in 1844 has remained traditional Adventist dogma until this day, but that part of the parable which says, "And the door was shut," has been reinterpreted to mean a future close of probation.⁸ One is asked to believe that the Bridegroom shuts the door more than 146 years *after* He comes to the marriage. But a simple reading of the parable shows that the door is shut *when* He comes. Furthermore, how could the foolish virgins knock at the shut door if the door were open for over a hundred years after they all went out to meet the Bridegroom? Such an attempt to treat the parable as an allegory is ridiculous.

The close of probation is prominent in traditional Adventist eschatology. In effect, the pioneers said they

8. See *ibid.*, pp. 426-28.

were correct in teaching a shut door prior to Christ's return, but they had merely placed the event too early. Thus, the Adventists would yet see Christ come, they would yet know the day and hour of His coming, and they would yet see the foolish virgins knock at the shut door before the coming of Christ.

Revelation 22:11 became the proof text for this special event called the "close of probation." But this scripture is not concerned with a future decree but with a present permissive decree which will remain in effect until Jesus comes. When he declares, "'Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; . . . let him who does right continue to do right,'" Christ is simply giving His closing salutation. The Lord will deal with those who practice right and wrong when He comes. This is all the passage is saying.

The Babylon-Remnant Concept. In the summer of 1844 the Adventists declared that all the churches which rejected the October 22 date were irretrievably apostate and were therefore the fallen harlot churches of Babylon. After the Disappointment only the little company which kept the Sabbath and held to a shut door had the truth and qualified as the eschatological remnant. All the prophecies relating to the end time were thus made to pass through the narrow 1844 door and to fit the two-apartment sanctuary schema.

Ellen White was an earnest girl who experienced the stirring events of the 1840's. By her charismatic visions she placed what the pioneers believed to be the divine stamp of approval on these novel contributions to theology. They have remained untouchable holy relics in the Adventist museum only because intelligent Adventist students have believed that Mrs. White is as inspired as the Bible itself. Ellen White made a holy history out of Adventism's early experience and thus glorified reli-

gious folly. Obvious mistakes were vindicated and made sacred dogma.

At the beginning of this century, when A. F. Ballenger questioned aspects of the fantastic two-apartment schema, Mrs. White warned her flock to be silent on the 1844 events in which they acted no part.⁹ She drew a veil of mystery over the shut-door days and thus placed the unique features of traditional Adventism beyond candid investigation. Other Adventist authors laundered this history, buried the skeletons and invented legends about the glorious pioneer era.

Adventism is now confronted with the distressing reality that every unique aspect of its theology is without biblical support. Adventism has never been willing to acknowledge its mistakes. Instead of repenting for preaching a message based on time, we tried to justify it. And our unique doctrines, in one way or another, are only extensions of that one unconfessed error. One Great Disappointment should have been enough. But traditional Adventism now faces another great disappointment as all our unique theological contributions, which have bolstered our triumphalism, fall down before the gospel. The gospel does not offer a theology of glory which makes proud, arrogant people. It offers a theology of the cross which humbles us in the dust.

Adventism's contribution is not its unique teachings. "What is wholly new is not true." Its contribution is its strong eschatological consciousness, its Old Testament roots, its wholistic view of man and its profound respect for the law of God. God has been wonderfully gracious to the Advent people. In spite of their immaturities, He has providentially given them an Old Testament framework which makes a marvelous setting for a rehearsal of the

9. See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), pp. 161-62.

apostolic gospel. This gospel is the end of traditional Adventism.

27

Some Reflections on Adventism

Adventism has come to the end of an era. People everywhere sense it. In view of the confrontation with the gospel, in view of the facts uncovered in the Ellen White research, and in view of a new consciousness of the priesthood of all believers, it is useless to pretend that nothing has changed. It has—and Adventism will never be the same again.

A new Adventism is aborning, and the transition from the old to the new is as radical as the transition from Judaism to Christianity or from medieval Christianity to Protestant Christianity. It is the end of traditional Adventism. Some may respond with fear and alarm because they see this development as the negation and destruction of what they think the movement stands for. But others will see it as the fulfillment and fruition of Adventism. So it was when the gospel broke upon the Jewish community in apostolic times.

The issues confronting Adventism are the issues which confronted the church in the sixteenth-century Reformation—the supremacy of the gospel, the authori-

ty of the Scriptures and the priesthood of all believers. Adventism has come to its own Protestant Reformation, and we now see the emergence of a truly Protestant Adventism. It is remarkable how Adventism has recapitulated the history of the Christian church. Like the early church, Adventism had to become settled on such things as the Trinity and the full deity of Christ. Justification by faith was the center of the struggle in the sixteenth century. And a person would have to be very uninformed not to know that justification by faith is the center of the struggle in Adventism today.

Rather than being chagrined that our little religious world is being shaken, we ought to be glad that the traditional Adventist stalemate is over. Surely it should be evident that all the talk of "finishing the work" is a myth. Adventism is not "finishing the work," and furthermore, such a goal is not even remotely in sight. Traditional Adventism has absolutely no hope of arresting the attention of the world. It cannot even arrest the attention of the Christian church. No one is listening. Some may continue thinking that traditional Adventism is God's complete "package deal" for the world, but thoughtful Adventists will not take this childish triumphalism seriously anymore. Traditional Adventism is not a viable religion for the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, traditional Adventism does not grip the hearts of the under-forty generation in the church. Those whose religion is the sanctification of the status quo are losing contact with the rising generation. The "leadership" apparently do not know how many young ministers no longer believe the old legends. This new generation will not enthusiastically proclaim the Lisbon earthquake or shake the world with the news that Jesus went from one compartment to another in 1844.

No longer say that the shaking is coming; it is well under way. Many will no doubt wake up after it is all

over—like the isolated Japanese soldiers who finally emerged from the jungle in the 1960's, not knowing that the war was already over.

When we say that things will never be the same again, we include traditional Adventism too. The Judaism or Catholicism which survived the confrontation with the gospel was much different from the kind which existed before. The stream of history moves inexorably on. And it is myopic to think that nothing has changed.

Judaism and the medieval church had to be judged by the gospel; they did not have to fight it. Subsequent events would have been much different if the power brokers of these religious structures had been willing to become new bottles to hold the new wine. But they were too enamored with their theology of glory. They would not accept the theology of the cross. They were not prepared to appreciate that God's victories are under the veil of ignominious defeats. Those who ride the glory train go to perdition, while those who ride the dung cart go to glory.

Judaism and the medieval church were not willing for the old order to die so that it might be vivified by the power of the resurrection. They sought to save the system, and therefore they lost it. Adventism does not have to repeat that history and raise a fist of defiance against the gospel.

Some Contrasting Features of Old and New

Truth can be taught to the human mind only by thesis and antithesis. Paul repeatedly does this in his Epistles: "Not because of righteous things we had done, *but* because of His mercy . . ." (Titus 3:5). "A man is not justified by observing the law, *but* by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). Over and over the apostle says, "This way

and not that way," or, "Not that way but this way." Those who think they can teach only by thesis will never be effective in calling people to decision. People often listen to truth and say, "Amen." Then they listen to error and say, "Amen." They hear the truth but lose it by placing it in an erroneous framework.

The worst thing that can happen to Adventism now is a synthesis between the old and the new. This happened at the Council of Trent, and this is what occurred at Palmdale.¹ The theology of Trent was not old Catholicism but a synthesis between old Catholicism and the evangelical doctrine. It will be fatal to attempt a synthesis between the old traditional Adventism and the new evangelical Adventism. The new must stand separate. The new wine dare not be put into the old bottles, or both will be ruined. A new line must be drawn beside the old line; otherwise people will not realize that a new line has indeed been drawn. When the Reformers pointed people to Christ, they also pointed to the antichrist. They presented the true gospel and exposed the false. People saw there was an issue and were brought to decision. God is not waiting for everyone to accept the gospel, but He does want everyone to make a decision.

We said that the issues center around the supremacy of the gospel, the authority of the Bible and the nature of the church. Let us make some final reflections on these areas.

1. On April 23-30, 1976, a group of nineteen leaders and theologians met at Palmdale, California, for a conference on the meaning of the gospel of righteousness by faith. A joint statement from the conference appeared under the heading, "Christ Our Righteousness," in the *Review and Herald*, 27 May 1976, pp. 4-7.

The Gospel

Old Adventism, like Judaism, has essentially been a preparation for the gospel. God overruled the immature apocalypticism of 1844, the shut door, the investigative judgment, celestial geography and the Spirit of Prophecy so that they would prepare a people for a mighty resurrection of the gospel. Perhaps I am still trying to preserve some Adventist triumphalism. But I believe that God graciously chose to work with such unpromising material so that out of foolishness—rather than out of wisdom—He would bring His purposes to pass. The problem is that we have generally reasoned from this sense of election to a vindication of our foolishness—"If God has chosen us, we must be right." It would be better if the wonder of grace made us say that, if God has chosen us to do anything, it is surely because He has chosen the foolish to confound the wise, and great legalists to out-evangelical the so-called evangelicals, so that the excellency and power may be seen to belong to God and not to us.

The new Adventism is passionately committed to the gospel. This is its prophetic spirit. It wants to disciple men to Jesus Christ rather than to lesser allegiances. Do not tell me that this has been the burning passion of traditional Adventism. In the old order, getting people into the truth often meant getting them into the Adventist church. Coming into the truth has been equated with coming into the cult.

The gospel offers us unique security, but paradoxically, it comes to us in the form of insecurity. This point is central to the present struggle.

God offered Cain security even though he was an unworthy sinner. "The Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him" (Gen. 4:15). But Cain had no faith in the Lord's security. He went out and built

a city (Gen. 4:17). Throughout history the city is the preeminent expression of man's attempt to make himself secure.

No wonder God called Abraham out of the city. The Scripture says, "He did not know where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). This man of faith had to turn his back on all human systems of security. His was a pilgrim existence. He lived in a tent. That was dangerous in those days. People preferred to live in walled towns for protection against marauders and wild beasts. Abraham and Sarah naturally longed for the security of a city, but they set their sights on the holy city to come. Abraham's security was the word of promise—nothing else. Amazing faith! Abraham did not know where he was going. It was sufficient for him that God knew where he was going. Magnificent insecurity!

Abraham's descendants settled in the land of Goshen, but that security only brought them into bondage—like all the securities we try to build for ourselves. God led them out just as He led Abraham out. But it was not long before Israel became terrified of their wilderness "insecurity." They felt that the security of bondage in Egypt was better than a perilous march through the desert with no better assurance than a "vague" covenantal promise.

Israel finally entered the so-called Promised Land, but they had to learn that this was not the inheritance Abraham had embraced by faith. Whenever Israel was inclined to relax in magnificent security, they forgot God and abused their covenantal obligations. They built a kingdom, founded the city of Jerusalem and erected a temple. But God made it plain that this was not their rest. Sometimes He sent the heathen to afflict them. Often He sent a prophet. And who were these prophets? Those who afflicted them with the Word of God. That Word exposed and tore away all the securities with

which they had surrounded themselves. It was the prophet who prevented Israel from sinking into pagan insensibility. Israel hated the prophet because he made them feel insecure. Yet by those means God preserved the pilgrim character of the covenantal community.

In his pathfinding book, *God Who Acts*, G. Ernest Wright brilliantly contrasted the religion of paganism with the religion of Israel. Paganism was a religion of "normalcy." Its function was to provide security by fitting man into the rhythm and balance of nature. The good life was the one which corresponded with the established hierarchy of authority. Paganism was therefore predominantly a religion of the status quo. Such a religion could never be a dynamic force for social change. Wright showed that man naturally has a desire for pagan "normalcy."

Biblical faith, therefore, could never be a religion of the *status quo* for its faithful adherents. Dynamic change and revolution are to be expected because God is a dynamic being, external to the processes of life, engaged in the active direction of history to his own goals.²

It was only natural, therefore, that pagan Rome should bitterly fight Christianity just as Israel had resisted the prophets. Biblical faith places a tension at the heart of existence. Only thus can we realize that "here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Heb. 13:14). The church which lives between the Exodus of the resurrection and the Promised Land of the second advent must not lose its pilgrim character.

2. G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 22.

Man's tendency toward, and desire for, pagan 'normalcy' being what they are, it is scarcely surprising to find that Christians have sought by a variety of means to avoid this conception and to eradicate the tension occasioned by the dynamic and energetic Lord who will even destroy in order to build. . . .

