The Nearness and the Delay of the Parousia in the Writings of Ellen G. White

Ralph E. Neall

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

THE NEARNESS AND THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Ralph E. Neall
May 1982
THE NEARNESS AND THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

A dissertation presented
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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by
Ralph E. Neall

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ABSTRACT

THE NEARNESS AND THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

by

Ralph E. Neall

Chairman: Hans K. LaRondelle
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE NEARNESS AND THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Name of researcher: Ralph E. Neall

Name and degree of faculty adviser; Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D.

Date completed: May 1982

The writings of Ellen G. White, pioneer leader of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church, exhibit two apparently contradictory streams of thought on the time of the parousia. On one hand she wrote that the time of Christ's coming is fixed by God and will occur soon; on the other, that He has been delayed by the church's failures to preach the gospel and live holy lives.

Her point of entry into eschatological thought was the prediction of William Miller that Christ would return in 1844, rooted in the time prophecies of Daniel and summarized in the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12. She based her conviction of the soon coming of Christ on the past fulfillment of those prophecies. They took precedence in her mind over the familiar signs of the times.
Christ's soon coming became a motive behind all White's exhortations to holy living and diligent witnessing. Her ethical program was inspired by the Millerite movement and informed by the Holiness movement. The prophecy of the three angels explained her people's place in salvation history and gave them their commission: to prepare a people to meet the Lord.

While White consistently wrote of the nearness of the end throughout her ministry, she added the concept of contingency and delay in 1883, in reply to a critic's charge that she was a false prophet because Christ had not come. She said He had been delayed by the past and present sins of His people. Delay then became a new motive behind the same exhortations seen in the nearness stream of her thought.

The tension between nearness and delay cannot be completely harmonized in Ellen White's writings, except perhaps by suggesting that the time of the end is fixed from God's viewpoint but delayed from man's. She shares many characteristics with ancient apocalypses in which contradictory statements were often laid alongside each other without trying to work out all the logical questions. The fact that she used both nearness and delay as motives behind the same kinds of exhortations shows that White was more concerned about the ethical effects of her eschatology than about its chronology.
In Memory of My Parents,
Who Lived and Died
In the Blessed Hope
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>The Acts of the Apostles</td>
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<td>Early Writings of Ellen G. White</td>
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<td>Ed</td>
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<td>Evangelism as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White</td>
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<td>FE</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Christian Education</td>
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<td>Medical Ministry</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Patriarchs and Prophets</td>
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<td>LT</td>
<td>Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1 (2T etc., for vols. 2-9)</td>
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<td>LBC</td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1 (2BC etc., for vols. 2-7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCB</td>
<td>General Conference Bulletin</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIDCC</td>
<td>The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIDNTT</td>
<td>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RH</td>
<td>The Review and Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>The Signs of the Times (published from 1874 in California). References to the Millerite paper of the same name are not abbreviated.</td>
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PREFACE

My interest in the nearness of Christ's coming began with my parents' frequent comments that current events showed the Lord was certainly coming soon. My father told how his father had believed Christ was coming so soon that my father would not have time to grow up and have a family. When I was in the dormitory of Union Springs Academy in New York at the end of World War II, my roommate and I looked at the chaotic state of the world and agreed that surely the Lord would come in less than five years. Curiously, this conviction did not affect our plans to go to college, nor did the Lord's non-appearance in five years weaken our faith. The "blessed hope" has remained just as precious to me as it was to my father and grandfather.

Later I heard the conventional wisdom of many Seventh-day Adventists that the Lord has delayed His coming because of the failures of His church. I even published an article on it, based on a few paragraphs by Ellen G. White. This concept, however, introduced an element of contingency into the blessed hope which made it seem less blessed. I began to wonder whether the contingency of the parousia was a complete reflection of White's thought. Doctoral studies have eventually given me the opportunity to study the dynamics of her writings under careful supervision in my search for an answer.

1"Crossing the Jordan," The Review and Herald, 26 April 1973, pp. 4-6.
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The roots of Seventh-day Adventist eschatology lie in the Millerite revival of the 1840s. William Miller, Baptist farmer and one-time Deist in upstate New York, concluded from his study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation that Christ would return to earth during the year 1843-1844. He began to preach his views wherever he was invited; soon others joined him and the revival became an interdenominational movement centered in the northeastern part of the United States. When the Lord did not appear at the expected time, the interest gave rise to several organized church bodies. The branch that became the Seventh-day Adventist church held that Miller's time prediction had been correct, but his event wrong. Instead of returning to earth in 1844, they said, Christ then commenced a pre-advent judgment in heaven, and when it was finished He would come for His people. In the meantime, the church should go about the task of proclaiming His coming to the world.¹

While the "great disappointment" warned the Seventh-day Adventist group against the error of setting dates, it is not surprising that they have always been keenly interested in trying to determine where they stand in the stream of prophetic history. While Christ said that no man knows the day or hour of His coming,

He also said that when certain signs occur, the believers could know the end is near.\(^1\) Seventh-day Adventists have always hoped, therefore, that by identifying predicted events in current news reports they could narrow the nearness and thus estimate how much longer they might have to wait for the final redemption.\(^2\)

Alongside the belief that Christ is coming soon, there has developed in the church a belief that His coming has been delayed by the failure of church members to live holy lives and preach the message to the world. Taylor Grant Bunch, administrator and college Bible teacher, preached a widely distributed series of vespers sermons in 1937 which suggested that modern Seventh-day Adventists were repeating the experiences of the ancient Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for forty years because of their unbelief and disobedience.\(^3\) In the 1970s this interest was renewed with a spate of articles in popular Adventist magazines.\(^4\) In 1974 C. Mervyn

\(^1\)Matt 24:32-36.

\(^2\)This attitude is well expressed in the popular hymn by F. E. Belden, "Look For the Waymarks, as You Journey on," No. 671, in The Church Hymnal (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941).

\(^3\)"The Exodus of Ancient Israel From Ancient Egypt and the Exodus of Modern Israel from Modern Spiritual Babylon," duplicated by the author in 1937. His sources were largely quotations from Ellen G. White. It is of interest to note that he prepared these sermons slightly more than forty years after 1888, which he saw as a pivotal year in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Maxwell, chairman of the Department of Church History at the
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University,
and Herbert E. Douglass, book editor for Pacific Press, wrote that
Christ will come when the image of Christ is perfectly reflected in
His children or, as Douglass put it, when the harvest is ripe.¹ In
this they were following the lead of M. L. Andreasen, administrator,
teacher, and college president, who maintained that before He can
come, the Lord needs a generation of holy people to demonstrate that
the plan of salvation has been effective.² The calls to revival
and reformation issued by the Annual Councils of the church (1973
and 1974) were predicated on the same basis. They said that the
Lord's return had been delayed by sin in the church and by its
failure to preach the gospel to the world.³ In other words, Christ's
coming was seen as contingent on the state of the church and would

¹Douglass, "Men of Faith—The Showcase of God's Grace," and
Maxwell, "Ready for His Appearing," Perfection, the Impossible Pos-
sibility, by Herbert E. Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans K.
LaRondelle, and C. Mervyn Maxwell (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub.

²The Book of Hebrews (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald,
1948), pp. 458-70; and The Sanctuary Service (Washington, D.C.:

³Herbert E. Douglass, "1973 Annual Council," RH, 15 November
1973, pp. 1-12; "An Earnest Appeal from the Annual Council," RH,
6 December 1973, pp. 1-5; "World Leaders in Annual Council Speak to
the Church," RH, 14 November 1974, pp. 1-5. The official appeals
voted by the two councils reflect many ideas and much of the writing
style of Dr. Douglass.

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materialize just as soon as the church "swings into line" in cooperation with Christ, to use the words of Leroy Edwin Froom, seminary professor and for many years head of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.¹

On the other hand, works by Adventist scholars have appeared which de-emphasize or ignore the element of contingency and delay in the coming of Christ.² They say that the important thing is not the time when Christ will come, but the obligation to live in a constant state of readiness. Whenever the end of the world may be, everyone should be ready for the end of his own life. Roy Branson feels that the Seventh-day Adventist church has adapted to the passage of time in the same way the early Christians did. He sees Paul in 1 Thessalonians expecting the second coming in his lifetime, but in the epistles to Timothy he puts it into the future. By that time, Branson writes, the church had settled down to patient and sober


Helmut K. Ott, "Can the Advent of Christ Be Hastened or Delayed?" Research Report, Heritage Room, Andrews University, 1975, after examining the biblical evidence, came to the conclusion that there is no biblical evidence for a delay in the parousia.
waiting for the parousia. Tom Dybdahl emphasizes the need for constant readiness, while remembering that the Lord said, "I will come again" rather than "You must make it happen." This stream of thought appears to be a shift away from traditional Adventist eschatology.

Those who emphasize contingency and delay rely heavily on the writings of Ellen G. White (1827-1915), who enthusiastically participated in the Millerite revival and became one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although White is claimed as the inspiration for much of this thought, no one has made a careful study of her eschatology. While numerous statements pointing

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3 Note especially the works of Bunch, Maxwell, Douglass, and the 1973 and 1974 Autumn Council appeals mentioned above.

4 White's writings continue to exert a large influence in the church. A sermon from her pen is always included with the Week of Prayer readings published in the Review and Herald in October each year, and her comments are quoted more than any other writer's in the notes to the weekly Sabbath School lessons which are published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for use in all Adventist churches.

5 Dissertations on Ellen White which have appeared include the following: John M. Fowler, "The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1977); Roy E. Graham, "Ellen G. White, an Examination of Her Position and Role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1978); F. E. J. Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge as Conceived by Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1960); W. R. Lesher, "Ellen G. White's Concept of Sanctification" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1970); Ingemar Lindén, "Biblicism, apokalyptik, utopi; Adventismens historiska utformning i USA samt dess svenska utveckling tell o. 1939," Uppsala Universitet, 1971; Ingemar Lindén, The Last Trump; An historico-genetical study of some
to contingency appear in her writings, no one has asked whether they represent her entire thought.

There are tensions in her work which deserve careful analysis. In 1849 she wrote that the "time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time can last but a very little longer."¹ In 1862 she wrote, "The scenes of earth's history are fast closing. We are amid the perils of the last days."² In 1898 she said, "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay."³ But on the other hand, in 1883 she spoke of a delay in the coming of Christ. For the first time she stated that if the believers of the past (referring to the majority of the Adventist believers in 1844) had continued to follow God's leading, the Lord could have come

¹To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God, 31 January 1849, broadside (A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White [Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851], p. 46; and Early Writings of Ellen G. White [1882 ed., p. 49; 1945 ed., p. 58]).


before then. Nevertheless, she continued to speak also of a fixed
time. In 1888 she wrote, "The apparent tarrying is not so in
reality, for at the appointed time our Lord will come." In the
same year she stated that some people then alive would live to see
the final events.

Since she lived another twenty-seven years, long enough to
realize that many people then alive would not live to see the final
events, could we ask whether nearness meant to her that believers
should always live as though the Lord were coming in a few years,
while actually they could know nothing about the time? The very
fact that she could speak of the nearness of Christ's coming
throughout the seventy years of her ministry raises the question as
to what she understood nearness to mean. Once she spoke of
Christ's warning, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with
Me," as echoing down the ages to her time. A warning of Christ's
coming quickly which comes "echoing down the ages" makes the reader
wonder what "quickly" means, and what it may have said to the

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2 Letter to Dear Sister, S-38-1888, MS Release #816.

3 "Cast Not Away Your Confidence," RH, 31 July 1888, pp. 482-83.

4 For White's 1849 statement, see p. 6, n. 1 supra. For similar ideas expressed toward the end of her life, see The Story of Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917 and 1943), pp. 188, 276-77, 536-37, 605, 626, 71:; and "A Message for Our Young People," RH, 12 April 1915, p. 3.

intervening ages. How did White understand it? What part did it play in her eschatology?

It seems clear that White's thought on the time of Christ's coming involves several apparently contradictory factors which demand careful study. The fact that Adventist writers who emphasize contingency rely on her while those who de-emphasize time ignore her indicates that she is perceived by both sides as teaching a delayed advent. This concept tends to lay a heavy burden of guilt on the church: "Our sins have delayed the coming of Christ!" That is to say, if the church could hasten the parousia¹ and thus help bring the misery of the world to an end,² but Christ has not come yet, then the church is to blame for prolonging the miseries of the world until He does. We must ask whether Ellen White really intended to lay such a burden on her church. One purpose of this dissertation is to determine whether White's interpreters have given a balanced presentation of her thought.