It [the church] has preached the Gospel as a new kind of paganism, the value of which is strictly utilitarian. Religion is good for us; it gives us comfort and peace of mind; it is the only hope for democracy; it alone can support the *status quo* and make us happy within it. Yet Biblical hope and pagan comfort are not the same thing. In the present frustration within and without it is futile to speak glibly of peace when there is no peace. The Biblical hope is based solely upon God, upon his promises, and upon his election. It is known only in the context of judgment and of the Cross, in the acceptance of a severe ethical demand, of cross-bearing and cross-sharing and of a calling which one works out with fear and trembling. On the other hand, the Church has preached a Gospel of individual pietism and 'spiritual experience', separated almost completely from the common life and from the historical programme of God as revealed in the Bible, while emphasizing prayer and promising the immortality of the soul. It is not that these things in themselves are totally wrong in their proper setting, but here they are separated from their total Biblical context. As such, they are a reversion to pagan 'normalcy', to an individualistic, self-centred, utilitarian worship which lacks historical grounding in election, promise and fulfilment. The question is critical as to whether such faith can survive any better than did the ancient polytheisms.³

In the Reformation the church was stirred by this revolutionary prophetic spirit. All the securities which the medieval church had so meticulously erected were swept away, and the people of God abandoned those idolatrous securities for the security of the gospel. But Prot-

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 26-7.

estantism is also composed of sinful people. Once again we see the church preparing its creeds, systematizing its theology and fixing its boundaries. Calvinism, for example, is an elaborately logical system of theology. Everything is tidy; the rough edges have been cut away and the loose ends neatly tucked in. This careful theological system is appealing because it offers the security of having everything securely fastened. Calvinists are not alone in this, of course. I mention them only because it is easier to see the mistakes of others than to see our own mistakes. We all have a tendency to reduce truth to a closed system. We want to arrive at the holy city of truth so that we can remove our pilgrim shoes and put up our feet. We like to domesticate God and turn our religion into the sanctification of the *status quo*. Our worship tends to become an exercise in religious nostalgia, a benign sedative to soothe our minds and settle our nerves. We want a peace of mind which allays the pains and vexations of existence. We want our churches to be emotional service stations to relieve us of our worries. We want God to be our omnipresent Servant. We want a faith to get us our desires and a religion which confirms the essential rightness of our way of life. In short, we want something to enhance our sense of security and self-sufficiency instead of shattering it.

Traditional Adventism is a complete "package deal" which offers a marvelous sense of security. The elaborate prophetic schema shows us where we are and who we are. We know that the time of the end began in 1798 when the pope was taken prisoner and that 1844 marked the birth of the last church—which of course is us. We know that all other churches are Babylon, and we alone constitute the remnant. We have the prophetic waymarks behind and before, and we do not have to guess at anything. We know that America is going to change her Constitution to pass a Sunday-law decree. That will be a

clear sign to us that probation is about to close. We also know that the whole Christian church will persecute us. We know that there will be a shaking but that the church is going through. We have the security of knowing that God will look after His church and will see that all its critics and troublemakers are shaken out. We know that the Holy Spirit is going to come on this church with great power to enable us to give the "loud cry." If all this and much more is not clear from the Bible, it is clear from the Spirit of Prophecy. We are the most privileged of all people because the light on the prophecies puts us in a "box seat" with the right program of coming events. But that is not all. We not only know exactly where we are; we know exactly what we should do. What is only implicit in the Bible is explicit in the "Spirit of Prophecy." We know the right day of worship and the right method of Christian stewardship. We even know exactly what we should eat, how often and how much. We have a blueprint to follow on education, health, family life, medical missionary work and every other area of life that is important. We do not have to guess at what is right and wrong. Everything is clearly defined for us. This approach to ethics is appealing for the security it offers.

Adventism offers people an unrivaled sense of security. Building people up in the faith means bolstering their sense of security by assuring them that "we have the truth," "this is the true church," "this is the right way to live," "we are a people of prophecy." It is not readily discerned that such security is a fantastic system of idolatry. It appears that the prophetic voice is the voice of an enemy. Is not anything which makes us feel insecure and erodes our peace of mind the device of Satan?

In 1890 Uriah Smith wrote a remarkable letter to Ellen White in which he complained that one of the young men behind the 1888 revival was unsettling the faith. He

related that this man was suggesting that the date for the beginning of the 1260-day prophecy was uncertain. If such a teaching were allowed to prevail, he pleaded with Ellen White, "Then I would like to know where we are."⁴ Imagine how Smith would react today!

I have seen the look of terror in the eyes of some of my Adventist friends when the possibility confronts them that some of the most "fundamental" aspects of the prophetic-sanctuary schema are pious, nineteenth-century legends. And I must confess that I have also felt something of that terror in my own heart as the gospel has smashed through my hereditary religious securities. It has been as if a part of me were dying. And if it were not for the infinitely better security of the gospel, I could not have endured the shattering process. Growing up is painful as one leaves behind some of the comforts and securities of boyhood in order to become a man. The gospel has compelled me to abandon things that have given meaning to my life. I think I know how Abraham must have felt when he left Ur of the Chaldees for an uncertain pilgrimage in tents. But could the dull security of human devisings compare with the exhilarating (although sometimes terrifying) venture of faith?

Here is where the issue of security lies. Do we want the security that our system brings or the security that comes by the gospel through faith alone? Ironically, traditional Adventism makes the Adventist feel secure about everything except his acceptance before the bar of God in judgment. Although he has gathered many assurances about having the truth and being in the remnant and living the right kind of lifestyle, he often has a gnawing, cancerous lack of the glad assurance of acquittal

4. Smith to White, 17 Feb. 1890, written from Battle Creek, Michigan, in W. C. White Letter Book "I," pp. 546-52.

before the bar of God. Because he is so often burdened with guilt, he is easily manipulated by a system which is supposed to deliver him safely to the pearly gates. But now the gospel breaks through with its present assurance of acceptance in the final judgment. This security makes all other securities appear as no security at all. Yet he is tempted to be angry with the gospel for so rudely exposing the idolatry of looking for security in anything less than the eternal righteousness of Jesus. Here is the essence of that false worship exposed in the third angel's message. Those who look for security in the creature find no rest day or night. As Luther said, this is "the slaughterhouse of the conscience." Says Robert McAfee Brown:

The spirit of Protestantism [is] an openness to the judging and renewing activity of the living God made known in Jesus Christ. Protestantism at its best is willing to submit to the corrective activity of God, and to hold all things of no account so long as he is honored. . . . The spirit of Protestantism involves a willingness to live at risk, not only because the claim to human security is a denial of God, but because when human securities have been destroyed, God can enter in.

Not, it should be added, that this sort of thing comes very easily to the Protestant, or to Protestant institutions. Men have a deep-seated tendency to cling to the established and to look for ultimate securities of their own devising, and Protestants are no exception to this rule. But they are sometimes willing, thanks to the grace of God, to be shaken up and radically challenged, and then to submit to the painful but exhilarating process of being refashioned into something closer to the divine purpose. Before long, they need to be shaken up, challenged and refashioned again—and it is in this *constant renewal at the hand of God* that Protestants conceive the life of the church to exist. Through it all, God and his purposes remain constant. Nothing else. . . .

So Protestants will have a "style of life" that is not easy to describe but nevertheless has upon it the stamp of

authenticity and integrity. It involves an assurance about God combined with modesty concerning the reports we make about God. It means trusting him utterly and at the same time never trusting any human account of him utterly. It means being committed and recognizing that statements about our commitment must always be tentative. It means the assurance of an ultimate security and the likelihood of an immediate insecurity. It means a risk, but a risk in the context of a promise.⁵

We cannot honestly say that we are glad to have our Adventist world turned upside down by the gospel. *We prefer to know where we are!* We are not content to know that God knows where we are. We prefer to walk by sight rather than to live by faith. We prefer the security of the status quo in our little holy city to living in the tents of faith with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We would rather live by an elaborate code of rules than to trust God in the drift and current of everyday existence. *Sola fide* is as popular in the halls of traditional Adventism as is a pork chop in Loma Linda.

Traditional Adventism appeals to its unique doctrines as the only justification for its existence. In this it is not unlike Lutheranism, Calvinism, Campbellism or other branches of the church. Each group tends to cling to its special contribution as if that justified its existence. And generally the special contribution overwhelms the New Testament message. The only thing which justifies our right to exist either individually or corporately is the gospel. Many Lutherans do not believe in the justification of Lutheranism by faith alone but in justification by the Supper. Calvinists believe in the justification of

5. Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 40-41, 49.

Calvinism by the Five Points.⁶ Yet our only justification for existence is found in the gospel. This is a more solid foundation than trying to find our justification in a precarious apocalyptic theology born in the nineteenth century.

The early Adventists must have thought that virtually the entire prophetic schema of the Bible was written to focus on their glorious religious enterprise. Instead of testifying to Christ (for that is the spirit of prophecy—Rev. 19:10), the Bible was made to testify that we are the remnant and that the birth of our movement was the most important prophetic date in history—after Calvary at least. The traditional Adventist prophetic schema almost silently skips some of the greatest events in Christian history, even the world-shaking Reformation. Adventism seems to focus on the birth of the 1844 cult. We have turned the spotlight of prophecy on ourselves. Megalomaniacal nonsense! Yet as long as we seek justification apart from the gospel, what can we do but find denominational status in fantastic claims and works? It is time to repent for competing with Jesus Christ. When Adventism turns the spotlight of prophecy on Jesus Christ, it will bear witness of Him rather than attempting to justify itself. Then it will indeed have the spirit of prophecy.

The Bible

The new Adventism is committed to taking the *sola Scriptura* principle of the Reformation seriously. In the face of recent Ellen White research which has revealed substantial literary dependence, and in the face of the

6. The five points of Calvinism are called TULIP—total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.

evidence that the traditional doctrine of the sanctuary and investigative judgment cannot be established from the Bible alone, we dare not pretend that nothing has changed. The legend of Ellen White receiving information from visions in the night will have to be modified by the evidence that she also received information from books in the night. As she was confronted with her people begging bread, she must have felt like any preacher who sometimes realizes that his own cupboard is bare. What did she do? Quite sensibly, she went to the works of other writers and replenished her own spiritual larder. If some are offended to find that she went to “Babylonian” sources to gather many of her ideas, let it be remembered that Jacob went down to Egypt to get corn when there was none in Palestine. Of course, the experience broadened Ellen White. No wonder she was decidedly less critical of non-Adventists in her later life! I have had a similar spiritual pilgrimage—from the cultic world of an *Early Writings* apocalypticism to the catholic world of New Testament Christianity.

If the White Estate and the church hierarchy attempt to perpetuate the old legends with further cover-ups and the laundering of history, their credibility will be irrevocably damaged. The moral outrage of the people will be something to see.

Let us grant that Ellen White was a “lesser light” to lead Adventists to the “greater light” of the Bible. If this was God’s purpose in the spiritual gift, it is also clear that Adventism has largely frustrated that purpose. The gift has not been used to lead people to the Bible but from the Bible. There has been such a superficial reliance on Ellen White that Adventism is years behind in biblical studies. Most so-called experts in the “Spirit of Prophecy” are almost biblically illiterate. I have met pastors with basements full of Ellen White statements, yet who are appallingly ignorant of even the basic ele-

ments of biblical theology. "She says," "she says" has become such a fetish that I believe God is going to sweep it all away. That is what God did to Judaism when the means He had given to lead them to the truth were used as agencies to harden them against it. If we hold to anything which cannot be thoroughly substantiated by the Bible, we had better discard it. It will not be a help in the times before us. The community will face a traumatic, wrenching experience as it withdraws from a slavish dependence on an extrabiblical authority. The new generation of Adventists will not embrace theories which cannot stand the test of biblical scholarship.

Certainly some will cling to Ellen White as if nothing had happened. We will not question that they are God's dear children. We should not try to impose our views on them, and certainly not with that human arrogance which corrupts even genuine enlightenment. But if the traditionalists insist on making the old view of Ellen White a test of orthodoxy and acceptance in the community, a prophet will not be needed to tell us what will happen. The days of monolithic Adventism will be over. James White once wrote that whether a person believes or does not believe the visions was not a test among Adventists and that one's convictions on the matter were his own business and no one else's.⁷ Are those who talk so earnestly about returning to the teachings of the pioneers also willing to return to this aspect of their teaching on spiritual gifts? Even the most ardent Ellen White advocates tend to be selective in their application of Ellen White material. In his report on the 1978 Annual Council, Donald R. McAdams says:

7. See James White, "A Test," *Review and Herald*, 16 Oct. 1855, pp. 61-2, quoted in Robert D. Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 131-34.