The most careful work to date is that done by Leroy Edwin Froom.³ He begins his discussion by describing how the early Adventist believers received their sense of the immediacy of the second coming from the Millerites. Then he considers forty-five statements by White written from 1850 to 1915. Like Bunch, he sees 1888 as a turning point in the history of the church because of the

¹The Desire of Ages, p. 633.
new emphasis on righteousness by faith which came to the General Conference session in Minneapolis that year. He takes the position that Christ could not have come before the questions of the nature of Christ and salvation had been settled. After 1888, he feels, the church entered the time of the Spirit as it had before lived in the time of the Father and the Son. All that now remains before the end is for the church to finish the task in cooperation with God.\footnote{Movement of Destiny, p. 566. He offered no quotation from White to support this idea, however.}

Froom senses the danger of despair which lurks just beneath the surface when the contingency of Christ's coming is emphasized,\footnote{Ibid., pp. 570-71.} for he writes that the retardation or speed-up of the time of the end rests with believers only "up to a point."

\footnote{If the Lord is waiting for men to attain certain goals, there is the possibility that He may not be able to come at all.} He sees that emphasis on contingency alone would appear to damage the sovereignty of God and make His promises doubtful, so he tries to keep the final control in God's hands.

Froom's work is incomplete, however, because in the limits of his space he could not consider all that White wrote on the subject. He does not mention important unpublished documents, and several of his forty-five statements come from one manuscript: MS 4, 1883. Furthermore, he confines himself to the simple question, "Why the delay?" without engaging in serious theological reflection, nor does he study the background and context of White's thought.
Finally, his work gives evidence of being deductive rather than inductive, for he does not consider White's thought on the nearness of Christ's coming, which occupied her attention at least as much as the delay.

It appears, therefore, that there is a need for a serious analysis of White's thought on the nearness and delay of the parousia.

**Methodology**

In order to understand White's background and milieu, chapter 1 surveys the history of eschatological expectations from seventeenth-century England to nineteenth-century America. White is located with reference to the various streams of millennialism which appeared in the seventeenth century, and her relation to the Puritans, Jonathan Edwards, William Miller, John Nelson Darby, and the premillennialists of the Holiness Movement is pointed out. An overview of her eschatology in connection with her theodicy is presented.

Chapters 2 and 3 offer descriptions of White's thought on nearness and delay, showing how it agreed or contrasted with other eschatologies of her time. Internal harmonies and tensions are noted; change and development are traced. Exegesis of her statements is done where necessary. Since every theology has a point of entry which provides its inspiration and to a large extent its conceptual framework,\(^1\) the origin of White's eschatology is described

\(^{1}\)For instances, note Paul's Damascus road conversion from legalism to grace, and Luther's experience in the tower.
in order to demonstrate the inner structure of her thought on the signs, time prophecies, date setting, and delay.

Following the descriptive work, chapters 2 and 3 present interpretation of White's work. The reasons for her attitudes and the purposes she sought to accomplish are pointed out. The issues which underlie and are implied in her thought are discussed. Since no locus of theology can exist alone, the relations between White's positions on nearness and delay and her thoughts on the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, as well as her soteriology and ecclesiology, are examined. The practical effects of her eschatology are traced through her exhortations.

Finally, there is a process of evaluation by the norms of Scripture, logic, internal consistency, and practical effects. Approaching the Bible from her assumptions of inspiration and authority, the question is raised as to whether her emphases are the same as those of the Scriptures. Her positions are evaluated against the background of modern eschatologies: Dispensational, thoroughgoing, realized, and existential. The results which would ensue if her thoughts were pushed to their logical conclusions are pointed out. At last there is a discussion of the values and disadvantages of her expectations and exhortations for her church a century later. Chapter 4 includes suggestions for further study which grow out of the concerns of this dissertation.

**Limits of the Study**

The primary source materials are the printed books and articles by Ellen G. White and the unpublished documents which are accessible through the indices of the Ellen G. White Research Center.
at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Since the present policies of the Ellen G. White Estate do not permit unrestricted access to the unpublished document files, there remains a sizable corpus of manuscripts which could not be included in this study. Robert Olson, secretary of the Estate, kindly gave me permission to examine all the manuscripts in the files for two years, 1883 and 1888, and the insights gained are noted in the proper places. It is not to be thought, however, that the unpublished materials differ materially from the published. Ellen White was a prolific writer, and there is a consistency in her major views which does not vary in the different sections of her work. The unpublished documents which I have read have been consonant with the published works.

In any case, this is not an attempt to search out a large number of hitherto-unknown statements, nor is it an exhaustive new compilation.\(^1\) It is rather an attempt to deal with the large issues which are already quite well known but unexamined theologically.

It is to be hoped, however, that future researchers will be granted greater access to the unpublished document files. There will certainly be many serendipities which will help explain White's concerns and fill in the background of her work, which I have only been able to suggest.

\(^{1}\)The most recent such compilation of White's thought on the coming of Christ is Maranatha, The Lord Is Coming (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976).
CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF ESCHATOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS
FROM RICHARD BAXTER TO ELLEN G. WHITE

Preliminary Definitions

The term "Eschatology" seems to have appeared for the first time in 1844, but the complex of ideas to which it applies has interested non-Christians, Jews, and Christians for centuries. In the nineteenth century the term was applied to the concepts of the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the millennium, the last judgment, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth. The nineteenth-century meaning was


3 Hans-Goerg Link, "Eschatology," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed., Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1:56. J. A. MacCulloch defined it as "the last things strictly so-called—the idea of judgment and retribution, or of a Day of Judgment, Millennial ideas, the catastrophic end of the world and its renewal, and how the dead are related to
nearly synonymous with millennialism, rooted as it was in the apocalyptic literature of the Bible.¹ In contemporary theology it has taken on a broader and more diluted meaning,² but we are concerned with the beliefs of the nineteenth century, and their antecedents among the Puritans and the Pietists.³


¹Millennialism: derived from the one-thousand-year period of Rev 20 when Satan is bound, millennialism holds that a period of good times is coming. There are now three rival interpretations: premillennialism holds that the second coming of Christ will precede the millennium. Postmillennialism holds that the return of Christ will follow the millennium. Amillennialism holds that the thousand years in Rev 20 is symbolic of the present gospel age. See "Chiliastic," NIDNTT (1975), 1:52.


Froom was following the example of earlier premillennialists who supported their case by citing preceding scholars' positions, e.g., Daniel G. Taylor, The Voice of the Church on the Coming and the Kingdom of the Redeemer; or, A History of the Doctrine of the Reign of Christ on Earth, revised and edited with a preface by H. L. Hastings, 2nd ed. (Peace Dale, RI: H. L. Hastings, 1855); and E. B. Elliott, Horae Apocalypticae, or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical; Including Also an Examination of the Chief Prophecies of Daniel. Illustrated by an Apocalyptic Chart, and Engravings from Medals and Other Extant Monuments of Antiquity, 4 vols., 5th ed. (London: Seeley, Jackson, & Halliday, 1862). Earlier editions appeared in 1844, 1846, 1847, and 1851. Vol. IV has his history of interpretations.

³Instead of speaking about the end of the world and the last things, many now take it as stressing "present hope, expectations and promises about what may happen." See "Eschatology," NIDNTT, 1:56.

²The first loci of theology to be discussed in the Christian church were theology and Christology in the eastern church; the
Puritan Eschatology

The seventeenth century was a time of eager and widespread eschatological expectations in England. Anglican bishops and Fifth Monarchy Men alike agreed that the world had come to its expected last age and that the personal and glorious second coming of Christ was imminent. When He appeared He would raise the dead and translate the living saints. In the final judgment the saints would be acquitted and help judge the world.

Eschatological expectations at that time belonged more to orthodoxy than to heterodoxy. Puritan divines emphasized the bodily return of Christ, to be distinguished from any spiritual comings to individuals through the immediacy of the Holy Spirit. While they

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2 The Fifth Monarchy Men were radical Puritans who hoped to see the stone kingdom of Dan 2:44 set up by the establishment of the rule of Christ and His saints on earth as the successor to the Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires. They believed they could forward this kingdom by destroying all anti-Christian forms such as the established church. They supported Oliver Cromwell, but when the establishment of the Protectorate destroyed their hopes they turned against him. The movement was suppressed in the 1660s. See "Fifth Monarchy Men." New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), p. 375. See also Ball, A Great Expectation, pp. 181-82; and Leroy Edwin Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:566-69.

3 Ball, p. 229.

4 Ibid., p. 233.
recognized that the death of Christ lay at the very heart of human redemption, they also believed that beyond the cross His work had been greatly furthered through His priestly ministry and would culminate at His second coming.¹

The best survey of prevailing eschatological thought is found in the writings of Richard Baxter (1615–1691), chaplain to Charles II and later a leader of the Nonconformists. The 1662 Act of Uniformity deprived him of his ecclesiastical living and he was imprisoned in 1685 and 1686 for continuing to preach.² John Milton also believed in a literal coming of Christ when the dead would be raised before the millennium. In his view the judgment would occupy the thousand years, and final rewards would be given at their close.³

One who popularized the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and stood out above others in molding later interpretations was Joseph Mede (1586–1638), professor of Greek at Cambridge.⁴ Most of

¹Ibid., pp. 33, 48, 52.

²Ball made this evaluation of Baxter’s eschatology after studying some seventy commentaries of the time. See also "Baxter, Richard, (1615–1691)," NIDCC, p. 112. Baxter’s major work on eschatology was The Saints’ Everlasting Rest, or, a Treatise of the Blessed State of the Saints in Their Enjoyment of God in Glory (London: Thomas Underhill and Francis Taylor, 1652). See especially pp. 48–70. Much of the book was a meditation written during illness.


⁴His chief expository work was Clavis Apocalyptica, ET The Key of the Revelation, . . . with a Comment Thereupon (London: Printed by P.I. for Phil. Stephens, 1650). See Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:542–45, and Ball, pp. 59, 69, 85.
the Puritans accepted the historicist interpretation of Revelation, which held that its predictions were fulfilled throughout the Christian era. For them the past was the key to both the present and the future. The recently-proposed preterist and futurist interpretations had little appeal in the seventeenth century.

The expositors who expected Christ to return soon saw signs in the moral conditions of society similar to those of Noah's time, the Thirty Years' War which ended in 1648, celestial signs, and the preaching of the gospel to all the world, which they felt had been largely accomplished. Prophetic time calculations seemed to indicate that Christ would come between 1650 and 1660.

The British reformers, like Luther and Calvin, agreed that the Papacy fulfilled the biblical prophecies of the antichrist.

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1 Ball, pp. 70-73.

2 Preterism saw the predictions of the Apocalypse as being fulfilled largely during the first six centuries of the Christian church, and was proposed by Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), Spanish Jesuit of Seville, in Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi (1614). Futurism saw the prophecies of the Apocalypse being fulfilled at the end of the age after the appearance of the antichrist and was proposed by the Jesuit Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) in In sacram Beati Ioannis Apostoli, & Evangelistae Apocalypsin Commentarij (1593). See Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:507-9 and 489-93; Ball, 73-74; Elliott, 4:481-83.

3 Ball, pp. 97-113. Dark days were noted at Boston, in Lincolnshire, between July 4 and 6, and again July 11-14, 1661.

4 Ibid., pp. 117-18. The time calculations often used the principle that a day in symbolic prophecy represents a year of literal time in fulfillment. This principle has been traced by Leroy Edwin Froom to Benjamin Ben Moses Nahawendi (8th-9th centuries), and among Christians to Joachim of Floris (1130-1202). See Froom's Prophetic Faith, 2:196 and 1:700. John Napier (1550-1617), whose Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John was the first important Scottish work on the interpretation of Scripture, applied the principle to the longer time periods of Daniel and concluded that the judgment would occur around 1700. See Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:458, and Ball, p. 58.
Some saw two antichrists, corresponding to the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image in Dan 2—with the second antichrist being the Turks to the east. The reformers' preoccupation with the Papacy may be partly explained by the attack of the Spanish Armada, the Romanizing tendencies of Archbishop Laud and Charles I, and the hazardous course of continental Protestantism.\(^1\)

While it was not necessary to be a millenarian to believe in Christ's imminent return, many believers did give careful attention to the millennium. With his *Clavis Apocalyptica* Joseph Mede became the father of English millenarianism. Millennial views divided into a-, pre-, and postmillennialism,\(^2\) but most seventeenth century expositors were premillennialists. In support they cited ante-Nicene fathers who also were premillennial.\(^3\) The seeds of postmillennialism were sown by Thomas Brightman, who postulated a double millennium with the second thousand years beginning in A.D. 1300.\(^4\)

The expectation of Christ's coming was far more than a mere calculation of prophetic time periods or a counting of last-day signs. It was above all a blessed hope of the time when the believers would be delivered from sin and death and gathered home with their Savior. Richard Sibbes wrote that if Abraham, John the Baptist, and Peter were so ravished with a "little droppe and glimpse of Heaven, how shall we be affected, think you, when wee

\(^1\)Ball, pp. 138-41.