Church leaders interpreted and applied the writings of Ellen White in administrative areas more freely than they allow scholars to interpret and apply them in scientific, historical or theological areas.⁸

Two Australian doctors have led a campaign to censure a certain theologian because his interpretation of Ellen White's theology does not correspond with their ultraconservatism. Yet in matters of practical sanctification (diet, exercise, use of drugs and other matters) the two doctors are more liberal in their interpretation of Ellen White than the theologian, who is an ardent disciple of Ellen White in his lifestyle. Is the theologian's more liberal interpretation of Ellen White's theology any worse than the doctors' more liberal interpretation of her ethics or the administrators' more liberal interpretation of her church polity? The most consistent followers of the "blueprint" have been the so-called self-supporting institutions. But not too many people will be impressed with these experiments in Adventist monasticism.

Obviously, if Adventists are to continue living under one denominational roof, they will have to stop making Ellen White a *de facto* rule of either faith or duty. And those who say that the Bible and the Bible alone is our only rule of faith and duty will have to stop measuring each other's theology and lifestyle by an extrabiblical rule.

The Church

Wherever the gospel is given free course, it creates a new understanding of the nature of the church. Church officials can no longer expect gopelized Adventists to

8. Donald R. McAdams, "The 1978 Annual Council: A Report and Analysis," *Spectrum* 9, no. 4 (Jan. 1979): 6.

be as subservient to the hierarchy as Irish Catholics. The priesthood of all believers will henceforth demand possession of all the facts. The believers must decide the Daniel 8:14-Hebrews 9 debate on the weight of evidence. They must also have the full documentation on Ellen White's literary borrowings. They will no longer accept entertaining stories of baptisms along the Amazon while vital documents are kept from them, while the facts of history are laundered and while the flow of information is manipulated.

Heretofore the constituency have been treated like children who could not handle information considered dangerous. The way the lay members have been kept in ignorance on the stupendous struggle in the church is scandalous. Of course, the freedom of information has its dangers just as a free press has its dangers. But ultimately it is much safer than being insulated from all "undesirable" information. Adventism can no longer afford the doubtful luxury of a "soybean curtain" behind which the White Estate conducts the ritual of feeding the milk of Ellen White to a community which ought to be nourished by the strong meat of the Word. The White Estate will soon be irrelevant anyway.

A gospel community will not sanction the spirit of persecution which has reigned in traditional Adventism. Roger Williams said that it was better to live with Christian savages than savage Christians. The way the system has stifled the voice of dissent and bludgeoned many of its creative people is as black as hell. The system which garnishes the tomb of Ellen White will not tolerate any manifestation of a prophetic spirit in the church. Osterhaven's warning is applicable to Adventism:

The temptation for the church to become a religious establishment whose leaders become priests interested in

personal position and the perpetuation of certain forms of religion instead of prophets dedicated to proclaim the Word that the Spirit gives them is perennial, especially where the institutional life of the church is highly developed.⁹

Robert McAfee Brown says of Rome: "But it cannot allow for the possibility of reform of the church, the recognition that at the very basis of its being the church may need to be shaken, judged, purged, and re-made."¹⁰ Then Brown declares: "Protestantism affirms that the church *must* be shaken, judged, purged, and re-made."¹¹ If what Brown says is right, are Adventists Protestant?

There can be a venturesomeness in Protestant life and thought that often seems to the non-Protestant Christian to get out of bounds. But it is in this area that new advances, new insights, new understandings of the faith grow. Very often the man who first appears as a heretic turns out to be the one who was recalling Christendom to a long-neglected truth. He may have shouted a little too loudly, as the only way of getting a hearing, but had he not shouted, had he not rocked the boat a little, his fellow Christians might not have become aware that they were heading for dangerous shoals. Protestantism has an obligation to suffer fools gladly lest it stifle the message of one who is a "fool for Christ."¹²

There must therefore be a place within the church for "dangerous" ideas. This is the risk Protestantism must run in the name of devotion to the truth it is always stultifying. The compensating weight of heresy may be necessary from time to time to keep the listing ship of orthodoxy from foundering. If so, we can hazard the guess

9. M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 33.

10. Brown, *Spirit of Protestantism*, p. 45.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

that God has a special kind of affection for heretics, and even that he raises them up to fulfill his purposes when his usual means have been hampered by human self-sufficiency.¹³

Luther said that the glory of a Christian community is that it is full of the forgiveness of sins. A truly forgiven community will be a forgiving community. Here is the essence of justification and sanctification. Ellen White once said that if we were only a kind people, our efforts to win converts would be multiplied one hundred times. Charles Clayton Morrison declares:

The church is not an organization of good people, it is a society of sinners. It is the only organization in human society that takes sinners into its membership just because they are sinners. It is the only organization that keeps on saying week after week, year after year, age after age: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and we have done those things which we ought not to have done . . ."

Let us not claim moral virtue for church members or for the church. Let us rather glory in the fact that the church is a society of sinners, who claim no virtue but humbly rest their broken and burdened lives upon the grace which God has eternally revealed in Christ Jesus.¹⁴

This concept of the church transformed the covenantal community from cultic Judaism to universal Christianity. The same miracle happens wherever the Word of the living God goes forth to renew the church.

13. Ibid., p. 128.

14. Charles Clayton Morrison, "The Church Is a Society of Sinners," *Presbyterian Life*, 2 Mar. 1957, p. 2, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 99.

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Adventism in Historical Perspective

The reader may now feel like a farmer who surveys the scene after a cyclone has flattened his plantation and blown down his barn. But I have not written this review of Adventism to hurt anyone. I too am an Adventist born and bred. It was Adventism which mediated Christ to me, and it was in an Adventist home that I learned to sing such songs as

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.¹

Many in Adventism have experienced the genuine work of the Holy Spirit leading to faith in Christ and holiness of life. It has not been my purpose to weaken anyone's faith in God's leading them into a precious experience or to cause them sorrow of heart by forcing them to ask, "Is all this a delusion? Has the burning passion to see

1. Edward Mote, *The Solid Rock*.

the coming of the One whom I love more than life itself been an empty dream?" No, a thousand times no! The purpose of this chapter is to place Adventism in a historical perspective which will allow us to be corrected by the gospel while maintaining our faith in God's gracious leading.

Swedish historical scholar, Ingemar Lindén, has called Millerism a "most spectacular apocalyptic revival."² I believe this is the key to understanding Adventism. "We are a prophetic movement" has almost become an Adventist cliché. Yet I would suggest that the word *apocalyptic* rather than *prophetic* is more appropriate in describing the essential genius of Adventism. The unique emphases of the movement were drawn from its preoccupation with Daniel and Revelation, the two apocalyptic books of the Bible.

Apocalyptic movements have flourished in several periods of Judeo-Christian history. We shall briefly examine three such periods because the recurring pattern is so remarkable. This will help us to see Adventism in historical perspective.

From Jewish Apocalypticism to the New Testament Gospel. Old Testament scholars generally agree that the postexilic era initiated the great period of Judaistic orthodoxy. The prophetic spirit which had been so active in Israel's previous history was quenched. The little covenantal community was buffeted by the great powers and subjected to periods of severe persecution. The prophetic vision of Israel's glorious future seemed to be receding. Many of God's people despaired of realizing the goal by the historical process. They began to realize that the fulfillment of Israel's destiny had to be achieved

2. Ingemar S. Lindén, "1844 and the Shut-Door Problem in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (1980), p. 6.

by a cataclysmic event outside the historical process—hence the manifestation of a religious phenomenon closely related to prophecy. It is called apocalyptic. Apocalyptic flourished in Jewish circles from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 100. It is a special literary genre marked by several distinct characteristics:

1. Apocalyptic is patterned after the book of Daniel and is generally pseudepigraphic.
2. Apocalyptic authors are mystics who have visions and dreams—or use them as a literary device.
3. While prophecy is generally written in poetry, apocalyptic is written in prose. Yet it features such weird and gorgeous symbolism as bizarre animals, demons, angels and heavenly conversations.
4. Apocalyptic is dualistic in that it features the struggle between the forces of light and darkness.
5. Apocalyptic focuses on the future far more than does prophecy. It tends to be other-worldly and wonderfully dramatic in its view of the future.
6. Apocalyptic is preoccupied with the coming day of judgment, when God will punish the enemies of His people and vindicate the righteous. It sees no improvement in this age but looks for the cataclysmic inbreaking of God's kingdom in the age to come. The apocalyptic spirit therefore tends to have a pessimistic view of history. Many apocalyptists withdrew from the world and even from the greater Jewish community to become the faithful remnant awaiting the manifestation of the day of wrath and deliverance. Because of this preoccupation with the coming judgment, the word *apocalyptic* has the same connotation as *cataclysmic*. Apocalyptic breathes the spirit of imminence.

7. Apocalyptists tend to be esoteric, cultic and anti-establishment. Their information is for "insiders." They are more interested in the destruction than the salvation of their enemies.

8. Apocalyptists not only use visions, symbols and bizarre imagery, but they often employ numerology and mysterious time periods as literary devices. They express strong faith in the future and paint a dramatic picture of coming events.

Apocalyptists were pious dreamers who, despairing of the historical process, looked for a cataclysmic solution to history. Some indulged in apocalyptic speculation about the coming of the Messiah, the overthrow of Gentile tyranny and the golden age of the Messiah's millennial reign. Much of this apocalyptic speculation was weird and fanciful, and some of the apocalyptic speculators wandered so far that they crossed the boundary line of Jewish religion altogether.

There is an element of fantasy about the apocalyptic spirit. If the New Testament gospel community is the community come of age, the pre-Christian community was the community still in its childhood. A child must fantasize adulthood before it enters the reality of adulthood. Fantasies of motherhood must precede the reality of motherhood. While there is a correspondence between childlike fantasies and adult reality, fantasies are not reality.

Likewise, in apocalyptic the pious fantasies of the future are never an accurate description of reality. Even Daniel, which we may call an inspired apocalyptic, is not

an accurate description of reality.³ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* says, "We must not expect precise accuracy from Apocalyptists."⁴ This especially applies to their use of time periods. Adventism has been exceedingly naive in treating apocalyptic time periods as if they were scientifically accurate forecasts of future events.

9. The apocalyptists tended to follow an ascetic way of life. Some withdrew to the desert to engage in a program of regimented piety and to live by strict ascetic rules. This manner of religious life corresponded to the apocalyptic spirit, for both represent religious pre-adulthood. In Galatians 4 Paul shows that an heir must be disciplined by many rules and regulations as long as he is a minor. Among the Jews there was a widely-accepted notion that a righteous community would hasten and even precipitate the Messiah's coming. Thus, the apocalyptic spirits often pursued their ascetic way of life with great zeal.

The German scholar, Ernst Käsemann, has said that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."⁵ While some may feel that this statement is too sweeping, Käsemann's essential insight is now widely acknowledged. The Jewish apocalyptic movement made a significant contribution in preparing the way for the Christian

3. Traditional Adventism has proceeded on the assumption that the apocalyptic visions of Daniel rather than the New Testament gospel are the most accurate description of reality. Enigmatic apocalyptic passages have been treated as clear descriptions of reality, while clear gospel realities have been turned into enigmas.

4. J. E. H. Thomson, art. "Apocalyptic Literature," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (1929; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 1:166.

5. Quoted in D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 23.

gospel. Its view of history in the context of a cosmic struggle between God and Satan, its view of the two ages with the focus on the cataclysmic inbreaking of God's kingdom, its concentration on the coming judgment and its feeling of imminence thoroughly permeated Jewish thinking. This created that religious posture which Luke describes when he says, "The people were waiting expectantly" (Luke 3:15). Apocalyptic was a bridge from the ancient prophets to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus and the apostles used features of the apocalyptic framework to give force to the gospel. While we do not include books like the Book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Book of Noah, the Assumption of Moses and Second Esdras in the canon of Holy Scripture, they represent a movement which God used to prepare His people for the birth of the Christian gospel.

John the Baptist represented this apocalyptic movement at the breaking point. He probably descended from one of the severely ascetic apocalyptic sects. In fiery apocalyptic imagery he announced that the cataclysmic inbreaking of God's kingdom was at hand. He expected that the Messiah, whom he introduced to the people, would fulfill this apocalyptic hope.

In the message that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, the gospel declares that He fulfills all the apocalyptic dreams and more. Yet because childhood fantasy never corresponds to reality, even John the Baptist had difficulty adjusting his apocalyptic hopes to the reality of Jesus of Nazareth. Perhaps God laid the prophet to rest to spare him the trauma of reality. No pre-Christian dreams or visions could adequately describe the transcendent reality of God in human flesh dying on a cross and rising from the dead. This exceedingly bright reality, far more resplendently glorious than any prophet or apocalypticist could hope or think, had to break like the

gradual dawn. When the resurrection took place and Pentecost revealed the glory of the Christ event, the sun of the gospel burst on Israel in meridian glory. John the Baptist's prayer, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, RSV), was answered, for John represented the apocalyptic, while Jesus represented the gospel. Apocalyptic now gave way to reality itself. God no longer spoke to men through visions or revealed Himself in enigmatic statements, but at last He spoke His final Word in His Son. Henceforth there would be no way of going on from hearing the gospel to some higher or more profound experience or revelation of God. With the coming of the gospel, the community comes of age, and with Paul it says, "When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me" (1 Cor. 13:11). Consequently, "*the characteristic literary form of Christianity was the gospel and not the apocalypse.*"⁶

Apocalyptic, however, remained a subordinate literary strand in apostolic Christianity, as the book of Revelation demonstrates. The book of Revelation, however, is not ordinary apocalyptic. The author takes the apocalyptic imagery widely used by the Jews and shows that it is all fulfilled in Him "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4). Just as Matthew and Luke show how Jewish history is fulfilled in Christ, and Paul shows how Jewish law is fulfilled in Christ, so the revelator shows how Jewish apocalyptic is fulfilled in Christ.

From Medieval Apocalypticism to the Reformation Gospel. Although Paul warned the church not to quench the prophetic spirit (1 Thess. 5:19, 20), the post-apostolic church did just that—as postexilic Israel had quenched

6. Gerhard Ebeling, *Journal for Theology and the Church*, no. 6 (1969): 53 (Ebeling's italics), quoted in Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 83.

the prophetic spirit. Augustine's heady concept of the church as the "city of God" was not realized in the historical process. As the centuries ground wearily on and the earlier Christian hopes seemed further from realization than ever, men again began to despair of the historical process. Between two and three hundred years before the Reformation there was a remarkable renewal of apocalyptic thinking in the medieval church. The apocalyptic spirit was strongly manifested in some of the great medieval saints and mystics such as Joachim of Floris (d. 1202), Francis of Assisi (1181?-1226), John Bonaventura (1221-1274) and Birgitta of Sweden (1303-1373). Joachim of Floris was one of the first to apply the historicist method of prophetic interpretation along with the "year-day principle." He of course worked out the mysterious numbers to fit his day.⁷ To read Bonaventura is astonishingly like reading James White or Joseph Bates as they interpreted the apocalyptic symbols in the book of Revelation. The seal of God, the development of the 144,000 community, and many other features peculiar to Adventist eschatology were applied by Bonaventura to fit his century instead of the nineteenth century.⁸ Birgitta of Sweden, a woman of great piety, had visions and apocalyptic revelations astonishingly like those of Ellen White.⁹

All apocalypticists tended to speculate about the end times. Many set wildly speculative dates. Yet most of

7. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1946-1954).

8. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of History According to St. Bonaventura* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, n.d.). See also Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150-1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 58-92.

9. See J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), pp. 18-26.

them were pious mystics preoccupied with godly dreams of the future. Many of these apocalyptic spirits withdrew into the desert or into monasteries to follow an ascetic way of life. Like the pre-Christian apocalypticists, they thought they were to hasten or precipitate the day of the Lord by their great piety. Hence, the ascetic life was pursued with great zeal. In that long night of Christian history these apocalyptic spirits testified of the coming morning. Many people were thereby startled. Even kings and popes solemnly listened, and men were made conscious that the great day was approaching. They trembled because even their medieval piety could not relieve their uneasy conscience. This apocalyptic movement served as a bridge which led to the mighty rebirth of the gospel in the Reformation.

Luther had no use for apocalyptic. He even suggested that Revelation should not have been included in the canon of Holy Scripture. (He apparently never saw that John's purpose was to show that Jewish apocalyptic is fulfilled in Him "who is, and who was, and who is to come."—Rev. 1:4.) Neither Luther nor Calvin had any time for speculation about apocalyptic time periods. The year-day principle of historicism is not the Protestant principle of prophetic interpretation, as Froom tried so hard to prove. The year-day principle originated with Jewish and Christian medieval apocalyptic mystics and was introduced into Protestantism by various apocalyptic speculators after the Reformation. Luther and Calvin did not use the canons of historicism or the year-day principle to identify the papal antichrist. They identified the biblical imagery of the antichrist with the papacy because of its opposition to the gospel. They viewed everything in relation to the gospel. This was their overriding hermeneutic principle.

From the Modern Apocalyptic Revival to a Final Recovery of the Apostolic Gospel. When Protestantism settled into its period of orthodoxy, it also quenched the prophetic spirit. As the Protestant movement matured, it drew up its creeds, systematized its theology and fixed its boundaries. Truth became fossilized. There was also an unwarranted optimism about the church's ability to subdue the world to Christ. Says Lutheran scholar, William Hordern:

Because of the church's tendency to lose its full Christian witness, it frequently needed to be jarred by a prophetic voice, but often in its history it had no room within itself for such a voice. When this was the case, the prophetic message had to be expressed by a sect outside the church.¹⁰

Most sects tend to be apocalyptically oriented. While the mainstream church frequently loses sight of its pilgrim character, the sectarians often recapture the spirit of the impending end. J. E. Fison has shown that, despite their naive literalism and utopian apocalyptic, the sects generally manifest more life than does the "great church."¹¹ Many scholarly spokesmen for the great church now acknowledge that it needs the prophetic sectarian witness. While the sectarian bread may be rather moldy or only half baked and its Christian witness may be distorted, truncated and heretical in certain areas, it is nevertheless a beneficial witness which God uses when other means have failed to shake the church. I suggest that we need to look at Adventism in this context. It is undoubtedly a genuine Christian

10. William Hordern, *Christianity, Communism, and History* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp 17-18.

11. See J. E. Fison, *The Christian Hope: The Presence and the Parousia* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954).

movement, but a movement on the fringes of the Christian church.

Adventism was a child of the remarkable apocalyptic revival in the early nineteenth century. This revival was not merely an American development but a worldwide phenomenon. It was a reaction against postmillennialism—that optimistic dream that the whole world would be subdued to Christianity so as to inaugurate a golden millennial age. The apocalyptic spirits of the early nineteenth century despaired of the church realizing its goal through the historical process and therefore sought an apocalyptic solution.

Again and again religious history seems to demonstrate that, once the bright glow of the gospel is lost, it can only be recovered by a process which begins with apocalyptic. This is a childish stage of development, but we must remember the words of Wordsworth, "The child is father of the man."¹² When apocalyptic runs its course, it triggers the birth or rebirth of the gospel.

Froom and others have labeled nineteenth-century Adventism a prophetic movement,¹³ but the word *prophetic* has much broader connotations. It is more accurate to say that early Adventism was a manifestation of the apocalyptic spirit. The prophetic spirit finds its purest manifestation in the gospel (Rev. 19:10), but the gospel was not the forte of early Adventism.

Millerism was the most spectacular expression of the worldwide apocalyptic revival. Nineteenth-century Adventism was not a great gospel revival but an apocalyptic revival—and it is imperative that we see the difference. While William Miller, Edward Irving and

12. Quoted in Burton Stevenson, *The Home Book of Quotations: Classical and Modern*, 10th ed. (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1967), p. 251.

13. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1971), esp. pp. 25-38.

Joseph Wolff preached the gospel, their great preoccupation was with apocalyptic. They never attained a reputation as gospel exponents.

William Miller was a marvelous apocalyptic speculator. Many of his "expositions" were far removed from the world of sober biblical exegesis. By ingenious analogies and the juggling of apocalyptic numbers, he used the seven times of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:16, 23, 25, 32) as well as the mysterious number 666 to reach to 1843.¹⁴ It is clear that he arrived at some of his dates by beginning with a hypothetical date and working backward. For example, he established 677 B.C. (Manasseh's captivity) as the starting point of the seven times (2,520 years) of Leviticus 26:18 by working backward from his conjecture that the Lord would come in 1843. By subtracting the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11 from 1798 he arrived at A.D. 508 and then searched for an event that would correspond to the taking away of the "daily"—which he erroneously supposed to be paganism. Why did he select the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. as the fulfillment of "the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem"? (Dan. 9:25, RSV). And why did he make this the starting point of the 2,300 years? Neither he nor anyone else could do this on the basis of sound biblical evidence. Miller chose the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. because it was the only date which would fit the way he wanted it to. The time period was all worked out by ingenious juggling. It was no more scientific exegesis than presuming that the number 666 is represented by the title on the pope's tiara. (For that matter, someone has shown that the number 666 is also repre-

14. See William Miller, "Synopsis of Miller's Views," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy* 4, no. 19 (25 Jan. 1843): 149. See also William Miller, *Miller's Reply to Stuart's "Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy"* (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1842), pp. 45-6.

sented in the Roman numerical value of Ellen Gould White.) There is no clearer evidence that Miller was a marvelous apocalyptic speculator than the fifteen "proofs" for his positions set forth in the *Signs of the Times* for January 25, 1843. In these he "proved" that the seven times of Leviticus 26:18, the seven-year war of Ezekiel 39:9, 10, the seventh-day Sabbath, the seven times seven number of Jubilees, the three days of Hosea 6:1-3 as well as the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 all reached to 1843.

Miller, however, was outdone by Samuel S. Snow and George Storrs, the progenitors of the famous "midnight-cry" movement. Snow and Storrs were fantastic apocalyptic speculators. While it is generally believed that Snow became unbalanced after the Great Disappointment, the evidence indicates that he was the same wild-eyed speculator when he first gave the "midnight cry" at the memorable Exeter campmeeting of August 1844. He treated biblical parables as if they were detailed prophetic allegories of everything the Millerites did in the nineteenth century. By an involved process of juggling times and seasons and using the erroneous calendar of the Karaite Jews, Snow calculated the very day of Christ's coming—October 22, 1844. Miller himself was unimpressed, but most Millerites were impatient over any uncertainty on the time prophecies. Not content with fixing an exact time, Snow and Storrs made the acceptance of their calculations a test which would decide the fate of the entire world.

After the Great Disappointment of October 22, most Millerites abandoned their apocalyptic speculations. But not the little group who were to become the pioneer Seventh-day Adventists. Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson and James White were the leading apocalyptic speculators in the post-Disappointment era. Bates even suggested that Christ went before the mercy seat to

sprinkle the blood seven times (like Aaron in Leviticus 16) and that these seven times represented the seven years extending from 1844 to 1851.¹⁵ Edson was the visionary farmer who years later claimed he was the first to propose that Jesus passed from one compartment of the heavenly sanctuary to the other on October 22. Some of Edson's other apocalyptic ideas were so wild that they embarrassed the Whites. James White was the most systematic apocalypticist of them all. He assigned himself the task of defining the sequence of all the events from October 22 to the end of the world.¹⁶

From its inception Seventh-day Adventism has been a classical apocalyptic sect of the Christian church:

1. It has concentrated on the two apocalyptic books of the Bible, Daniel and Revelation, and derived unique emphases from these sources.
2. It has indulged in much speculation about the end of the world.
3. It has tended to be esoteric and cultic, as manifested in its "shut-door" mentality.
4. It has tended to be anti-establishment, as evidenced by its castigation of the established churches as the "harlot" churches of Babylon.
5. It has withdrawn from the world to await the eschaton. In this it has remarkably resembled the spirit of Jewish apocalyptic. In their first decade Adventists

15. See Joseph Bates, *An Explanation of the Typical and Anti-Typical Sanctuary, by the Scriptures* (New Bedford: Press of Benjamin Lindsey, 1850), p. 10.