\(^2\)See p. 14 supra, n. 1.

\(^3\)Ball, pp. 161, 164, 175.

shall see Christ, not in his transfiguration, but in his glorification for ever? Richard Baxter, who had been an army chaplain during the civil war, expressed his joyful hope in terms of a victorious army setting prisoners free:

... I have thought on it many a time, as a small Emblem of that day, when I have seen a prevailing Army drawing towards the Towns and Castles of the Enemy: Oh with what glad hearts do all the poor prisoners within hear the news, and behold our approach? How do they run up to their prison windows, and thence behold us with joy? How glad are they at the roaring report of that Cannon, which is the enemies terror? How do they clap each other on the back, and cry Deliverance, Deliverance!

... Fellow Christian, what a day will that be, when we who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave, shall be fetched out by the Lord Himself.

Since many of the early settlers in New England were Puritans it is not surprising that ministers who fled from persecution in England brought their eschatological expectations and their interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to the New World. But before we follow the trail to America we must glance at the stream which flowed to Germany.

1 Sibbes, The Brides Longing for her Bridegrooms second coming, pp. 59-70, quoted by Ball, pp. 1-3.
2 Baxter, pp. 49, 47.
3 Among those born in England who emigrated to America were John Cotton (1586-1652, emigrated in 1633); Ephraim Huit (d. 1644, emigrated 1639), who wrote the first recorded New World commentary on Daniel; Thomas Parker (1595-1677, emigrated 1634); Thomas Shepard (1604-1649, emigrated 1635); and Roger Williams (1603-1683, emigrated 1631). For a summary of their lives and views see Froom, (Prophetic Faith, 2:33-55, 60-77.
4 Puritan influence included efforts for visible holiness on earth, along with their expectation for the imminent return of Christ. From the Reformed church the Puritans had learned the Third Use of the Law, and they sought to bring it into effect in this world, especially in the church. One of the best-known examples of this desire was the concept of the "Puritan Sabbath," which put the
Eschatology among the Pietists

Pietism was a revival movement in the Lutheran church which began shortly after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). It was a reaction to scholasticism in the church which resulted when fourth- and fifth-generation Protestants who had not shared the experiences of the first generation tried to systematize the living concepts of the reformers. Pietism was an attempt to regain those early experiences, holding that personal piety was important as well as correct doctrine.  

Puritan influences reached Germany through the writings of Richard Baxter, Lewis Bayly, and John Bunyan. As with the Puritans, there were variations in the eschatological beliefs which appeared among the Pietists. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), the leader of the Pietist revival, believed that the last times were at hand, with the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom due in the near future. For him the millennium was a period when Christ would reign on earth after having overthrown the antichrist (which like the Puritans he identified as the papacy). He

authority of the fourth commandment behind the observance of the first day of the week, contrary to the usage of the Lutherans and Calvinists on the continent. See the observations of Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 128-30.

1"Pietism," NIDCC, p. 780.
3A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), p. 156. Spener's thought is well manifested in the title of one of his books, Behauptung des Hoffnung Künftiger besserer Zeiten.
4Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:622.
distinguished between Christ's coming to destroy the antichrist and His coming for the final judgment.¹ This view combined aspects of both the pre- and postmillennial interpretations of the future. It took an optimistic view of the period from the present until the final judgment, stressing the importance of missionary activity and a constant direction toward holiness for the individual.²

Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), who came in contact with Pietism at Tübingen and who was a teacher of theology for many years, built upon Spener's idea of two comings of Christ and developed a unique concept of two millennia. He thought there would be one millennium when Satan would be bound, referred to in Rev 20: 2,3,7, and another when the saints would reign, referred to in Rev 20:4-6. The first would end before the end of the world, and the second would reach to the general resurrection.³ He arrived at the

¹Martin, p. 73.
²McGiffert, p. 160. In their desire for holiness as well as in their eschatology, the Pietists were influenced by the Puritans. They held that the work of sanctification consists partly in self-denial with respect to the pleasures of the world, and partly in labors for the increase of the kingdom of those regenerate persons who deliberately prosecute the work of sanctification. Moral excellence among Christians was not to await the heavenly kingdom; it was to be an event of the earthly history of the kingdom of God. The millennium would involve not the abolution but the diminution of sin and evil. See J. A. Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, Particularly in Germany; Viewed According to Its Fundamental Movement and in Connection with the Religious, Moral and Intellectual Life, trans., George Robson and Sophia Taylor (Edinburgh, 1871; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 216-17.
³Johann Albrecht Bengel, Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis oder vielmehr Jesu Christi (Stuttgart: Fr. Brodhag, 1834), pp. 74-75, quoted by Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:712. Bengel is known also for his contributions to textual criticism of the New Testament. He was the first to propose dividing manuscripts into families and suggest that they should be "weighed" and not merely counted, and that the
date 1836 for the beginning of the first millennium.¹

The lines of influence between England and Germany ran on a two-way street, however, then as now. John Wesley (1703-1791), founder of Methodism, reproduced many of Bengel's computations in his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament,² even to the date 1836, when he believed the papal antichrist would be overthrown. He followed the historical system of interpreting the Apocalypse; the things prophesied began to occur soon after they were given, but the two millennia were still future in his day. The various lines of prophecy, he believed, were consecutive; i.e., the seven trumpets belonged to the seventh seal, as the seven vials belonged to the seventh trumpet.³


¹Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:710. Froom believed that Bengel's great contribution to evangelistic Christianity lay not so much in his chronological writings, but in his insisting that the Bible is the revelation of God's plan, in which Christ is the supreme Center. For him the second coming of Christ was the glorious culmination of the divine plan of redemption.


³Ibid., pp. 934, 1038-39, 973. We note that the Pietists had a profound effect on Wesley's soteriology also. It was the faith of the Pietistic Moravian Brethren during a storm in the Atlantic which caught Wesley’s attention on his way to his post in Georgia in 1735, and it was the Moravian Peter Boehler who aided in his conversion in 1738 after his failure in America. After the Alderagate Street experience he visited the Moravian settlement at Herrnhut in Germany and met Count Zinzendorf. See "Wesley, John," NIDCC, p. 1034, and L. Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1872), 1:163-70.

Probably because of his own conversion experience, Wesley developed his doctrine of sanctification, sometimes called the "second blessing." Justification was the first blessing which
Eschatology in Eighteenth-Century America

The children of the Puritans who settled New England retained their eschatological views for the most part in the seventeenth century, although with the writings of Jonathan Edwards postmillennialism was introduced in the eighteenth. All but three of the twenty-eight expositors whom Froom reviewed held that Christ would return before the millennium. Like their Puritan fathers, they saw the papacy as the antichrist who would be overthrown at the coming of Christ. They agreed on the historicist school of interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.¹


¹Froom, Prophetic Faith, 3:252-53.


Edwards deserves special attention also because he has been called the greatest philosopher-theologian of America ("Edwards, Jonathan," NIDCC, p. 334) and because his preaching in Northampton, Massachusetts led to a notable revival in 1734-35, which was part of the larger movement known as the Great Awakening in the American colonies, dated from 1725 to 1760. The high point of the Awakening came under the preaching of Wesley's friend George Whitefield, in 1739 and 1740. See "Great Awakening," NIDCC, p. 428, and Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History, pp. 281-82, 271.

For evaluations of Edwards' life and thought see Ahlstrom.
that it spoke directly to

. . . that millennial concern which the Awakening had
accentuated and which in various forms became a prominent
and distinctive feature of American thought on the nature,
purpose, and destiny of the nation.¹

Edwards' work is important not only because he introduced the post-
millennialism of Daniel Whitby² to America, but also because his
basic understanding of the prophecies was more like than unlike that
of the premillennialists of his time.

In his sermon series Edwards preached that Satan rose
against God to frustrate His design in the creation of this world.

Both man and the world were ruined by the consequences of the fall.

pp. 298-313, with bibliography on p. 1113. A more complete bibliog-
raphy of earlier studies may be found in Clarence H. Faust and
Thomas H. Johnson, Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections, with
Introductions, Bibliography, and Notes (New York: American Book Co.,
1935). See also Douglas J. Elwood, The Philosophical Thought of
Jonathan Edwards (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Edward
Hutchins Davidson, Jonathan Edwards; The Narrative of a Puritan Mind
(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards
(New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1949). Yale University Press is
now issuing a complete edition of The Works of Jonathan Edwards,
under the editorship of John E. Smith.

¹Ahlstrom, p. 311.

²Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), "A Treatise on the True Millennium;
Showing That It Is Not a Reign of Persons Raised from the
Dead, but of the Church Flourishing Gloriously for a Thousand Years
after the Conversion of the Jews, and the Flowing in of All Nations
to Them Thus Converted," A Critical Commentary and Paraphrase on the
Old and New Testament and the Apocrypha, by Patrick, Lowth, Arnald,
Whitby, and Lowman (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846-1848), 4:1117-
1134. Whitby held that the second advent of Christ would be a full
effusion of the Holy Ghost similar to that given to the early
church. The millennium would begin with the fall of antichrist and
the conversion of the Jews. While remaining in heaven, Christ would
bind Satan and reign over both Jews and Gentiles on earth during the
millennium. At its close Christ would descend literally from heaven
with the spirits of just men made perfect to judge the wicked and
destroy sinners. Then would commence the day of eternal salvation
for the saints.
God will eventually destroy all the works of the devil and restore all that was ruined. Edwards saw three periods of redemption: the first from the fall to the incarnation of Christ, which consisted in preparation for Jesus' coming; the second, from the incarnation to the resurrection of Christ, which was occupied in procuring and purchasing redemption; and the third, from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world, occupied in bringing about the success of the purchase.

Surveying Old Testament history, Edwards noted that Christ became man's Mediator as soon as man fell and that the sacrifices were types of Christ's sacrifice. Other items he noted in the Old Testament were the prophecies and the covenants made with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, and the people of Israel. He divided the Sinaitic law into ceremonial and judicial types. Similar to Anselm, Edwards held to a satisfaction theory of the atonement which dwelt heavily on Christ's sufferings, especially the sufferings of His soul.

Edwards held that all time since the resurrection of Christ is called the last days in Scripture—this was the third of his

1 Edwards, pp. 35-36.
2 Ibid., p. 39.
3 Ibid., pp. 74, 92.
4 Ibid., pp. 196, 228. In his defense of the revival experiences of the Great Awakening, Edwards' soteriology developed into an Arminianized Calvinism. While he believed that man left to himself is lost, he also taught that conversion and regeneration are possible for every contrite soul; men can freely will good instead of evil. See Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York: Harper and Row, 1944, Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 24.
divisions of salvation history. His view of the millennium was copied from that of Daniel Whitby.

Nevertheless, Edwards shared many presuppositions with the premillennialists of his time. To many of them the red dragon of Rev 12 was the Roman empire, and the antichrist who received his seat from the dragon was the papacy. They agreed that the 1260 years of Rev 12 must have begun sometime in the fifth to the seventh centuries and that the woman in the wilderness was the true church. Edwards' own date was A.D. 479, which, following the day-for-a-year principle, would bring the expected time for the beginning of the millennium to 1739, when he was preaching those sermons. He saw signs of the times being fulfilled in the success of the gospel preached to the American Indians, to the East Indians, in Saxony by Herman Francke, and in the recent revival in New England. He felt that there were very few of the foretold signs which remained to occur before the beginning of the great work of God.

Edwards shared with the premillennialists a general historicist approach to the book of Revelation. They all saw the parousia

1Edwards. pp. 83-84, 244.

2Edwards believed that the great work of God would go on more and more, resulting in a spiritual resurrection of the church, followed by a millennium of great light and knowledge. There would be a short time of great apostasy at the end of the millennium, which would call for Christ's literal appearance to take vengeance. The saints would be caught up in the air to meet Him. The wicked would then be called to meet Him in judgment; with the saints gone the world would be set afire for eternity. Heaven would be the final home of the saints. See pp. 355, 363-83.

3Ibid., pp. 294, 300, 302, 309; Froom, Prophetic Faith, 3:252-53.

4Edwards, pp. 300, 340. 5Ibid., pp. 293-300.
as a literal event which would mean judgment for the wicked and salvation for the saints. The difference between the pre- and post-millennialists was the degree of optimism they expressed over the future of the world. Edwards believed that the preaching of the gospel would produce great improvements, while the premillennialists held that while the gospel would certainly be preached as a witness, it would not make large changes—the great change would be wrought by Christ Himself at His second coming.\(^1\) While there was more to unite than to divide them in Edwards' time, we see the two sides disputing most earnestly in the century that followed.\(^2\)

\(^1\) James Martin, p. 82, wrote that Edwards' sermons on the history of the work of redemption produced results in two directions: 1) Dispensationalism, which maintained the divisions of history but lost sight of the unity; and 2) Heilsgeschichte, where the divisions of history were interpreted in terms of the basic unity belonging to history as the form of God's revelation. Edwards himself was closer to the latter. Dispensationalism, however, made a sharp distinction between Israel and the church which cannot be traced back to Edwards. See pp. 30-31 infra.

\(^2\) Forty years after Edwards died came the second Great Awakening marked by the formation of a multitude of voluntary associations. Societies were formed for home missions, for foreign missions, for Sunday schools, for temperance, for Sabbath-keeping, for distributing tracts and Bibles, and many other causes. See Ahlstrom, p. 386; Kenneth Scott Latourette, The Great Century, 1800-1919, Vol. IV of The Spread of Christianity (New York: Harper and Bros., 1941), p. 205-20; and Tyler, pp. 31-39.

The second awakening was marked by notable revivals at camp meetings on the western frontier. The most famous of these occurred at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in August 1801. The crowd there was estimated at from ten to twenty-five thousand, although the population of nearby Lexington was barely two thousand at the time. See Ahlstrom, p. 433.

The revivals of the second awakening, the growing Arminianism in the country, and an almost messianic optimism which was in the air in the time of Jacksonian democracy, all combined to produce a wave of perfectionism, and not only in the Methodist church. Political optimism on one hand and theological perfectionism on the other, were secular and religious manifestations of the postmillennialism which came to prominence in the nineteenth century. See Ahlstrom, p. 345.

There were dozens of utopias, communal experiments, and
Nineteenth Century Premillennialism
in Great Britain

The nineteenth century interest in the coming of Christ and the millennium was the climax of the interest which had been growing since the days of the Puritans and Pietists. Sandeen's statement that "The French Revolution was directly responsible for the revival of prophetic concern," seems somewhat excessive in view of the number of expositors who wrote on the prophecies before that time.¹

The shape of premillennial eschatology in England was set forth at a series of conferences held in the home of Henry Drummond at Albury Park, Surrey, England, in 1826, 1827, and 1828. Six points were agreed upon at these conferences:

1. This age will end cataclysmically in judgment.

2. The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of the judgment.

societies for reform, which are aptly described by Alice Felt Tyler's title, Freedom's Ferment. There were interests in temperance, freeing the slaves, educational reform, manual education, diet reform, health reform, prison reform, women's rights, and phrenology, to name a few. All of them fit very comfortably into the optimistic postmillennialism of the time. Indeed, the revivalists of the 1830s used millennialism as a spur to their reforms. See Charles C. Cole, The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 233.

¹Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, p. 5; Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:266-795, and 3:19-262, deals with expositors from the Reformation until the French Revolution. C. Mervyn Maxwell, "An Exegetical and Historical Examination of the Beginning and Ending of the 1260 Days of Prophecy with Special Attention Given to A.D. 538 and 1798 as Initial and Terminal Dates" (M.A. Thesis, Washington, D.C.: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1951) charts Froom's data and concludes that of thirty-three expositors listed immediately preceding the French Revolution, twenty-six looked to a future fulfillment and only seven said it was past. After the French Revolution, of sixty (non-Millerite) expositors surveyed, only twenty-five looked forward for fulfillment while thirty-five looked backward, and all but two of them saw the termination in the revolution.
3. The judgment to come will fall principally upon Christendom.

4. When the judgment is past, the millennium will begin.

5. The second advent of Christ will occur before the millennium.

6. The 1260 years of Dan 7 and Rev 12 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of the Apocalypse began then to be poured out, and the Lord will appear shortly.¹

The participants in the Albury Park conferences agreed also that the 2300 days of Dan 8:14 must reach their fulfillment in the years 1843-1847. They disagreed on the exact date, but all agreed that Christ would return in a few years.²

Meanwhile Futurism began to gain influence among premillennialists in England with a series of conferences held at Powerscourt Castle in Ireland beginning in 1830. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and the Plymouth Brethren dominated these meetings from 1832 on.³

¹Henry Drummond, Dialogues on Prophecy (London: Nisbet, 1828), pp. ii-iii.


³Darby left 34 volumes of Collected Writings of J. N. Darby (London: Morrish, 1867-1901), which are seldom used for a summary of his teachings, because they exhibit such a lawyer's attention to detail (he trained as a lawyer) that they are extremely difficult to read. J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, a Study in Biblical Eschatology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958 and 1964); and Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody, 1965), are good modern presentations of the system developed by Darby. Clarence B. Bass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalism, Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960); and Daniel Payton Fuller, "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Chicago: Northern Baptist Theological Seminary (1957), give useful critical evaluations of the system. Bass
The starting point for Darby's system was his definition of the Christian church as an entirely spiritual and heavenly body which could not be the subject of any earthly prophecy in the Bible and could not be identified with any of the existing denominations. At the second coming of Christ the members of the church would be caught away secretly to dwell with Christ in heaven: the very character of the church required that this coming be secret and mystical, and this coming, which he termed the "rapture", could occur at any moment. There were no signs which necessarily had to appear before the rapture.¹

Darby actually divided the second coming of Christ into two phases: the secret rapture for His saints, and the subsequent parousia with His saints. The parousia would be preceded by the familiar signs described in the Synoptics. The rapture would have to do with the church, the parousia with literal Israel, which was a completely different entity from the church. Christ would establish a literal throne in Jerusalem at the parousia, and from that throne would rule over the world during the millennium. Darby wrote that the Jewish remnant indeed has a hope of blessing at Christ's coming, but it is not the heavenly blessing or hope of the church.²

¹Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. 62-63. Darby was always puzzled by the fact that Americans who accepted much of his system did not share his burden to leave their churches (see pp. 73, 79).

²In Volume 4 of his Collected Works, p. 182, he wrote that the important thing with him was not the secrecy of the rapture, but rather the existence of a Jewish remnant at the end, and the true character of the church of God.
The distinction between Israel and the church led Darby to divide the Scriptures into church and Jewish pigeon holes; what applied to one could not apply to the other. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" became a hallmark of the movement. Most of Daniel and Revelation he applied to the Jews. In the first three beasts of Dan 7 he saw Babylon, Persia, and Greece, but the little horn of the same chapter would be an incarnation of evil to appear three years before the final judgment. Daniel 8 and 9 pointed to the Jews. The 2300 days of Dan 8:14 he thought were fulfilled at some time in the past; he did not think they meant literal years.

The first sixty-nine weeks of Dan 9:24-27 reached to the ascension of Christ, at which time the prophetic clock stopped ticking. The Jews' rejection of Christ forced God to interrupt His plans for them, and the "church age" intervened. This "great parenthesis" was not foreseen in the Old Testament. The Lord would turn His attention back to the Jews and the prophetic clock would resume its ticking only after the church was removed from the earth by the rapture. Then the seventy-ninth week of Dan 9 would run its course, the antichrist would appear, and the fearsome events predicted in Rev 4-19 would occur during the final seven-year period. While his concept of the


3 Ibid., p. 75.
Rapture was unique, Darby's futurism can be traced back to Francisco Ribera in the sixteenth century.¹

Darby shared with other premillenarians his preoccupation with prophecy and the second advent, the restoration of the Jews, and his division of history into dispensations. But he differed from them in his definition of the church, his radical division of the Scriptures, and his splitting the advent into two parts.

He visited America seven times between 1862 and 1877, concentrating his efforts in the areas between Boston and New York in the east, and Detroit, Chicago, and St. Louis in the midwest, beside productive work in Canada. While Americans never accepted his dismal evaluation of organized churches, by the end of the nineteenth century increasing numbers of them were convinced of his prophetic system.

Historicist premillennialism experienced a resurgence in Great Britain in the late 1840s which seems to have contributed to the revival of such interest in the United States in the 1860s.² Edward Elliott continued revising his *Horae Apocalypticæ* until 1862.³ In 1849 the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* was founded by Horatius Bonar and recorded the movement for twenty-five years.⁴

¹See p. 17, n. 2 supra.
³Ibid., p. 81.
⁴See p. 14, n. 1 supra.
⁵Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, pp. 83, 37. This journal was always critical of John Darby personally and in early years took the historicist position, but it came to accept his ideas of the church age as a divine parenthesis, the secret rapture, the any-moment expectation, and the dispensations in salvation history.
Bonar became one of the conveners of a prophetic Bible conference held at Mildmay Park, near London, 1878; others were held there in 1879 and 1886. The speakers emphasized basic elements of millenarianism as against nonmillenarianism, but there was variety among them. Both historicist and dispensationalist millenarians were present.¹ These meetings had an important influence on millenarians in the United States.

¹Ibid., pp. 145-147. One of the leading historicists at these conferences was H. Grattan Guinness (1835-1910), a powerful preacher often compared with Wesley, Whitefield, and Spurgeon in pulpit power, who wrote nine books based on premillennialism. See Froom, Prophetic Faith 4:1194-1203. He argued that Christ now rules on earth only through His providence, but after His coming He will rule directly—hence the millennium cannot be now. Christ would come immediately after the wars, tribulations, and famines of the last days. See his The Approaching End of the Age Viewed in the Light of History, Prophecy, and Science (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), pp. 48, 33. He recognized that the preterist school of interpretation arose with the Jesuit Alcazar, and the futurist school with Ribera about the same time. He believed that the presentist view which he advocated was the historical Protestant view (Ibid., pp. 95, 96). He applied the 1260 years of Dan 7 and Rev 12 to the papacy, beginning in the seventh century A.D. (p. 171). The seventy weeks of Dan 9 he saw as reaching from the decree of Cyrus to the first advent of the Messiah (pp. 309, 316). The 2300 days of Dan 8:14 reached from the time of Daniel to the future restoration of Israel (p. 324). Palestine would someday again become the home of the Jews, and God would overthrow the Turkish power which had so long trodden down Jerusalem (p. 351). He figured the seven times of Dan 4 to equal 2520 literal years and placed them on a sliding scale beginning between 770 and 602 B.C., and ending between A.D. 1851 and 1919. With this calculation he came closer than most expositors of his time to setting a date for the parousia (pp. 351-53). [In view of his position as an effective interdenominational evangelist, it is surprising to find him expressing a Donatist, if not a Darbyite, view of the true church: "There is a little flock, there is a true church but its members are scattered abroad and almost invisible in the great Babylon; they are the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal, they are the called and chosen and faithful who follow the Lamb" (p. 580).]
Nineteenth Century Premillennialism in the United States

Millerite Premillennialism

William Miller (1783-1849), the foremost exponent of premillennialism in America,\(^1\) reached conclusions nearly identical with those of the Albury Conferences (see p. 28-29 supra), disagreeing mainly with their ideas on the restoration of the Jews.\(^2\) Arminian in his soteriology,\(^3\) he became widely known for his prediction of the return of Christ in 1843 or 1844.

Miller believed that his eschatological conclusions grew logically out of his hermeneutical principles,\(^4\) which were not

\(^1\)Miller published his beliefs in Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year A.D. 1843 and of His Personal Reign of 1,000 Years (Brandon, VT: Vermont Telegraph office, 1833, with later editions in 1836, 1838, 1840, and 1842), and in articles in Signs of the Times and Midnight Cry, published from 1840 to 1844 in Boston. For biographical materials see Sylvester Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853); and Isaac C. Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People (Yarmouth, ME: I. C. Wellcome, 1874). Thorough research in original sources is evident in Everett N. Dick, "William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1930); F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1944); and in P. Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 3-100.