16. For a detailed account of the novel apocalyptic speculations in the post-Disappointment era, see P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

were not interested in the world except to withdraw from it. As far as they were concerned, the world and the churches were doomed because Christ had come on October 22 and shut the door. As the little remnant, they alone were shut in. The world and the Christian bodies were shut out—their salvation had passed. Even former Adventist brethren who rejected this shut-door doctrine were denounced as the synagogue of Satan. It was only a step from the shut-door doctrine to open vindictiveness. Some took that step and actually prayed that God would destroy their theological opponents!¹⁷

6. Like many apocalyptic spirits, Adventism has been very triumphalistic ("We are the true remnant, and we alone are called to herald and usher in the end times," etc.).

7. Most apocalyptic spirits have tended to be ascetic. They have lived by strict codes of eating, drinking and dressing—usually imposed by a desert teacher, a monastic order or some other disciplinary agent. Adventists have also tended to be Christian ascetics who live by an extrabiblical "blueprint" which outlines the disciplined conduct of the sect in great detail. Just as Jewish apocalypticists taught that the pious living of the remnant would hasten and precipitate the Messiah's coming, so Adventists have taught that the end of the world depends on their achieving perfect piety.

8. Most apocalyptic movements are marked by mystic dreams, visions or apocalyptic trances by one or a number of persons in the community. The Jewish and

17. "Well I have no doubt that the time has come for us to ask God in faith to kill the wicked, and consume them from the earth: Just as we ask him to bestow his spirit upon us; or as we formerly asked him to save sinners" (G. W. Peavey, "A Voice of the Howling of the Shepherds; for Their Glory Is Spoiled," *Day-Star* 9, nos. 7-8 [24 Jan. 1846]: 10).

medieval apocalyptists had their visionaries, and the American Adventists had their Ellen G. White.

In 1844 Ellen Harmon (later Ellen White) was an intensely pious girl of seventeen who lived entirely in this world of frantic apocalypticism. She passed through the wrenching experience of the Great Disappointment and compared her sorrow at that time to the sorrow of the weeping disciples who thought they had lost their Messiah. She was a member of the shut-door band which clung to its Advent faith as (to use the words of one of their number) "wave after wave of fanaticism" passed over them. Soon she began having prophetic trances—all relating to subjects which the brethren were earnestly discussing and frantically trying to understand. Her visions largely reflected and confirmed the views of James White. Such visionary confirmation was comforting to the harassed pioneers in those uncertain days. Ellen White was a typical apocalyptic mystic. Not until years later did Adventists begin to place her early visions (edited of course!) in the category of biblical revelation. We now have evidence that Ellen White read Jewish apocalyptic writings and actually borrowed many descriptive phrases from this material.¹⁸

Ellen White was not the only person in her era who had prophetic trances. About the same time, England was also being stirred by a great apocalyptic revival. The British Advent movement was likewise marked by charismatic manifestations. Robert Norton has written a

18. See Ellen G. White, in *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (1847; facsimile reproduction, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., n.d.), p. 26; see also pp. 15, 17, 19. Unpublished research has revealed other extensive literary borrowing by Ellen White from such apocryphal books as *Second Esdras*. Still further research has shown that Ellen White also borrowed from the medieval haggadic literature of Judaism—i.e., *The Book of Jasher; Referred to in Joshua and Second Samuel* (1840; reprint ed., Mokolunne Hill, Calif.: Health Research, 1966).

fascinating account of the outbreak of prophetic gifts in England and Scotland at that time.¹⁹ Norton tells the story of the pious Macdonald family in Scotland. Two brothers and their sister exhibited supernatural gifts of prophetic utterance. The visions of Margaret Macdonald are astonishingly like those of Ellen White. They too are replete with the familiar phrase, "I saw." In fact, a comparison of Margaret Macdonald's visions with *Early Writings* suggests that her visions were more spiritual and revealed more pathos, love and certainly far more sympathy for sinners than the early visions of Ellen White.²⁰

19. See Robert Norton, *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; in the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1861).

20. The following passages are illustrative of Margaret Macdonald's gift: "Immediately I was so swallowed up in God I did not see those who were with me in the room, nor hear their voices singing, but I heard the trump of God sounding in my ears so loud that all other sounds were lost. I heard unutterable things. The sound of the trumpet seemed to wax louder and louder, as if at that moment the Lord was to have been revealed. I felt surrounded by the heavenly hosts, a multitude which no man could number, and heard them saying, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.' O, it was a blessed sound, and I felt constrained to join with them, and sing loudly the same glorious song. I did not feel on this earth, I thought it had vanished at the presence of the Lord. No language can express the glorious things which were made to pass before me. I was constrained to cry for a speedy revelation of the glory, that all flesh might see it. It was impressed on me that the longsuffering of God is salvation, not willing that any should perish. I felt that the spirit of Jesus was weeping the same as He did over Jerusalem, over the world,—and I was constrained to cry to those who were with me to ask for souls to be brought to Jesus. I felt that He was longing over souls with an intensity of love altogether inconceivable. All the mighty works which God did for His ancient people passed before me. I was astonished and overwhelmed. At that time a great deal was given me to say to my brothers. All things again passed from before me. I was overpowered by the spotless purity of God, and saw that He is indeed a holy God who cannot look upon sin without abhorrence. Everything seemed black and desolate with it. I shuddered and felt as if the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain. Had I not seen that Jesus on the cross had borne sin away, I thought all must have sunk under it immediately. The price that had been paid in the sufferings of our Lord was brought before me, and I felt what an awful thing it was to have light views of sin. All His agony in the garden and on the cross went to my heart, and I was constrained to cry, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart

Karolina Utriainen of Finland was born in 1843 and was called to preach at the early age of nine years. She had an apocalyptic vision of Christ Himself, and her description is very reminiscent of the early visions of Ellen White. And there were a number of other "sleeping" (trance) preachers of Finland.²¹ These women were not pious frauds or counterfeits of Ellen White. Although they were all part of their cultural and religious milieu, much of their work was beneficial.

As in the age of the Jewish and medieval apocalypticists, some of the apocalypticists of the nineteenth century crossed the boundary that entitles them to a place in the Christian fold. The founder of the Mormons, Joseph Smith, was such a person.

9. One more feature of the Adventist apocalyptic spirit deserves attention. While the apocalyptic spirit is prophetic, it is not prophetic in the mature sense of the

from iniquity.' After this very much passed before me. I felt in a measure what it was to be come to the spirits of the just made perfect; I held intercourse and fellowship which I cannot describe, but which I knew to be reality. . . .

"I saw the people of God in an awfully dangerous situation. . . . It will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the very centre; but the trial of real faith will be found to honour and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand; the stony-ground hearers will be made manifest; the love of many will wax cold. . . . I frequently said, Oh, be filled with the Spirit; have the light of God in you, that you may detect Satan; be full of eyes within; be clay in the hands of the potter; submit to be filled with God. It is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. This will fit us to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. I saw it to be the will of God that all should be filled; but what hindered the life of God from being received by His people was their turning from Jesus,—passing the cross, through which every drop of the Spirit of God flows to us. Oh, it is much needed, a leading back to the Cross.

"I saw that night, and often since, that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit such as has not been; a baptism of fire, that all the dross may be put away;—the servants of God sealed in their foreheads; His holy image in His people; the bride made comely by His comeliness put upon her.—Jesus wants His bride. His desire is towards us. He that shall come will come and will not tarry."—Quoted in Norton, *Restoration of Apostles and Prophets*, pp. 6-8, 17-18.

21. See Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, pp. 14-15.

word. It represents a pre-maturity phase of religious development. Apocalyptic is stamped from beginning to end with the marks of religious childhood. As we have already pointed out, apocalyptic speculations about the end times are never descriptions of reality but are childlike fantasies. We do not say this in a pejorative sense, for in real life childlike fantasies must precede adult maturity.

The entire 1844 Adventist episode is stamped with the characteristic of childlike apocalyptic fantasy. It was not the Millerite leaders who blazed the "midnight cry" of 1844. It was the simple, common people who were determined that Christ would come on October 22. Anyone would have had to be naive to believe this, and far more naive to believe that God would damn everyone who rejected their childish date setting.

Despite the fiasco of October 22, 1844, the pioneer Seventh-day Adventists, who were mostly youngsters physically as well as spiritually, refused to accept reality—that the "midnight cry" was an apocalyptic fantasy. Their mistake did not destroy their apocalyptic spirit. Instead, they made an apocalyptic fantasy out of the Disappointment of October 22. The date was right, they said; only the event was wrong. The Bridegroom had actually come to the most holy place in heaven and had shut the door on all their theological opponents. The primitive Seventh-day Adventist community might have numbered less than one hundred souls, but for about seven years they were sure that they alone had the truth and that the entire Christian church was doomed. When time forced them to abandon this shut-door fantasy, they reinterpreted it as an investigative judgment—which they tried to support by the most arduous juggling of texts, parables and biblical analogies. In their apocalyptic imagination, October 22, 1844 became

the greatest event in history beside the Christ event of A.D. 31.

The Adventist prophetic schema passes silently over such significant developments as the Reformation and regards 1844 as the birth of the greatest religious movement this world has ever seen. The pioneers were so anxious to make a transcendently important event that they robbed A.D. 31 of its glory to bestow it on 1844. For example, they said that the atonement was not made on the cross but in 1844, that Christ did not go into the most holy place in A.D. 31 but in 1844, that the last days did not arrive in A.D. 31 but in 1844 and that Christ did not receive His kingdom from His Father in A.D. 31 but in 1844. The first Sabbatarian periodical, *Present Truth* (edited by James White), actually said that Hebrews 9:26 ("once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin"—KJV) referred to what happened in 1844. When Peter said in his day that the time had come for judgment to begin at the house of God, James White said that Peter was speaking prophetically of 1844. But the apocalyptic fantasy does not end here. Traditional Adventism sees its birth as that which inaugurates the last days. It is God's remnant, and the Seventh-day Adventist organization is not only the one true church but God's last church, the only object of God's supreme regard. It sees itself as God's mighty colossus, striding through the earth and finishing the work. This apocalyptic fantasy has generated an incredible triumphalism.²²

There is a fine line between apocalyptic fantasy and fanaticism. All the pioneers were guilty of the shut-door fanaticism. Mrs. White not only "saw" that the saints should be rebaptized into the faith of the shut door,

22. See Kenneth H. Wood, "Daniel Points to Our Day as the End-Time," *Adventist Review*, 17 July 1980, pp. 3-6.

but was rebaptized herself.²³ In 1845 James White denounced a couple in their group for denying the faith by marrying at such a late hour—yet he married Ellen Harmon some months later.²⁴

Mrs. White's early visions were simply pious apocalyptic fantasies which reflected the views of her brethren—mostly her husband's. They were helpful to her brethren in their immaturity, but no mature student of the Bible could regard them as revelations after the biblical order. In one vision she entered the heavenly sanctuary and saw that it looked just like the one built by Moses—with a table of shewbread, curtains and Jesus ministering like a Levitical high priest. No mature student of the gospel believes that there is a two-apartment Levitical tabernacle in heaven with furniture corresponding to the Mosaic tabernacle. Mrs. White only mirrored the childish views of her peers in a kind of pious religious reverie. And her visions reflected both the mistakes as well as the advances of the little Adventist band.

After the end of the shut-door episode (1844-1851) Mrs. White virtually disappeared from the scene for about five years. In those early years her visions were not regarded as revelations of infallible dogma. In fact, James White was outspoken about keeping the visions in their proper place. But when Mrs. White emerged from her silent years about 1856, she began to be invested with a prophetic mantle after the order of a biblical prophet. This was also part of Adventism's apocalyptic fantasy. The entire idea of the "Spirit of Prophecy" invested the movement with proof that it was God's remnant church.

23. See chap. 26, footnote 5.

24. See Paul B. Ricchiuti, *Ellen* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1977), pp. 25-6.

In order to support this apocalyptic fantasy, some of Ellen White's earlier visions and activities had to be edited or concealed. Skeletons had to be buried, hagiographies had to be written, and a holy history had to be created out of things which were nothing more than religious foolishness. I have no desire to exhibit some of the pitiful human eccentricities manifested in the post-Disappointment period. Some of it is very distressing, and if it were not for the fact that traditional Adventism is so dogmatically tied to that history, I would gladly pass silently over those early years. It is not that the pioneers or Adventist historians have been deliberately dishonest, even when covering up the facts of history. They are simply caught up in this apocalyptic fantasy.