\(^3\)Judging by a summary of his general Christian beliefs written on 5 September 1822. See Sylvester Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, pp. 70-72. His beliefs numbered 3 and 9, dealing with "the atonement to be made by the intercession of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of His blood in the Holy of holies," may have provided the seed thought for the later development of day-of-atonement symbolism among Seventh-day Adventists.

\(^4\)See Appendix, pp. 259-60.
original with him but were part of the Christian heritage traced from the days of the Puritans and Pietists. Sandeen agreed that Miller's principles were in large agreement with other expositors of the time, both American and British. They all interpreted the Bible literally, believed in a literal return of Christ (disagreeing only on whether it was to be pre- or postmillennial), and were perfectionistic. The perfectionism of the Millerites, however, was subservient to their single-minded desire to be ready for the coming of Christ. Miller always ended his lectures with solemn appeals to repent and reform but spent little time on popular reform issues of his time. It was not until his Sabbath-keeping descendants had worked out their sense of identity and mission about 1860, that such reforms could gain their attention.

Miller and his followers--along with the millenarians in England--believed that the biblical signs of the times were being fulfilled in their time. Many were general in nature: i.e., the preaching of the gospel, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the growth in religious knowledge, and the increase of riches,

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2 Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. 42, 50, 57, 58. Miller, however, was known to have read only two works on prophecy, one by G. S. Faber and the other by Newton—it is not known whether this was Sir Isaac or Bishop Newton. See F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1944), p. 150.


4 Even the voluntary societies which marked the second Great Awakening Miller saw as a sign of the coming of Christ. Histori-}

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scoffers, perilous times, and false teachers. Such signs, of
course, could be seen in every generation, but Miller found the
greatest support for his expectations in the time prophecies. He
found not only the 1260 days and the 2300 days but also the 1335 and
1290 days of Dan 12 focused on his time. His colleague, Josiah
Litch, interpreted Rev 9 as pointing to Turkey's supposed loss of
sovereignty on 11 August 1840, and this prediction, published ten
days before the expected date, added new credibility to Miller's
hermeneutics and gained enormous new interest for his advent
expectation.

Miller differed from his colleagues in applying the signs in
the heavens in a figurative sense. For him the sun represented the
light of the gospel extinguished in the early church, and the fall-
ing of the stars referred to ministers falling into anti-Christian
abominations. His friends, on the other hand, applied the celest-
tial signs literally to the dark day of 19 May 1780 and the star

the tract, missionary, Bible, temperance, and moral reform societies
were all helping to prepare the way for the "midnight cry" of the
parable. See his Evidence from Scripture and History (Troy, NY:

1 Josiah Litch, "Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople;
The End of the Second Woe, Rev. ix," Signs of the Times of the
Second Coming of Christ (Boston), 1 August 1840, p. 70. The pre-
diction and Litch's understanding of its fulfillment were spelled
out in greater detail in The Great Crisis of Eighteen Hundred Forty-
Three (Boston), 4 August 1842, which was published as a supplement
to The Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy, 7 September
1842, pp. 179-82.

2 A Familiar Exposition of the Twenty-fourth Chapter of
Matthew and the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of Hosea, to Which Are
Added an Address to the General Conference on the Advent, and a
Scene of the Last Day (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), p. 25.
showers of 13 November 1833, which had attracted wide attention.

Miller's conviction that Dan 8:14 pointed to the parousia was based on the idea that the sanctuary there mentioned referred to the church and the earth. The church would be cleansed or justified at the end of the 2300 years, while the earth would be cleansed by fire. In the early years of his preaching, he was reticent to set a date closer than "about the year 1843," but on 1 January 1843 he narrowed the prediction down to "between March 21st, 1843, and March 21st, 1844, according to Jewish mode of computation of time." For him the millennium would be little different from the eternal state, beginning with the coming of Christ, resurrection of the righteous dead and translation of the righteous living, destruction of the wicked, and the creation of the new earth. The end of the millennium would be marked by the loosing of the devil, the resurrection of the wicked, their judgment by the saints, and their second death in the lake of fire.

As the Millerites extended their efforts and labored with increasing zeal, opposition arose from the churches—probably

1See in the Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy: Josiah Litch, 7 September 1842, p. 184; Joel Spaulding, "Exposition on Matthew xxiv," 14 September 1842, pp. 184-87; and Sylvester Bliss, "Exposition of the Twenty-Fourth Chapter of Matthew," 9 November 1842.

2"Cleansing of the Sanctuary," Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy, 6 April 1842, pp. 1, 2.


because they inclined more to postmillennialism. Large numbers of Adventist believers found themselves disfellowshiped.\(^1\) Charles Fitch saw this development as a fulfillment of the prophecy of the fall of Babylon in Rev 14:8 and 18:4.\(^2\)

Various dates were set during the years 1843 and 1844: 10, 15 February; 3, 14 April; and any time during the month 24 September to 24 October 1843. None of them gained wide acceptance. When the end of Miller's Jewish year 1843 passed on 21 March 1844 the first disappointment occurred. The final correction was made by Samuel S. Snow, to the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month, which was 22 October 1844 according to Karaite Jewish reckoning. This date gained almost universal support, including that of Miller himself just three weeks beforehand. The stage was set for the Great Disappointment.\(^3\)

The zeal with which the Millerites proclaimed their message, their concern for sinners, their investment of their means, their extensive use of the press, their mammoth camp meetings—all have

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3. Damsteegt, pp. 84-100.
been told over and over.\textsuperscript{1} There is no question but that they were utterly sincere. As for sin among the members of the movement, Cross observed that "no more moral and righteous people would seem ever to have inhabited this earth."\textsuperscript{2}

When Christ did not appear on 22 October 1844, the Millerites faced their disappointment in various ways. Joshua V. Himes called a conference at Albany, New York, in April 1845. It was not very successful in producing unity. Some gave up all faith in the 2300 days; some retained them but renounced the 22 October date; others claimed that Christ had indeed come, but in a spiritual rather than a physical sense. The smallest group retained both the prophecy and the date, but held that Christ had come not to the earth but to the Father in heaven for a pre-advent judgment, and when that judgment was finished He would return to earth for His people. The young Ellen Harmon accepted the view of this group.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}After Wellcome's History in 1874, Clara Endicott Sears wrote her Days of Deception, A Strange Bit of History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924) whose approach is well indicated by her title. She relied on letters of reminiscence solicited from 1920-1923. According to her information, many of the Millerites wore ascension robes and climbed on housetops to await the end. F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry, by examining scores of 1844 newspapers, was able to show that there was no primary evidence for the ascension robe story. Everett Newlon Dick, "The Adventist Crisis of 1843-1844," gives another careful study, which deserves to be better known.


\textsuperscript{3}Damsteegt, pp. 113-14.

A sociological theory of how groups cope with psychological stress has been applied to the Millerite history by Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, When Prophecy Fails (New York: Harper and Row, 1956; Harper Torchbooks, 1964). The authors' hypothesis that when a group of people hold a belief about the
future with deep conviction and invest a great deal of themselves in it, the non-occurrence of the prediction event does not necessarily destroy their faith. They find ways to go on believing in the face of the disconfirmatory evidence. Eventually, however, the disconfirmatory becomes so overwhelming that the belief system is forsaken and the believing community collapses.

They tested their hypothesis by infiltrating a small group in mid-America which at the time was predicting an apocalyptic cataclysm some four months in the future. The group believed they would be snatched away by flying saucers a few hours before the final destruction. The observers kept records on every activity of the group during the months of their keenest interest, seeking to judge the degree of commitment of each participant and also to chronicle their responses when their predictions failed. As the researchers expected, disconfirmation of early predictions did not destroy the group's belief; they were able to find reasons for the failure and reasons to go on believing. But the final massive failure did destroy their belief, and the group soon disintegrated under pressure of hostile neighbors and legal authorities who tried to judge some of them insane.

William I. Rankin, "A Study of Rhetorical Strategies in the Rise of Seventh-day Adventism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1971), pp. 23-39, approves the application of the Festinger hypothesis to the Millerite movement, but there are notable differences. In the first place, the Millerite predictions were based on understandings of Bible prophecy which they shared in large measure with the majority of other Christians. The group in Festinger's research based their predictions on esoteric messages received through automatic writing by a spirit medium. Their views were not shared by the public, and they did not make any effort to proselyte until after the final prediction failed.

The Millerites, on the other hand, carried a genuine burden for the world and made every effort to proselyte while it would do some good. In Festinger's group, the proselyting followed disconfirmation. The Millerites' reaction to the first disappointment on 21 March 1843 was a reduction in their missionary activities. They did not resume vigorous work until Samuel Snow convinced them of the 22 October date.

Another difference between the two was that the Festinger group actively sought publicity after their 21 December date, whereas they had shunned it before; but the Millerites sought publicity before their disappointment and shunned it afterward.

The applicability of Festinger's hypothesis to the Millerites movement appears questionable. It does not explain why a remnant of that revival not only did not collapse but has grown to become an international church.
Post-Millerite Premillennialism

Outside its own group the Millerite failure had the effect of discrediting premillennialism and encouraging postmillennialism, but premillennialism began to experience a resurgence in the 1860s. In that decade, The Christian Intelligencer, the weekly paper of the Dutch Reformed Church, published a lengthy debate over premillennialism. Numerous books and articles appeared, and The Prophetic Times was founded in 1863 and continued for twenty-five years.

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1 Smith, p. 228.

2 Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. 91-94. The editor was Joseph A. Seiss, minister of the largest English Lutheran church in America and from 1865 president of the board of the Philadelphia Lutheran Theological Seminary. The journal set forth a creed which rejected postmillennialism as an un-Christian delusion. It looked forward to the personal return of Christ as the great hope of the church, but differed from the Millerites by rejecting the idea that He would destroy the earth at His coming. Rather, He would reign over the world from Palestine, with Israel holding first place among the nations. See The Prophetic Times, January 1863, pp. 13-14. Dr. Steven H. Tyng, who later hosted the First Prophetic Bible Conference in 1878, wrote in the first issue that he was expecting all lines of prophecy to meet in 1868 as the time for the glorious coming of the Son of Man.

While the Civil War received scant mention in this journal, there was keen interest in Louis Napoleon III as the possible antichrist. Joseph Seiss even computed that his name in Latin and Greek added up to 666. See "The Anti-Christ, Will It Be Louis Napoleon?" The Prophetic Times, February 1863, pp. 17-21. A letter by an anonymous layman accepted the day-year principle for interpretation of the seals, trumpets, vials, and other prophecies of Daniel and Revelation "by way of rehearsal on the larger scale with reference to the sufferings of the church militant under the Papal anti-christ," but surmised that there would be a future "literal-day fulfillment on a small scale with reference to the sufferings of the church militant under the last personal antichrist." He followed the standard historicist understanding of the past prophecies, but accepted the Darbyite idea of a future tribulation of three and a half years. See ibid., p. 23. The journal became increasingly Darbyite as the years went by, although it never accepted the separatist tendencies of Darby's ecclesiology.
Beginning in 1875 the millenialist movement in America began to conduct yearly conferences which came to be known as the Niagara Bible Conference, named after Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, where they met from 1883 to 1897. These one- to two-week meetings each summer served to provide fellowship among the millenialists outside of denominational connections and to gain publicity among the churches for their ideas. The leaders and speakers increasingly advocated Darby's system of interpretation.¹

In 1878 eight of the leaders of the Niagara Bible Conference issued a call for a prophetic Bible conference to meet in New York, "as our honored brethren in England have recently done."² More than a thousand convened October 30, in the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, of which Dr. Steven H. Tyng was the pastor. The speakers sought to put up a common front against postmillennialism and amillennialism, so, like the British, they emphasized their common concepts. Darbyism was present but not emphasized.³

¹Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. 137, 141. The giving of studies in the form of "Bible Readings" became popular at these gatherings.

²Nathaniel West, comp., Second Coming of Christ; Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference, Held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1879), p. 12. This was the official report of the conference. West (1824-1904) himself was a Presbyterian minister from Cincinnati. See Froom's discussion in Prophetic Faith, 4:1178-85. The British conference they referred to was that held at Mildmay Park the same year.