Mrs. White wore the heavy prophetic mantle astonishingly well. When her people looked for her to live up to their unrealistic expectations, she did not have within herself the means to give them the bread they needed. Being very resourceful, however, she began borrowing prodigiously. She gathered material from Protestant authors, placed it in an Adventist framework and made it both simple and authoritative for the Adventist people. Her "children" did not wish to know where "Santa Claus" got all the presents, and she felt no need to tell them. Because of original sin there may well have been an element of motherly deviousness in Mrs. White's methods. But in the context of apocalyptic fantasy, there is a fine line between devotion to the cause and devious manipulation. It is clear that Mrs. White herself was caught in this apocalyptic fantasy about the "Spirit of Prophecy," for she eventually compared the trustworthiness of everything she wrote to the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Fortunately, as the pioneer Adventists matured, they abandoned much of their frantic apocalyptic specu-

lation and moved more and more toward the mainstream of orthodox Christianity. Ellen White led the way in this maturing process. It is astonishing how such a narrow, esoteric, shut-door group became an aggressive missionary movement. As the years passed, the pioneers often nostalgically recalled their nascent Advent experience and wished they could recapture their early fervor.

The romanticism linked with those early days is understandable, but it would be well to restrict such dreams to the world of the imagination. Adventism could no more live in the white heat of its apocalyptic conception than the Christian church could live in the ecstasy of Pentecost or lovers could live in the delirious euphoria of their first embrace. Yet apocalyptic has remained a strong feature in Adventism. If Adventism is to be judged by its public evangelistic campaigns, it is fair to say that apocalyptic rather than the gospel is its major preoccupation. Studies on last-day events have been widely promoted in the community. Although evangelists and teachers in the past have been greatly embarrassed over their dogmatizing on Turkey and the close of human probation, few have been deterred from discussing how America will pass a national Sunday law and martyr the Adventists. Of this they are sure since it is in *The Great Controversy*.²⁵

It takes great fortitude to become an Adventist if you believe all that the Catholics and Protestants will supposedly do to you in the near future! Although this exists only in the apocalyptic imagination of Adventists, it does have practical value in their spiritual lives. A willingness to put their lives on the line for the truth in the

25. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), pp. 449, 573, 579, 592.

coming time of trouble helps them to take truth seriously today.

Adventism, however, is still so strongly linked to its nineteenth-century apocalypticism that it has virtually canonized its apocalyptic immaturity. Is there any informed Bible student today who still believes he can derive the crude theory of an investigation of the dead beginning on October 22, 1844 from Daniel 8:14? Is there anyone who still believes that the Old Testament apocalyptic writer used mysterious numerics to make scientifically accurate prophecies on the birth of the Adventist church?

Mrs. White was not the only apocalyptic visionary of the nineteenth century. Adventists simply excelled everyone else by making an Ellen White cult in slavishly following her on everything. Informed Adventist scholars now realize that they cannot use the arguments of the pioneers to prove many of their positions. But they continue believing them because Mrs. White said so. It is painful to watch their circuitous and evasive maneuvers as they try to make Mrs. White harmonize with the Bible in the face of obvious contradictions—as in Hebrews 9. Ellen White was a pious apocalyptic spirit, and like many of the great apocalyptic spirits in the Judeo-Christian movement, she was not without some heresy. Her greatest heresy was to think that she had none. In 1905 she wrote, "There is one straight chain of truth without one heretical sentence in that which I have written."²⁶ In saying this, she was simply a victim of her own apocalyptic fantasy. There is no reason to deny that she sincerely believed it and loved Jesus ardently. But as a visionary, Mrs. White does not stand in the tradition of the biblical prophets and apostles. Rather, she stands in

26. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 3 (Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1980), p. 52.

the tradition of the great apocalyptists of the Judeo-Christian movement. Her writings are like the apocryphal books of the Bible—less than canonical though obviously written by saints.

Although Adventism has undoubtedly been a *Christian* movement, as a Christian movement it has held a number of heresies. Its chief heresy has been the conviction that every other church except itself was guilty of heresy. This does not mean that it has therefore been disastrous to be part of the movement. Even orthodox Christian scholars acknowledge that the sects often nurture a more viable Christianity than do the great churches. It cannot be denied that God has elected to save many through the witness of Adventism.

There is no reason for my Adventist brethren to ask, "Is all lost because we are part of this Adventist history?" No, for God's gracious Lordship over history has been manifested in Adventism. History has repeatedly proved that apocalyptic has been used by God as the matrix for the gospel. The Christian gospel was born out of apocalyptic Judaism. Adventists have the unshakable conviction that God raised them up to lighten the earth with His glory (Rev. 18:1), but this cannot be done with apocalyptic—by dead men telling tales or by skillfully juggling the mysterious numbers of Daniel and Revelation. And of course we all intuitively know this. It will only be done by the gospel.

Apocalyptic Adventism has been a preparation for a recovery of the apostolic gospel. Adventism has recapitulated the Judaistic community which awaited the Messiah. It therefore has the marvelous opportunity to recapitulate the transition from apocalyptic Judaism to New Testament Christianity. In reviewing the history of Adventism, we see how the pioneers ascribed the atonement, Christ's entry into the most holy place and the inauguration of the last days to 1844. If this is not heresy,

nothing is! But all is not lost if we turn the meaning of 1844 into a rehearsal of the Christ event. God has used apocalyptic to forcefully bring His people to the reality of what happened in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁷

Adventists need not look upon the gospel as the destruction of their heritage, but as its fulfillment. The gospel is so great that, in fulfilling the history of the Old Testament, it fulfilled all human history, even Adventist history. The gospel is the reality of the so-called investigative judgment, and the justification which comes by faith is its liberating verdict. The blessed gospel is all that we have hoped for and more.

While we have ample room for repentance, there is no reason to disown our Adventist heritage. We cannot escape our history anyway, for our history is what we are. If God has elected to return us to the apostolic gospel by the road of Adventist apocalyptic, let us be grateful for the way He has led us. The gospel challenges us to put away childish things and to come to maturity.

One lingering difficulty may prevent an Adventist from relinquishing the apocalyptic fantasy about 1844. It is often said, "If you take away the history of 1844, you take away the only thing which justifies our corporate existence." The reason why Adventism cannot face the truth of its history but has created so many

27. The Awakening of the 1960's represented Adventist apocalypticism at the breaking point. For decades Adventism had urged perfection of character as a means of securing the latter rain and the seal of God, of being ready for the time of trouble and of hastening Christ's coming. Many had exhausted themselves in trying to break the "sin barrier," and some were in danger of killing themselves with their ascetic programs. The Awakening despaired of reaching this goal of perfection by the historical process and sought an apocalyptic solution to the problem of original sin by entering the "judgment of the living" by faith. This was apocalyptic Adventism taken to its logical end. The Awakening streaked across the Adventist sky and died like a falling meteor, yet this development triggered an astonishing recovery of the gospel in the Adventist community.

pious legends is that it depends upon that history for its corporate justification. Yet right here it unwittingly expresses its denial of justification by Christ alone. Only one history justifies our right to exist either individually or corporately—the holy history of Jesus of Nazareth. To embrace the gospel means that we confess that all history but Christ's stands under the judgment of God. It is His history plus nothing which justifies our existence. We began as a movement by making our history (1844) replace His (A.D. 31). We then retreated and made our history a necessary addition to His. But now the gospel demands that we find the justification for our existence in the history of Jesus Christ alone.

Appendix

Following are a few examples of Ellen G. White's literary dependence on such authors as Larkin B. Coles, Alfred Edersheim, William Hanna, John Harris, Horace Mann, Daniel March and Calvin E. Stowe.

Larkin B. Coles

The sympathy existing between the mind and the body is so great, that when one is affected, both are affected.¹

Whatever mars the healthy circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system, lessens the strength of the vital forces; and, through them, deadens the native

Ellen G. White

The sympathy which exists between the mind and the body is very great. When one is affected, the other responds.²

The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life.

1. Larkin B. Coles, *Philosophy of Health: Natural Principles of Health and Cure; or, Health and Cure without Drugs* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields, 1853), p. 127.

2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 4:60. First published in 1876.

susceptibilities of the soul. The nervous system is the only medium through which truth can reach the interior man. Divinity himself uses no other medium through which to reach the human heart.³

Alfred Edersheim

With no spiritual, only a heathen acknowledgment of Jehovah, covetousness and ambition were the main actuating motives of Balaam. In the pithy language of the New Testament, [2 Pet. ii. 15.] he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." . . . And thus God gave him leave to do that on which he had set his heart. . . .

And so even "the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." [2 Pet. ii. 16.] . . . Even so, Balaam still continued blinded, perverse, and misunderstanding, till God opened the mouth of the dumb animal.⁵

God's repentance is not like ours, for "the Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent." Man's repentance implies a change of mind, God's a change of circumstances and relations. *He* has not changed, but is ever the same; it is man who has changed in his posi-

Whatever disturbs the circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system lessens the strength of the vital powers, and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind.⁴

Ellen G. White

Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness." 2 Peter 2:15. The sin of covetousness, which God declares to be idolatry, had made him a timeserver. . . .

Thus far the Lord would permit Balaam to follow his own will, because he was determined upon it. . . .

Balaam was blinded to the heavenly interposition. . . .

God now opened its mouth, and by "the dumb ass speaking with man's voice," he "forbade the madness of the prophet." 2 Peter 2:16.⁶

God's repentance is not like man's repentance. "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent." Man's repentance implies a change of mind. God's repentance implies a change of circumstances and relations. Man may change his rela-

3. Coles, *Philosophy of Health*, pp. 266-67.

4. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:347. First published in 1869.

5. Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History*, 7 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1876-1887), 3:21-2.

6. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1958), pp. 439-42.

tion relatively to God. . . . God's repentance is the unmovedness of Himself, while others move and change.⁷

. . . by means of "a branch of hyssop." . . . In ancient times this plant was regarded as possessing cleansing properties. . . .

The sacrificial lamb, whose sprinkled blood protected Israel, pointed to Him whose precious blood is the only safety of God's people; the hyssop (as in the cleansing of the leper, and of those polluted by death, and in Psalm li. 7) was the symbol of purification.⁹

William Hanna

St. Gregory exclaims: "The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of his light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received. But though the senseless elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God,

tion to God by complying with the conditions upon which he may be brought into the divine favor, . . . but the Lord is the same "yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8.⁸

The hyssop used in sprinkling the blood was the symbol of purification, being thus employed in the cleansing of the leper and of those defiled by contact with the dead. In the psalmist's prayer also its significance is seen: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. . . ." Psalm 51:7.¹⁰

Ellen G. White

At His birth the star had known Christ, and had guided the wise men to the manger where He lay. The heavenly hosts had known Him, and had sung His praise over the plains of Bethlehem. The sea had known His voice, and had obeyed His command. Disease and death had recognized His authority, and had yielded to Him their prey. The sun had known Him, and at the sight of His dying anguish, had hidden its face of light. The rocks had known Him, and had shivered into fragments at His

7. Edersheim, *Bible History*, 4:76.

8. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 630.

9. Edersheim, *Bible History*, 2:79-80.

10. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

and, harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance."¹¹

cry. Inanimate nature had known Christ, and had borne witness to His divinity. But the priests and rulers of Israel knew not the Son of God.¹²

John Harris

Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of strange and mysterious import was heard in heaven; and the more mysterious, because it issued from the throne itself. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Lo, I am come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my breast." And who is it that thus announces his purpose to visit a guilty world, and become incarnate?¹³

His name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, the principle of their piety, the bond of their union, the end of their actions, the authority for their conduct, and the

Ellen G. White

Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, "Lo, I come." "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God." Heb. 10:5-7. In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. Christ was about to visit our world, and to become incarnate. He says, "A body hast Thou prepared Me."¹⁴

Christ's name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His super-

11. St. Gregory, quoted in William Hanna, *The Life of Christ* (New York: American Tract Society, 1863), p. 754.

12. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), pp. 770-71.

13. Heman Humphrey, Introduction to *The Great Teacher: Characteristics of Our Lord's Ministry*, by John Harris, 17th American ed. (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1870), p. 15.

14. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

source of their success. Nothing was to be recognized or received in his kingdom which did not bear the superscription of his name; everything was to confess his supremacy, by acknowledging him for its author, or else for its ultimate design.¹⁵

But the great Prophet and Lawgiver of the Christian church, having consulted our nature in the requirements he makes, can then conform our nature to his authority; having authoritatively announced his will, he can carry it into all the recesses of the soul, and, in perfect harmony with our free volitions, can so identify it with our thoughts and aims, so blend it with the stream and current of our consciousness, that in yielding obedience to his word we are only obeying the actings and impulses of our own minds.¹⁷

He could have uttered a single sentence, which, by furnishing a key to many a mystery, and affording a glimpse of arcana before unknown, would have collected and concentrated around it the busy thoughts of each successive generation to the close of time. . . . He disdained not the repetition of old and familiar truths, provided his introduction of them would subserve his grand design; for, though he pro-

scription is to be recognized in His kingdom.¹⁶

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.¹⁸

He could have opened mysteries which patriarchs and prophets desired to look into, which human curiosity had been impatiently desirous of understanding. . . . Jesus did not disdain to repeat old, familiar truths; for He was the author of these truths. He was the glory of the temple. Truths which had been lost sight of, which had been misplaced, misinterpreted, and disconnected from their pure position, He

15. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 32.

16. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

17. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 40.

18. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

posed to erect a second temple of truth, the glory of which should eclipse the splendor of the first, he deigned to appropriate whatever of the ancient materials remained available. Truths, which the lapse of time had seen displaced and disconnected from their true position, as stars are said to have wandered from their primal signs, he recalled and established anew; and principles, which had faded, disappeared, and been lost, as stars are said to have become extinct, he rekindled and resphered, and commanded them to stand fast forever.¹⁹

He sought access to their minds by the beaten pathway of their most familiar associations; he insinuated and intertwined his divine instruction with the network of their most hallowed recollections and sympathies; thus providing for it the easiest mode of admission into their hearts, and making them feel that his identification with their nature and interest was complete. But,

separated from the companionship of error; and showing them as precious jewels in their own bright luster, He reset them in their proper framework, and commanded them to stand fast forever.²⁰

The Prince of teachers sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He presented the truth in such a way that ever after it was to His hearers intertwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. He taught in a way that made them feel the completeness of His identification with their interests and happiness. . . .

19. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 51.

20. Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 237.

at the same time, whatever of their most popular and admired lore he condescended to employ, he gave them an opportunity of marking his superiority to the most approved and honored of their rabbinical teachers; for, however great its original excellences might have been considered, it came from his hands beautified with a simplicity, dignified with a power, and invested with attractions, unknown to it before.

In order that he might obtain admission through the common avenue of our sympathies, and build himself a home in our hearts, he drew his images and illustrations from the great treasury of our household affections, and from the most familiar features of nature.²¹

Drawing aside the veil which concealed his glory from our eyes, it shows him in his high and holy place, not in a state of silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of holy, happy beings, and every one of them waiting to do his bidding; not in a state of inactivity and moral indifference, but in active communication with every part of his vast dominions.²³

Christ drew many of his illustrations and lessons from the great treasure house of nature.²²

The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion.²⁴

21. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 55.

22. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1946), p. 148.

23. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 61.

24. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1905), p. 417.

He lays open to their inspection the volume of providence, and, turning to the name of each one in succession, shows him that in that volume each has a page—that he has never been absent from the mind of God—that the page assigned to him contains every particular of his history, even to the numbered hairs of his head.²⁵

His whole life was only a preface to his death.²⁷

“Therefore doth my Father love me, *because I lay down my life, that I might take it again because I lay down my life for the sheep:*” in other words, “My Father loves you with a love so unbounded, that he even loves me the more for dying to redeem you. He so loves you, that whatever facilitates the expression of his love receives an expression of his divine esteem: by sustaining your liabilities, by surrendering my life as an equivalent for your transgressions”²⁹

He came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment in the temple

In the book of God’s providence, the volume of life, we are each given a page. That page contains every particular of our history; even the hairs of the head are numbered. God’s children are never absent from His mind.²⁶

His whole life was a preface to His death on the cross.²⁸

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.” That is, My Father has so loved you, that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your substitute and surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father.³⁰

Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the tem-

25. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 62.

26. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 313.

27. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 65.

28. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 382.

29. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 66.

30. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 483-84.

of creation, that every worshipper might have free and equal access to the God of the temple.³¹

He came and set up his tabernacle in the midst of the human encampment, pitched his tent side by side with our tents, to attest the presence of God, to make us familiar with his character, and sensible of his love. The great inscription of Immanuel, *God with us . . .*³³

The Father demonstrates his infinite love to Christ, by receiving and welcoming the friends of Christ as his own friends. He has pledged himself to do so, and he is so complacently delighted with Christ,—so fully satisfied with the atonement he has made,—feels himself so unspeakably glorified by the incarnation and life, the death and mediation, of Christ, by all that he has done for the honor of the divine government and the salvation of man,—that, if I may say so, he has thrown open his heart and his heaven to all the friends of Christ. They come to his throne; and, on the intercession of Christ in their behalf, the Father lays open all the treasures of his grace for their appropriation and use. “Yea,” saith Christ, “ask in my

ple, that every soul may have free access to God.”³²

So Christ set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment. He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life.³⁴

And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ, who paid our ransom with His blood, by receiving and welcoming Christ’s friends as His friends. He is satisfied with the atonement made. He is glorified by the incarnation, the life, death, and mediation of His Son. . . .

As Christ intercedes in our behalf, the Father lays open all the treasures of His grace for our appropriation, to be enjoyed and to be communicated to others. “Ask in My name,” Christ says; “I do not say that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me. Make use of My name. This will give your prayers efficiency, and the Father will give you the riches of His grace; wherefore, ‘ask, and ye shall

31. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 71.

32. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1900), p. 386.

33. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 90.

34. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

name; and I do not say that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me." "Make use of my name, and that will suffice; my name alone, without any entreaty on my part, would be a certain passport to my Father's heart, and to all the riches of his grace." "Wherefore ask and receive, that your joy may be full."³⁵

He gave a new economy to the divine government—placed himself at the head of a new dispensation, the object of which was to reconcile the prerogatives of justice and compassion; and to do this, not by compromising either, but by honoring both—by enabling mercy to punish without impairing its clemency or its claims to our love, and enabling justice to forgive without sacrificing its purity or its claims on our awful regards. The rights of justice and the condition of sinful man were essentially hostile—they had diverged to an infinite remoteness, and stood frowning at each other, as from opposite sides of the universe. He *laid hold* on the nature of man; and, planting his cross midway, created a point of attraction which reached and drew them across the separating gulf back to itself, as to a common centre. Justice moved from its high and awful position on Sinai; and, with all

receive, that your joy may be full." John 16:24.³⁶

His [Christ's] object was to reconcile the prerogatives of Justice and Mercy, and let each stand separate in its dignity, yet united. His mercy was not weakness, but a terrible power to punish sin because it is sin; yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ, Justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one jot of its exalted holiness.

Justice and Mercy stood apart, in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf. The Lord our Redeemer clothed His divinity with humanity, and wrought out in behalf of man a character that was without spot or blemish. He planted His cross midway between heaven and earth, and made it the object of attraction which reached both ways, drawing both Justice and Mercy across the gulf. Justice moved from its exalted throne, and with all the armies of heaven approached the cross. There it

35. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 107.

36. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:364.

the armies of holiness, brightening and still brightening with complacency as it approached, bowed with reverence at the cross, and said, "It is enough."³⁷

No external force is employed. . . . It is true, the change is necessitated; but that moral necessity is the highest form of freedom. It is true that the mind is brought under the authority of a new law; but that law is the royal law of liberty, the law to which the nature of man was pre-configured; and all that the Divine Spirit effects is to bring out and make legible the secret characters of that law originally written on the heart. He comes to the emancipation of the will from a state of slavery; (for sin can only triumph by enfeebling the mind and extinguishing the liberty of the soul;) . . . calls into exercise its noblest powers. Even the expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself; . . . " . . . the only condition on which the freedom of a finite will is possible, is, by its becoming one with the will of God;" and to produce this happy junction is the object of the regenerating Spirit; so that subjection to him is restoration to one's self.³⁹

saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough.³⁸

No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. . . .

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. "The truth shall make you free;" and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only be enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is "the law of liberty." James 2:12.⁴⁰

37. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 110.

38. Ellen G. White, in "Ellen G. White Comments," *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1953-1957), 7:935-36.

39. Harris, *Great Teacher*, pp. 126-27.

40. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

It is the only fortress which he holds in a revolted world; and he intended, therefore, that no authority should be known in it, no laws acknowledged, but his own. . . . His high design is, that, as Satan has a church, (he himself speaks of the synagogue of Satan,) consisting of the children of sin,—a church in which men have been always laboring to cast off the divine law, and to confound the distinctions between good and evil . . .

If his church is to resemble a temple, let it be built after the pattern of things in the heavens: let it have the exact dimensions and proportions assigned by the angel-architect, who brought to the work his golden measuring-rod from heaven, . . . radiating around in all directions its dazzling beams, . . . let her be fed with the manna which his own hand supplies, and grow as the indwelling life shall expand, and be left to the sole guardianship of his own grace, and she shall move in her own light, clad in more than complete steel, having the robes of divinity about her. . . .

But the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is that only object on earth on which he bestows his supreme regard. . . . While he extends his sceptre, and despatches his angels to every part of the world, he engages to come personally into the midst of his church, and to honor their prayers and decisions by regarding them as laws for his own conduct. The church is his mystical body, and he is present

I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church. . . .

. . . His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a sin-stricken, revolted world; and He intended that no authority should be known in it, no laws be acknowledged by it, but His own.

Satan has a large confederacy, his church. Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan because the members are the children of sin. The members of Satan's church have been constantly working to cast off the divine law, and confuse the distinction between good and evil. . . .

His church is to be a temple built after the divine similitude, and the angelic architect has brought his golden measuring rod from heaven, . . . radiating in all directions the bright, clear beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The church is to be fed with manna from heaven and to be kept under the sole guardianship of His grace. Clad in complete armor of light and righteousness, she enters upon her final conflict. . . .

The church . . . is His depository, in which the wealth of His

as the vital head, living through all its members. . . . His church is the repository in which all that wealth is stored, preparatory to its full and final display.⁴¹

Speaking of Satan, our Lord declares that he "abode not in the truth:" once he possessed a throne where all is radiant with holiness and joy; but he swerved from his allegiance to "the blessed and only Potentate," and thus lost his first estate. . . . planted the standard of rebellion, around which all the principles and powers of evil might rally and combine. . . . Stimulated by implacable hatred against God, he no sooner found our world created, than he came to efface from it the image of God, and to stamp his own on its breast. . . .

Unable to expel God from his throne, and thus succeed to the homage of man, he had, by a universal system of idolatry, planted his throne between the human worshipper and the Divine Being, intercepting and appropriating the adoration which belonged to God alone.⁴³

. . . was a sight, we may suppose, familiar to the eye of Christ; though seen by him, alas! under a far different aspect. He beheld in it a scene of woe, which never failed to call forth his pro-

mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display.⁴²

Speaking of Satan, the Lord declares that he abode not in the truth. Once he was beautiful, radiant in light. . . .

Around the standard of rebellion that he planted, evil workers of all generations have rallied. . . .

No sooner was man created than Satan resolved to efface in him the image of God, and to place his stamp where God's should be. . . . He desired to usurp the throne of God. Failing in this, he has worked in darkness, in crookedness, in deception, to usurp his place in the hearts of men. He has set up his throne between God and man, to appropriate the adoration that belongs to God alone.⁴⁴

The Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. With pity He saw how men had become victims of satanic cruelty. He looked with compassion upon those who were

41. Harris, *Great Teacher*, pp. 158-60.

42. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1923), pp. 15-18.