³Charles K. Imbrie believed that the Jews would be restored to their land and that the restoration prophecies made to Israel could not be fulfilled to the church. See "The Regeneration," Second Coming of Christ, Nathaniel West, comp., pp. 126-30 and 150. Bishop W. R. Nicholson said that the seventieth week of Dan 9 would immediately precede the advent of Christ. See "The Gathering of Israel," ibid., pp. 222-40. H. Lummis explained the apparent 1800-year delay

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The common statement unanimously voted at the close of the conference⁠¹ affirmed that the prophecies of the return of Christ would be just as literally fulfilled as were the predictions of His first advent (Article II) and that the scriptures do not teach that the world will be converted before He comes (Article IV). Article III held to an any-moment expectancy and excluded all date-setting: "This second coming of the Lord Jesus is everywhere in the Scriptures represented as imminent, and may occur at any moment; yet the precise day and hour thereof is unknown to man, and known only to God."² Article V was noteworthy because of its sense of mission and of hastening the advent:

V. The duty of the church during the absence of the Bridegroom is to watch and pray, to work and wait, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and thus hasten the coming of the day of God; and to His

since the time of Christ by saying that we are little skilled in celestial arithmetic: but surely the night is far spent and the day is nearer now. He also emphasized the spiritual value of preaching the advent near. See "The Kingdom and the Church," ibid., pp. 199-202. West himself spoke of the "mere chronological error of Mr. Miller's reckoning" and summarized the history of premillennial expositors. See "The History of the Pre-Millennial Doctrine," ibid., p. 359.

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²We have already noted Dr. Steven Tyng's setting the date 1868 (p. 41, n. 2). Another was Charles Taze Russell, who had met a remnant of the Millerites in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1868, and accepted the date 1874 from them but interpreted the coming of Christ as an invisible coming. He also accepted the Adventist group's views on the soul and hell but worked out other points of his system on his own. Two good histories of his Jehovah's Witnesses are Timothy White, A People for His Name; A History of Jehovah's Witnesses and an Evaluation (New York: Vantage Press, 1969); and Herbert Hewitt Stroup, The Jehovah's Witnesses (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945).
last promise, "Surely I come quickly," to respond, in joyous hope, "Even so; come Lord Jesus."¹

The Rev. Dr. Rufus W. Clark believed that the advent of Christ could also be hastened by the repentance of God's people.²

Later prophetic conferences became increasingly Darbyite in orientation, as non-Dispensational speakers were no longer invited to speak.³ The movement was influenced by Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), who came under the influence of Plymouth Brethren theology in 1877. His conferences at Northfield, Massachusetts, beginning on 1 September 1880, used many of the leaders of the Bible and Prophetic Conferences, but in 1891 he introduced the theme of

¹West, p. 8. The conference also saw the doctrine of the premillennial advent as "one of the mightiest incentives to earnestness in preaching the Gospel to every creature, until He comes," pp. 8-9.

²"Hope of Christ's Coming as a Motive to Holy Living and Active Labor," ibid., p. 429. Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, p. xx, is therefore incorrect when he says, "Millenarian leaders did not believe that they could do anything to hasten, much less to bring about, the second advent of Christ."

³Two approving accounts of the Prophetic Bible Conference, including its common declaration, were published in Review and Herald. See J. H. Rogers, "The Prophetic Conference and the Advent Message," RH, 30 January 1879, p. 34, citing the Louisville Presbyterian as its source; and [James White?], "The Prophetic Conference," RH, 6 February 1879, p. 41, citing the Seventh Day Baptists' Sabbath Recorder as its source. Rogers concluded his report with the comment, "We are glad to see our friends 'wheeling into line' on these important truths. . . . The Lord is preparing the way before us for the message to go with power." He had some justification for his smugness, since Seventh-day Adventists had never given up their emphasis on the literal premillennial return of Christ, while the other Protestants had said very little about it for a generation after 1844.

holiness by bringing F. B. Meyer from Keswick in England. The
Keswick teachers were also premillennialists, and they emphasized
the power of the Spirit to lead the believer away from evil toward
righteousness.¹

Moody also influenced the millennialist movement by founding
Bible Institutes, which in the twentieth century have become the
main propagators of Darbyism,² and by encouraging the Student Volunteer Movement, which was the beginning of the greatest demonstration
of missionary interest ever known in the United States and which has helped to spread Darbyism in mission fields.³

We have now outlined the history of millennialism far enough
to show that it was by no means destroyed by the Millerite disap­
pointment in 1844, but we have also seen that historicism in proph­
etic interpretation came to be displaced on both sides of the
Atlantic by John Nelson Darby's futurism, even though most Americans
refused to accept his negative evaluation of the church. We have
noted that with D. L. Moody the millennialist movement absorbed from
Keswick a variation of Oberlin perfectionism and a new emphasis on
foreign missions. We now turn our attention to Ellen G. White who

¹The Keswick movement actually began in Oberlin perfection­
ism. Among the leaders who took it to England in the 1870s were
Asa Mahan, former president of Oberlin College, who had retired to
England; Mr. and Mrs. William E. Boardman, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert
Pearsall Smith. The two women, especially Hannah Whitall Smith,
became famous through their books. See Sandeen, Roots of Fundamen­
talism, pp. 173-74 and 178-79.

²Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, p. 181.

³Ibid., p. 183.
lived at the time of these movements and whose church was built up in this milieu.

**Life of Ellen G. White**

Ellen Gould Harmon and her twin sister Elizabeth were born 26 November 1827, to Robert and Eunice Harmon in Gorham, Maine. There were four older sisters and two older brothers in the family. Robert moved his family to Portland in 1836, became a deacon of the Pine Street Methodist Church, and supported his family by hatmaking.¹

Ellen Harmon was converted in 1840 at a Methodist campmeeting in Buxton, Maine, about the same time that her family first heard William Miller lecturing in Portland. Her extended conversion:

Berkeley, 1932); Guy Herbert Winslow, "Ellen Gould White and Seventh-day Adventists" (Ph.D. dissertation, Clark University, 1932). An extremely antagonistic work.


It should be noted that most popular works on Ellen White are either attacks or apologies. There is great need for a critical biography of her life.
experience was affected by both Methodism and Millerism and merits
attention here because of its apparent formative influence on her
later soteriology and eschatology.¹

At the time of her conversion Ellen fully surrendered her
life to God and received assurance of forgiveness as well as peace
of mind,² but when she attended the Miller lectures a few months
later she began to long for complete sanctification and "holiness
of heart."³ She became terrified that she was not ready for the
imminent coming of Christ. Eventually, after agonies in prayer,
"the blessing of God" came upon her; she felt that she had achieved
entire conformity to the will of God. But since she attributed this
victory not to Methodism but to her hope in the imminent coming of
Christ, she encountered severe opposition in her class meeting, and
she with her family were disfellowshiped from the Methodist church
in September 1843.⁴

Ellen's struggles grew out of her Methodist framework of
thought. She knew that she had been justified when she was con­
verted, but she believed that she must reach "some higher attain­
ment" before she could be sure of eternal life and knew not how to
claim such a blessing for herself.⁵ That she was thinking of a

¹For the following analysis I am indebted to Rolf J.
Poehler, "Sinless Saints or Sinless Sinners? An Analysis of the
Doctrine of Christian Perfection as Taught by John Wesley and Ellen
G. White" (Term Paper, Heritage Room, a Seventh-day Adventist
Archive and Research Center, Andrews University, 1978).

²SW 11-12. Abbreviations will be used in references to
White's published works throughout the rest of the dissertation.

³SG 14-16; SW 11-12.


⁵IT 21-23.
Wesleyan "second blessing" seems clear from the expressions she used in describing her trials: holiness of heart, fully consecrated to God, some higher attainment.\(^1\) After the "great change" came to her,\(^2\) she spoke of having the witness of the Spirit that her sins were pardoned, and "I had at length received the blessing so long sought, an entire conformity to the will of God."\(^3\)

Although Ellen Harmon gave credit to her experiences in Millerism for her new joy in the Lord, her mode of expression was that of a Methodist who had received the second blessing. Still, there were differences between her insights and those of the Methodists.\(^4\) For one thing, she did not make the sharp distinction

\(^1\)Wesley believed that sanctification is an experience which occurs in the life of believer subsequent to justification and may, like the latter, occur instantaneously. "We do not know a single instance, in any place, of a person's receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new clean heart," he wrote in Christian Perfection (The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols., 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House reprint, 1979, from 1872 ed. published in London by the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room], 11:380). "Second blessing" is the term which has been applied to his doctrine of sanctification.

\(^2\)IT 27-31. \(^3\)SG 22.

\(^4\)In fact, she wrote some severe criticisms of what she understood the Methodist doctrine of sanctification to be. She felt it would militate against the third angel's message. It is likely that what she criticized was a perversion of Wesley's own doctrine, for in her view it would whitewash sin under a cover of professed holiness. True sanctification, she believed, was "truth received in the heart, and practically carried out in the life." IT 335-40. "Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. . . As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place, there is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained." p. 340. She believed that the holiness people later went to antinomian extremes. See ISM 361.

Wesley himself insisted that obedience to the commandments is a sign of sanctification. In his first sermon on "The Witness of the Spirit," he said, "Love rejoices to obey; to do, in every
between justification and sanctification that they did, but the Methodist interest in holiness exerted its influence on her soteriology throughout her ministry. She always held the ethical standards of the gospel high and believed that sanctification was indispensable if one would be ready to meet Christ when He returned.

There is no question that White was fully convinced that Jesus was coming soon.¹ When He did not appear, she endured the great disappointment with the rest, but unlike most she did not give up her faith that prophecy had been fulfilled.

A few days after her seventeenth birthday she received what Seventh-day Adventists consider a supernatural vision which confirmed that God had led in the Millerite expectation, although it did not offer any explanation.² This was the first of about two thousand visions which formed the basis for her public ministry of writing, speaking, counseling, and leading the church.

She married James White, an Adventist minister, previously of the Christian Connection, on 30 August 1846. He was four years her senior. Since they felt it their duty to travel and encourage the "Little Flock," the scattered remnants of the Millerite hope in New England, they had no fixed home during the early years. They

¹From the time of her conversion Ellen Harmon showed a deep concern for the salvation of her acquaintances (IT 33). After accepting the belief that Christ was coming in 1843, she donated the little she earned in her father's hatmaking trade to purchase Millerite literature (IT 38).

²EH 13-20. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church's belief concerning the authority and role of White, see p. 56, n. 1, infra.
never flinched from what they perceived God's will for them to be.

The Whites began to observe the seventh-day Sabbath after reading a tract by Joseph Bates (1792-1872). Six general meetings for "friends of the Sabbath" were held in 1848 in New York and New England, at which several basic beliefs now held by Seventh-day Adventists were crystallized from the welter of opinions afloat at the time.

On 14 March 1858, White received a vision which showed some of the events in the great conflict between Christ and Satan.

Sixty-five pages of the two hundred-page record of this vision describe the Millerite movement and subsequent history, which White

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1Joseph Bates, The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, from the Beginning, to the Entering into the Gates of the Holy City, According to the Commandment (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1846). Former sea captain, temperance advocate, ardent believer in the Millerite message, Bates with the Whites became a founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On 3 April 1847, Ellen White received a vision confirming the seventh-day Sabbath doctrine (see Ellen White, James White, and Joseph Bates, A Word to the "Little Flock" [Brunswick, ME: James White, 1847], pp. 18-20; reprinted in EW 32-35).

2"Sabbath Conferences," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), pp. 1255-56. At the sixth conference in November 1848, Ellen advised her husband to begin printing a little paper, which was the beginning of Adventist publishing. James first produced The Present Truth, of which eleven issues appeared in seventeen months. It became The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald in 1850. He founded The Youth's Instructor in 1852, and The Signs of the Times in California in 1874. The printing was done by the believers themselves from 1852, first in Rochester, New York, and after 1854 in Battle Creek, Michigan. In the early years the papers were the main bond of fellowship between the scattered believers (See LS 125-28; "Publishing Department," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, pp. 1167-69).

3The vision provided the material for Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1858). In LS 162 White wrote that she had seen it ten years earlier, but there is no written record of the vision from that time.
knew by personal experience.\(^1\) The record was clearly intended to confirm the faith of the believers, both those who had gone through the great disappointment and those who later accepted the new beliefs concerning the work of Christ after the passing of the time in 1844. This account laid the foundation for what was expanded into the five-volume "Conflict of the Ages" series.\(^2\)

The Whites pressed their fellow believers in the late 1850s and early 1860s to organize themselves in order to hold legal title to their property and to inaugurate a system for recognizing and supporting their ministers; the first General Conference was set up in May 1863.

Soon afterward White had her first vision on health, which eventually made good health habits a part of Adventist faith. On Christmas Day 1865, another vision focused this new emphasis toward the founding of their own health care institution. In response the Western Health Reform Institute was founded in Battle Creek, Michigan, in September 1866, the first of scores of similar institutions around the world.

In 1872 White called the believers' attention to educational reform, which resulted in the founding of Battle Creek College in 1874-75, and later to the development of an elementary and secondary school system.

On 1 April 1874, White received additional light on the work of Seventh-day Adventists extending into the western United States and into foreign fields. This must have encouraged the General Conference to send J. N. Andrews (1829-1883) to Switzerland as their first foreign missionary on 15 September the same year. The Whites traveled across the country several times in the 1870s as they worked to build up the work in the West. Both were sought-after speakers at camp meetings and other large gatherings of the church. James died at the age of sixty on 6 August 1881, a victim of overwork. The largest part of Ellen White's literary work was accomplished after he died.

White spent the years 1885-1887 in Europe, where she had access to historical records which helped fill out the details for The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, published in 1888.

Back in America she participated in the General Conference session held in Minneapolis from 17 October to 4 November 1888. She supported and, over the following three years, gained gradual acceptance of, the positions of A. T. Jones (1850-1923) and E. J. Waggoner (1855-1916) on the deity of Christ and righteousness by faith, which were opposed by older leaders at the conference.

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From 1891 to 1900 she lived in Australia. After her return to America, she attended the General Conference session held in 1901 and urged a complete reorganization in order to provide for the management of a church which had spread outside its homeland. Her difficulty getting decisions and money from the leaders in Battle Creek, Michigan, for needs in Australia had dramatized the need for reorganization. It was a vivid example of her influence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that the reorganization she called for was inaugurated without serious trauma and that ideas which had been tried already in Australia were used.

Trauma there was, however, in meeting a theological and organizational challenge posed by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) during the first few years of the twentieth century. He had

1While there she helped choose the site for Avondale College, which became the training school of workers for the islands of the South Pacific. She also aided in the founding of medical institutions and prepared several books on the life of Christ. These books seemed to be inspired by the new emphasis on righteousness by faith dating from 1888: The Desire of Ages (1898); Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing (1896); Steps to Christ (1892); Christ's Object Lessons (1900).

2Encouraged and partially financed by the Whites, Kellogg earned a medical degree from Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York and then became superintendent of the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1876. Prospering under his leadership, it became Battle Creek Sanitarium, one of the largest medical institutions in America by 1900. Kellogg invented cornflakes, developed a number of exercise machines, and wrote prolifically. His biography has been written by Richard William Schwarz, "John Harvey Kellogg, 1852-1944" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1964), with a popularized version published as John Harvey Kellogg, M.D. (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Ass., 1970). See also the references to Kellogg in Arthur W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, vol. 3, and "Kellogg, John Harvey," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, pp. 722-23. Gerald Carson, Cornflake Crusade (New York: Rinehart, 1957), is a whimsical account of Kellogg's work with foods, based on original sources. Ronald M. Deutsch, The New Nuts Among the Berries: How Nutrition Nonsense...
built up the medical work to the point that it exceeded the size of
the General Conference, and he refused to decentralize and start
smaller institutions in scattered locations as White urged. He also
began teaching what many regarded as pantheism. White opposed his
ideas and supported A. G. Daniells (1858-1935), president of the
General Conference from 1901 to 1922. Dr. Kellogg and the Battle
Creek Sanitarium were lost to the church, but the church was saved
from pantheism and was free to expand its medical work elsewhere.

During the first decade of the 1900s, Ellen White helped
found several medical institutions in California, the most important
of which was The College of Medical Evangelists at Loma Linda, which
came to replace Dr. Kellogg's American Medical College in Battle
Creek as the training school of physicians for the church.

At the same time White was helping to establish Adventist
activities in the southern states where her son James Edson (1849-
1928) worked with his boat, the "Morning Star," from 1894 to 1904.
She supported the founding of Oakwood College, near Huntsville,
Alabama, for black young people, and Nashville Agricultural and
Normal Institute near Madison, Tennessee, for mature white young
people.

White attended the General Conference for the last time in
1909 when she was 81. Over the five months she spent on this tour

no great claims to scholarship, deserves mention as hilarious read-
ing for a dull day. Kellogg appears in several chapters.

1His pantheism was thought to be expressed in The Living
Temple (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Pub. Co., 1903), although
critics disagreed on which sections of the book to condemn. See
she spoke seventy-two times in twenty-seven places. She spent the last years of her life in California, preparing more books for the press. She died on 16 July 1915 after being confined to her wheelchair for five months with a broken hip. She was buried beside her husband in Battle Creek, Michigan.\(^\text{1}\)

The Eschatology of Ellen G. White

The Purpose of Christ's Coming

Ellen White's eschatology had its genesis in the ideas of William Miller. With him, she believed that the return of Christ in glory is the "very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures" which had been longed for by the children of faith ever since the fall in

\(^{1}\)The belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church about the work of White has been expressed in numerous statements through the years. See Witness of the Pioneers Concerning the Spirit of Prophecy, a Facsimile Reprint of Periodical and Pamphlet Articles Written by the Contemporaries of Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C.: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1961). Typical of these was an article published in 1883 by G. I. Butler, who was president of the General Conference from 1871 to 1874 and from 1880 to 1888. See "The Visions," RH Supplement, 14 August 1883, pp. 11, 12. Butler took the ministry of Ellen White as a sign that the Seventh-day Adventist church is God's chosen church for the last days. He accepted her as inspired because the Bible had predicted that such a gift would be granted to the final church, and because she met the Bible tests of true prophets: agreement with Scripture, exalting Christ as having come in the flesh, and good fruits from their ministry. Among the good fruits he cited were the general prosperity of the church and the fact that White first called attention to every important move the church had made: publishing, health, temperance, educational institutions, and missionary enterprises. Referring to the relationship between her writings and the Bible, he wrote that the Bible was the canon for testing her work, but also maintained that once her writings were accepted as inspired they should be respected as having authority in the church, even though belief in their inspiration was not a test of church fellowship. See also p. 194, n. 2 infra.

While we regard the work of Ellen G. White as a genuine manifestation of the gift of prophecy, we have studied her eschatological views apart from a consideration of their origin. The question of inspiration was not regarded as having a bearing on this study.
Eden. At His advent Christ would "complete the great work of redemption." To believers today as to the shepherds in Bethlehem the proclamation of Christ's coming should be "good tidings of great joy" because He who is their hope of eternal life is coming, not to be insulted and rejected, but "in power and glory, to redeem His people."  

White believed that one of the purposes of Christ's return is to reap the harvest of the earth, making the great division between the wheat and tares among His professed people, and between believers and unbelievers generally. His coming will therefore mark the end of the present age, the final judgment. 

"Judgment" in White's eschatology, however, involved much more than a mere courtroom scene. It was the climax of the theodicy which played a major role in her thought. Her "Conflict of the Ages" series, in the tradition of Jonathan Edwards, John Milton's Paradise Lost, and apocalyptic literature in the Bible, was concerned to justify the ways of God toward men. Her theodicy

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1 GC 299-302. To show how the belief in the second advent extends throughout the Scriptures, White cited Enoch, Job, the psalmists, prophets, and apostles. See also PP 86; COL 421; AA 228-29, 536; DA 627-36.

2 GC 339-40. 3 COL 62-63, 69, 75; see also GC 454; IT 261.

4 See pp. 23-26 supra.

5 See Rev. 15:3,4—"Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages!" See also other doxologies in the book: 5:9-10; 11:17-18; 16:6-7; 19:2,6-8.

6 Her theodicy is most fully worked out in her comments on creation and the fall (PP 33-43, 63-70; GC 492-504), the giving of the law (PP 338-39, 393), the death and Resurrection of Christ (DA 58, 758-68), and the final judgment, which involves events before, during, and after the millennium (GC 670-71).
presupposes that salvation history on this earth is a lesson book for intelligent beings throughout the universe. The issues being worked out on this planet have ramifications far beyond this world, she thought—issues which must be settled before God can allot the final rewards to men.

Satan, whom White believed was once a covering cherub in heaven, rebelled against God's government and raised fundamental questions about His character and law. Impeaching His wisdom and love, Satan charged that God was a tyrant for imposing arbitrary laws on the angels, who were holy beings and needed no such control. White saw Satan as claiming that the law of God must be either changed or abrogated in order to bring true happiness in heaven. He said the law could not be obeyed and that justice was inconsistent with mercy. If the law should be broken, it would not be possible for God to forgive the sinner. Men's disobedience proved that the law could not be obeyed, he said, and thus he claimed the

1"Angels and unfallen worlds," DA 758-59, 490, 693. See also PP 42-43, 68; GS 597-98, 503; ST 27.
3PP 35. See also ISG 17; ISP 2.
4PP 40-42. White's view of the great controversy between Christ and Satan differed from that of Jonathan Edwards in giving more attention to issues involving the dominion of God over the entire universe, whereas Edwards emphasized the controversy on this earth. See p. 24 supra, and Edwards' History of the Work of Redemption, p. 36ff. See also PP 36-38, 69, 338; DA 761-62; GC 493, 671.
5DA 761. See also PP 40, 69.
numan race as his rightful subjects.¹

If God had destroyed Satan immediately, before he had a chance to work out his principles, White thought, the surviving angels would have served Him from fear, which would sow the seed for further rebellion. Since God desired the service of love, White believed, He had to deal with the rebellion in such a way that His goodness and the evil of sin might be clearly seen. Only as Satan's charges were answered to the satisfaction of all could God's government be placed on a basis of eternal security.²

White wrote that the charges of Satan were refuted by the life and death of Christ. At the cross the character of Satan as cruel and murderous and the character of Christ as sinless and unselfish were fully revealed.³ By His perfect life Christ proved that the law is righteous and can be obeyed. By His death He showed

¹PP 69. The importance of the law of God in White's view of the great controversy cannot be over emphasized, but her understanding of "law" includes more than a few hundred words written on stone, or even the Torah of Moses. It is actually a shorthand term for the sovereignty of God and cannot be separated from His Person. When Satan attacked the law of God, White saw it as rebellion against God Himself. But since the same God who gave the law gave also the sacrifice for transgression of the law, there can be no question of legalism in White's theodicy. She believed that the foundation of the divine government was the "law of love," and that the happiness of all created beings depended on their being in accord with it. See GC 493.

²PP 42; GC 503; DA 58. Satan therefore had a short-term advantage in that he could use flattery, deception, and force, but God must depend on truth and love. "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to earth; but He did not do this. . . . God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power" (DA 759; see also GC 497-98).

³DA 761. White believed that angels offered themselves to make the sacrifice for sin, but could not be accepted. Only the One who created man had authority to redeem him. See PP 63-66; GC 502-3.
that the law is unalterable, for if it could have been changed, then Christ need not have died. He upheld the authority of the law while providing a way to forgive the sinner. God could therefore be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.¹

While believed that Christ can remit past sin because His "life stands for the life of men." He offers His holiness and perfect character as a free gift to all who will receive it. "More than this, Christ impues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character." Through the forgiveness of past sin and power against present sin, "the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ."² Thus mercy and justice were reconciled.

Nevertheless, as White saw it, the controversy could not yet be ended. The issues at stake must be more fully revealed. Men as well as angels must see the characters of Christ and of Satan and choose the side on which they will stand.³

After the resurrection of Christ, White said, Satan attacked the law from a new standpoint. He declared that the death of Christ abrogated the law: mercy had destroyed justice.⁴ This would be the issue in the final crisis, when, under the pressure of persecution

¹DA 762-63. White's doctrine of the atonement bore some resemblance to that of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), who believed that Christ died to uphold the government of God, while making it possible for Him to remit sin. His death served to maintain respect for the law of God. See "Hugo Grotius," NIDCC, p. 440; and L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 4th rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), pp. 338-39.

²DA 762-63. ³Ibid.

⁴DA 763. White was referring to the arguments of the antinomians.
and threatened death which White called the time of Jacob's trouble, every man would be called to decide whether he would obey God's law or man's.

Throughout the controversy, White believed, God has acted so as to bring man to acknowledge His justice. She did not believe He acts arbitrarily, but that He is wise, just, and loving, and that He desires to be seen as such. After a final attack on God at the end of the millennium, even Satan will be brought to acknowledge the goodness of God and the justice of His own sentence. Every question will have been answered; God will stand clear of blame for evil.