43. Harris, *Great Teacher*, pp. 162-63.

44. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:1119.

found compassion. On all sides he beheld the blinded victims of satanic cruelty: vast, crowded tracts of spiritual beings—immortal essences—wasted, ruined, murdered, lost;—a captive world, chained to the wheels of the spoiler, and moving along (most of them so beguiled as to be actually pleased with the mock pomp of the gloomy procession) to endless death—while immediately beneath his eye, in the very land where he had taken humanity, he saw legions of fiends in actual, bodily possession of miserable man. Not satisfied with the evil they could inflict by ordinary temptation, he beheld them consummating their cruelty by actually incorporating with men, turning their bodies into living tombs, engrossing and demonizing all their powers, merging the man in the fiend. Yes, man, who had been created in the image of God, became “the habitation of dragons;” his heart, the fuel consumed by their passions; his senses and organs, the slaves of their rampant impiety; hell brought to him, and begun in him, upon earth; an incarnate demon, his features putting on the image of the legion within him. What a sight for the Lover of souls!—what a spectacle for infinite Goodness to contemplate!⁴⁵

45. Harris, *Great Teacher*, p. 164.

46. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 36.

being corrupted, murdered, and lost. They had chosen a ruler who chained them to his car as captives. Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin, —to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning. Satanic agencies were incorporated with men. The bodies of human beings, made for the dwelling place of God, had become the habitation of demons. The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of men, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men. Human faces reflected the expression of the legions of evil with which they were possessed. Such was the prospect upon which the world’s Redeemer looked. What a spectacle for Infinite Purity to behold!⁴⁶

The hand of Christ had carried a golden chain of love around the world, binding the whole together, and all to the throne of God.⁴⁷

*Selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church.*⁴⁹

To defer religion till your last hour is guilt of the deepest die; can it be innocent, then, to defer the practice of one of its most important relative duties till the same crisis arrives? . . . For he who withholds his hand from deeds of benevolence till his last hour, surrenders his property to death, rather than devotes it to God. . . .

With the golden chain of His matchless love, Christ had bound them to the throne of God.⁴⁸

Selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church.⁵⁰

I saw that many withhold from the cause while they live, quieting their consciences that they will be charitable at death; they hardly dare exercise faith and trust in God to give anything while living. But this deathbed charity is not what Christ requires of His followers; it cannot excuse the selfishness of the living. Those who hold fast their

47. John Harris, *Mammon; or, Covetousness the Sin of the Christian Church* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), p. 32.

48. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, revised and enlarged ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1915), p. 39.

49. Harris, *Mammon*, p. 36.

50. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:204. First published in 1882.

What you are proposing to defer till the period of your natural death, the Christian, if he acts in harmony with his profession, feels himself bound to do when he dies unto sin; *then* he devotes himself and his property to God; and with this immense advantage over you, that he will be his own executor; that he will enjoy the godlike satisfaction of doing himself, for God, what you will leave to be done by others. You profess to regard yourself only as the steward of your property, and God as its supreme proprietor; but, instead of employing it for his glory and rendering to him a *periodical* account of your stewardship, your covetousness makes it necessary that death should deprive you of your office, in order that the property you hold may not lie useless for ever.⁵¹

Horace Mann

Man came from the hand of God so perfect in his bodily organs, . . . so surcharged with vital force, that it took more than two thousand years of the combined abominations of appetite and ignorance . . . to drain off his

property till the last moment, surrender it to death rather than to the cause.⁵²

Ellen G. White

Man came from the hand of God perfect in every faculty of mind and body; in perfect soundness, therefore in perfect health. It took more than two thousand years of indulgence of appetite and lustful passions to create

51. Harris, *Mammon*, pp. 173-74.

52. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:154. First published in 1882.

electric energies and make him even accessible to disease.⁵³

If the race had not been created with ten times more vital force than it now possesses, its known violations of all the laws of health and life would, long ere this, have extinguished it altogether.⁵⁵

such a state of things in the human organism as would lessen vital force.⁵⁴

If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct.⁵⁶

Daniel March

The magistrates had gone to their homes, flattering themselves that by promptness and energy they had suppressed a popular tumult and vindicated the majesty of Roman law.⁵⁷

The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. The clouds in black and angry masses sweep between the mighty bird and the sunny heights where she builds her nest and basks in the full day. For a while she dashes to and fro, buffeting the storm with her strong wings and waking the echoes of

Ellen G. White

Meanwhile the magistrates returned to their homes, congratulating themselves that by prompt and decisive measures they had quelled a tumult.⁵⁸

The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. Storm clouds shut in this mighty bird of the forest, their dark masses separating her from the sunny heights where she has made her home. Her efforts to escape seem fruitless. She dashes to and fro, beating the air with her strong wings,

53. Horace Mann, "Dedicatory and Inaugural Address" (1853), in Joy Elmer Morgan, *Horace Mann at Antioch* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Assn., 1938), p. 205.

54. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:29. First published in 1876.

55. Mann, in *Horace Mann at Antioch*, p. 209.

56. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:138-39. First published in 1872.

57. Daniel March, *Night Scenes in the Bible* (1868; reprint ed., Kregel Publications, 1977), p. 304.

58. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 214.

the mountains with her wild cry, vainly endeavoring to find some way out of her dark and high-walled prison. At length she dashes upward with a scream of triumph into the midst of the black clouds, and in a moment she is above them in the calm sunshine, with the darkness and the tempest all beneath, the light of heaven shining in full blaze upon her conquering pinions, and her loved home on the lofty crag in full sight waiting to receive her. It is through the darkness that she rushes into the light. It is by a mighty effort to ascend that she leaves the clouds and the storms of earth beneath.

So by a firm decision and a mighty effort must we rise above all the clouds of doubt and fear to the serene heights of faith and peace in God. So through the darkness of trouble and conflict and death must we pass into heaven's eternal day.⁵⁹

I have seen the bird of prey in chase of the timid dove. The dove knew that the hawk, in making its attack, must swoop down from a loftier height. And so the defenceless creature rose, circle above circle, higher and higher, toward heaven. Above the hills and above the mountains, and above the morning clouds, the panting fugitive climbed with laboring wing, and all the while

and waking the mountain echoes with her cries. At length, with a note of triumph, she darts upward, and, piercing the clouds, is once more in the clear sunlight, with the darkness and tempest far beneath. So we may be surrounded with difficulties, discouragement, and darkness. Falsehood, calamity, injustice, shut us in. There are clouds that we cannot dispel. We battle with circumstances in vain. There is one, and but one, way of escape. The mists and fogs cling to the earth; beyond the clouds God's light is shining. Into the sunlight of His presence we may rise on the wings of faith.⁶⁰

Have you ever watched a hawk in pursuit of a timid dove? Instinct has taught the dove that in order for the hawk to seize his prey, he must gain a loftier flight than his victim. So she rises higher and still higher in the blue dome of heaven, ever pursued by the hawk, which is seeking to obtain the advantage. But in vain. The dove is safe as long as she allows nothing to stop her in her

59. Daniel March, *Our Father's House, or the Unwritten Word* (Philadelphia: Zeigler, McCurdy & Co., 1870), pp. 254-55.

60. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), pp. 118-19.

the eager hawk went screaming after, striving in vain to reach a loftier height from which to rush down, like a thunderbolt, and seize the prey. But the dove was safe so long as she continued to soar. She had nothing to fear from the talons of her rapacious foe so long as she suffered nothing to entice her back to the earth. But once let her cease to rise, and her watchful enemy would soon reach a loftier elevation, and from thence shoot down with deadly aim for her destruction.

So is it with us in our lifelong conflict with the seductions and temptations of the world. So long as we keep them under, we are safe. So long as we set our affections on things above, and continue to rise higher and higher in the successive attainments of a pure and blameless life, the world may toil after us with its temptations in vain. To be sure of not sinking, we must never cease from the effort to rise. To win the crown of life, we have only to forget the things that are behind and press forward to those that are before.⁶¹

flight, or draw her earthward; but let her once falter, and take a lower flight, and her watchful enemy will swoop down upon his victim. Again and again have we watched this scene with almost breathless interest, all our sympathies with the little dove. How sad we should have felt to see it fall a victim to the cruel hawk!

We have before us a warfare, —a lifelong conflict with Satan and his seductive temptations. The enemy will use every argument, every deception, to entangle the soul; and in order to win the crown of life, we must put forth earnest, persevering effort. We must not lay off the armor or leave the battlefield until we have gained the victory, and can triumph in our Redeemer. As long as we continue to keep our eyes fixed upon the Author and Finisher of our faith, we shall be safe. But our affections must be placed upon things above, not on things of the earth. By faith we must rise higher and still higher in the attainment of the graces of Christ. By daily contemplating His matchless charms, we must grow more and more into His glorious image. While we thus live in communion with Heaven, Satan will lay his nets for us in vain.⁶²

61. March, *Our Father's House*, pp. 255-56.

62. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1930), pp. 103-4.

Love is the golden chain which binds the believing soul in willing bonds to the service of the supreme Sovereign, to the society of the holy and the blessed, to the maintenance of justice and truth forever and ever.⁶³

Nevertheless it will do us all good, frequently and solemnly to review the closing scenes in the Saviour's earthly life. Amid all the material and worldly passions, by which we are beset and tempted, we shall learn many salutary lessons, by going back in memory, and spending a thoughtful hour, in the endeavor to strengthen our faith and quicken our love at the foot of the cross. What then are the lessons which the divine Passion, the infinite sacrifice, the true and redemptive Cross of Christ is fitted to teach?⁶⁵

With the golden chain of His matchless love Christ has bound them to the throne of God.⁶⁴

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.⁶⁶

It will do you good, and our ministers generally, to frequently review the closing scenes in the life of our Redeemer. Here, beset with temptations as He was, we may all learn lessons of the utmost importance to us. It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the

63. Daniel March, *Walks and Homes of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1866), pp. 134-35.

64. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 679.

65. March, *Walks and Homes of Jesus*, pp. 313-14.

66. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour.⁶⁷

Calvin E. Stowe

Moreover, human minds are unlike in the impressions which they receive from the same word; and it is certain that one man seldom gives to another, of different temperament, education, and habits of thought, by language, exactly the same idea, with the same shape and color, as that which lies in his own mind; yet, if men are honest and right-minded they can come near enough to each other's meaning for all purposes of practical utility.

Here comes in the objection that the Bible can be made to mean everything and anything, all sects build upon it, the most diverse doctrines are derived from it.

This infelicity it shares with everything else that has to be expressed in human language. This is owing to the imperfection, the necessary imperfection of human language, and to the infirmity and the perverse ingenuity also of the human mind. It is not anything peculiar to the Bible. Hear two opposing lawyers argue a point of statute law in its applica-

Ellen G. White

Human minds vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. Yet to honest men, right-minded men, he can be so simple and plain as to convey his meaning for all practical purposes. . . .

They [skeptics] declare that the Bible can prove anything and everything, that every sect proves their doctrines right, and that the most diverse doctrines are proved from the Bible.

The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. . . . Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves. It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible. Opposing politicians argue points of law in

67. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:374. First published in 1879.

tion to a particular case. Hear two opposing politicians make their diverse arguments in reference to the true intent and force of a particular clause in the United States Constitution. . . . It is for practical purposes only that the Bible was given.

Yet prepossessions, prejudices and passions come in so plentifully to darken and confuse men's minds, when they are reading the Bible. . . .

The Bible is not a specimen of God's skill as a writer, showing us God's mode of thought, giving us God's logic, and God's rhetoric, and God's style of historic narration. How often do we see men seeking out isolated passages of Scripture, and triumphantly saying that such expressions are unworthy of God, and could not have proceeded from Him. . . . God has not put himself on trial before us in that way in the Bible. . . . It is always to be remembered that the writers of the Bible were 'God's penmen, and not God's pens.'

It is not the words of the Bible that were inspired, it is not the thoughts of the Bible that were inspired; it is the men who wrote the Bible that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words, not on the man's thoughts, but on the man himself; so that he, by his own spontaneity, under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, conceives certain thoughts and gives utterance to

the statute book, and take opposite views in their application and in these laws. . . .

The Bible was given for practical purposes. . . .

Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ. . . .

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. . . .

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind

them in certain words, both the words and the thoughts receiving the peculiar impress of the mind which conceived and uttered them, and being in fact just as really his own, as they could have been if there had been no inspiration at all in the case. . . .

The Divine mind is, as it were, so diffused through the human, and the human mind is so interpenetrated with the Divine, that for the time being the utterances of the man are the word of God.⁶⁸

and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.⁶⁹

"Selected"

Ellen G. White

The great want of this age is men. Men who are not for sale. Men who are honest, sound from center to circumference, true to the heart's core—men who will condemn wrong in a friend or foe, in themselves as well as others. Men whose consciences are as steady as the needle to the pole. Men who will stand for the right if the heavens totter and the earth reel.⁷⁰

The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.⁷¹

68. Calvin E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible, Both the Canonical and the Apocryphal* (Hartford: Hartford Publishing Co., 1867), pp. 17-20.

69. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), pp. 19-21.

70. "Men Wanted," *Review and Herald* 37, no. 6 (24 Jan. 1871): 47.

71. White, *Education*, p. 57.