Then, in White's view, "God will vindicate His law and deliver His people" by cutting off Satan and all who joined him in rebellion. Because of the long continuance of evil, the righteous have asked the question of Rev 6:10—"How long dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?"—a question which suggests that God needs to be vindicated also before the righteous. The question will

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1 GC 592-92, 613-34. In White's view, Satan did not need to attack the entire law of God; he could gain his purpose by destroying one command, for this would eventually lead to disrespect for all. The particular target of his effort is the Sabbath commandment. To prepare the way for his final deception, Satan has led men to question the doctrines of creation, the fall of man, the atonement, and the authority of the Bible itself. The result, White believed, is modern impenitence, corrupt courts, increase in violent crime, and popularity of convicted criminals.

2 PP 393, 498.


4 DA 763; PP 339. As illustrations of the final destruction of the wicked, White pointed to the destruction of the antediluvian world (PP 104, 109); of Sodom (PP 165-66); of Babylon (GC 653); and of Jerusalem (GC 37).
be answered at last. The extermination of sin will vindicate His love and establish His honor before a universe of those who delight in Him.¹

God's ultimate goal, in White's thought, is a clean universe. While Christ through His cross has paid the redemption price for all² and has brought hope and salvation to the world,³ it is not yet fully realized. The cross is the pledge of everlasting life, but the life is not yet given.⁴ At His coming Christ will pay the pledge and satisfy the hope. Sin will be no more; Christ will create new heavens and a new earth as the eternal home of His people.⁵

¹GC 504, 670-71; see also PP 338-39; DA 764.
²ST 603. White included the concept of Christ's work as a ransom very early in her writings. See 1SG 23-25 (1858); ISP 45.
³AA 77; see also TM 67; Ev 186.
⁴GC 662-78, which is a slightly edited copy of 4SP 476-92. These chapters present a much more developed description of the new earth than appeared in the earliest version of the theme (1SG 214-19; for other descriptions see Ed 301-9; Ev 17-20; SR 430-33; IT 67-70; 9T 285-88).
⁵GC 674-78. The basic themes of White's theodicy are similar to those of Jewish and Christian apocalypses. In the words of Ethelbert Stauffer, as quoted by D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), p. 105, the apocalypses were characterized by the principles of "primordiality, conflict, eschatology, and universalism." White, with them, was concerned about the source of evil in the fall of man and the angels. They all saw history in terms of a great conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (ibid., pp. 105-6), with Satan working to control not only the human race but the cosmos as well. They saw human suffering as the result of clashing principles, and all who endured persecution because of their loyalty to God were achieving something of vast significance. See H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to Revelation, 2nd ed. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), pp. 156, 174. This ethical dualism is not complete, however, for God remains in overall control of history (ibid., p. 167).
The Manner of Christ's Coming

In White's eschatology, Christ will return literally, personally, and visibly. She emphasized that He will return in the same manner in which He went away, and men will see Him come just as they saw Him go. He will come in the glory of the Father, accompanied by all the angels of heaven. His coming will be just as literal as the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai or His death on Calvary. For the righteous it will mean a literal deliverance from persecution, a literal resurrection, and a literal translation.

The final vindication of God's authority requires a personal intervention by Christ at the end of history. White insisted on the literality because she believed that shortly before the end Satan would attempt to counterfeit Christ's coming but would not be


2 AA 33. White emphasized the humanity of Christ at His ascension in order to underline the assurance that believers now have in Him as their substitute and surety. She believed that He will retain His human nature throughout eternity. See 5BC 1125-26; 6BC 1054; DA 831-32.

3 PP 339-40; DA 739. See also EW 110; GC 640-41.

4 GC 322, 636-37, 642-44.

5 GC 503-4, 643, 666-68, 670-71; DA 739. It can be seen that the vindication of God is, by definition, the theme of White's entire theodicy. This is not surprising in view of the fact that her eschatology found its starting point in the book of Daniel and Revelation which, like all apocalypses, are much concerned to justify the ways of God to men. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross has vindicated God's law and mercy before the universe (see Rev 5:9-13), but a further vindication remains for the end of history. Until then, persecuted saints will ask, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:10). For further discussion see Neall, "The Vindication of God in Daniel and Revelation" (Research Report, Heritage Room, Andrews University, 1976).
permitted to imitate His universally visible appearance in glory. Only by knowing the biblical descriptions of the event could men distinguish the true from the false.¹

Ellen White's Sequence of Last Day Events

Ellen White accepted William Miller's computations based on the prophecy of Dan 8 and 9.² Following his lead, she wrote that the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24-27 commenced with the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. Using the day for a year principle which was common among prophetic expositors at the time, she wrote that the first sixty-nine weeks reached to the baptism of Christ in A.D. 27, and the seventieth week extended to A.D. 34 as the end of the period allotted to the Jews as a nation. In the middle of the final week, in A.D. 31, Jesus was crucified, confirming the covenant and showing that the sacrifices of the ceremonial system which pointed to Him were to cease. Then, by connecting the seventy-week prophecy of Dan 9 with the 2300-day prophecy of Dan 8:14 and beginning them at the same time, White with Miller arrived at the date A.D. 1844 for the cleansing of the sanctuary and the coming of Christ.³

When the disciples went out to preach "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom is at hand: repent ye, and believe the

¹GC 625.

²"The computation of the prophetic periods on which that message was based, placing the close of the 2300 days in the autumn of 1844, stands without impeachment" (GC 467).

³GC 323-29, 398-99, 410; see also PK 698-99; DA 233. White believed that the fulfillment of the seventy-week prophecy in the earthly ministry of Christ was one of the strongest evidences that He was the Promised One.
gospel," their message, said White, was based on the prophecy of Dan 9.¹ Miller based his expectation on the same prophecy in combination with Dan 8.² Both Miller and the disciples were right about the time, White believed, but wrong about the event. The disciples did not see that Dan 9 also foretold the death of the Messiah, and Miller did not realize that he had no warrant for believing that the sanctuary of Dan 8:14 meant the earth, which he expected to be cleansed by fire. Neither did he see that the first angel in Rev 14:6,7, which he believed foretold his own proclamation, was followed by other angels. Because the disciples were expecting a glorious earthly empire, White reasoned, they thought they were proclaiming Christ's kingdom of glory, whereas the prophecy actually referred to His kingdom of grace. Similarly, because the Millerites accepted the current idea that the sanctuary represented the earth, they thought they were proclaiming Christ's return to cleanse the earth in final judgment. Both were wrong, White wrote, because they accepted popular errors, yet God was accomplishing His purpose in permitting the messages to be given in the way they were.³

¹GC 345; PK 698-99; DA 233.
²GC 351. In her earliest presentation of the Millerite revival, White had not felt it necessary to repeat his computations, perhaps because most of her readers would have been familiar with them. She recounted the story of the movement but did not try to give his biblical evidences. See iSG 133-40 (1858). By the time she published The Great Controversy (1889), of course, it was no longer sufficient to merely tell the history.
³GC 347, 353. White believed that God's will was done both through and in spite of the error. Both classes gave the messages which He desired to have given, although neither understood it completely. They could not have given it with equal enthusiasm if they had. The disappointment in 1844 served to weed out those who had moved merely from impulse and excitement. The final day was indeed
In White's thought, the time prophecies of Dan 7-9 gave the date for the beginning of the "time of the end." She combined with the Daniel prophecies the warning of Paul in 2 Thess 2:3, which told the church not to look for the coming of Christ in their day, for the man of sin must be revealed first. With most Protestant expositors since the Reformation, she held that the man of sin in 2 Thess 2 and the little horn of Dan 7 both referred to the papacy, and believed that the time, times, and half a time of Dan 7:25 extended to A.D. 1798. Since Paul "covers with his caution the whole of the Christian dispensation down to the year 1798," Christ could not come until after that year, which was therefore the beginning of the time of the end.

White wrote also that Daniel's succession of events led down to the "opening of the judgment," obviously referring to the same period at the end of earthly history. She supported this by citing at hand; the test of a definite time revealed to the people what was really in their hearts. White's concern to validate the 1844 experience is apparent.

1 GC 356. The phrase appears in Dan 8:17, which states that the 2300-day prophecy was "for the time of the end," and in Dan 12:4, which recorded the angel's command to Daniel to seal his book until the time of the end. Daniel himself, therefore, was not living in the final period. White believed that the 2300 days/years reached into the end time.


3 GC 356.

4 Ibid. It should be noted that White made no distinction between "the time of the end" (Daniel's expression) and "the last days" (generally used in the rest of the Bible), either on GC 356 or elsewhere, although she favored "the last days." Major statements showing that she believed she was living in the last days
the fact that Paul had proclaimed judgment to come—not in his day.
The Reformers also had not proclaimed the judgment—Martin Luther,
she wrote, placed it about three hundred years in the future. But
since 1798, many had arisen to preach the judgment near.

appear in 6T 10, 15, 31, 453; 9T 11-20, 89-96; PK 185, 275, 299,
624, 650-51, 717; DA 633; MH 142-43; and GC 406. She discussed the
1260-day prophecy in GC 54-55, 287, 306, 439-41. She quoted Rev
10:5,6 ("There should be time no longer") to say that there were
no more time prophecies to follow the end of the 2300 days/years in
1844 (See 2SM 108).
The idea that 1798 marked the beginning of the last days for
White is of immense importance in understanding the structure of her
eschatology. While she spelled it out most clearly on the one page,
GC 356, it is fundamental to the plan of the entire book, The Great
Controversy. She had a grasp of church history, but in The Great
Controversy much of it seems to have been merely a preparation for
the final period. The time of the end had a different quality and
a greater urgency, with privileges and obligations beyond those of
previous ages.

White apparently did not see the New Testament concept that
the last days began with the first advent of Christ. Such verses as
Heb 1:1,2 ("In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son"); Rom
13:12 ("the night is far gone, the day is at hand"); Rev 1:3
("Blessed is he who reads. . . for the time is near"); and Rev 22:
20 ("Surely I am coming soon"); are generally quoted as though they
applied to modern times. (See DA 198 for a brief allusion to Heb
1:1,2; 1SM 67 for Rom 13:12; TM 113-18 and AA 583-85 for Rev 1:3.)
This fact did not lead her to neglect the earthly life of Christ
(see The Desire of Ages), but it did cause her to overlook tensions
between nearness and delay in the New Testament, which will be dis-
cussed hereafter.

If White failed to see the NT view of the last days, so also
did other evangelical leaders of her time. See Nathaniel West,
comp., Second Coming of Christ: Pre-Millennial Essays of the Prophe-
tic Conference, Held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York
City (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1879). It was probably Albert
Schweitzer's work in The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York:
Macmillan, 1948 [first ed. in 1906]) that brought this concept to
general attention among English-speaking Protestants. The reason
for White's attitude is the fact that her eschatology started with
and developed from the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. If
she had begun with the Johannine or Pauline eschatology (cf. Geer-
and 1963]), it is likely that her conclusions would have been
different.
The notable result of White's approach was that, unlike
Schweitzer and later modern eschatologists, she was not concerned
about an eighteen-century delay in the parousia. Any "delay" in her
mind could only refer to the period after 1798.
Up to this point White agreed with Miller, but differed from him in her concept of the nature of the judgment to occur in 1844 and in the prophetic significance of the subsequent time. Like the early Christians, who divided the OT expectation of the Messiah into two phases, White divided Miller's judgment into a pre-advent investigative, and a later executive, phase.

In her first systematic account of the Millerite movement White presented it as a fulfillment of the first two angels' messages of Rev 14:1-8. The message of the first included the 1844 prediction of the judgment, which Millerites took to be concurrent with the coming of Christ, and also the concept of the "midnight

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\text{1See the chapters on the three angels' messages in LSG (1858), pp. 133-43 and 162-67; and the corresponding chapters in ASP (1884), pp. 222-40 and 273-86. It is probable that she felt the 1858 presentation to be necessary because new believers were coming into the community who had not gone through the 1844 experience. She had referred only briefly to the three angels in her 1851 publication, Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White), pp. 48, 50, 52, 55.}
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\text{2"Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'" (Rev 14:6,7). All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.}
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cry," which they applied to the final narrowing of the date to 22 October.¹

White's understanding of the first angel's message departed from Miller's with the new concept of the sanctuary suggested by Hiram Edson (1806-1882; a Millerite believer who had been a Methodist layman, later ordained) shortly after the disappointment. He said that instead of Christ's coming to earth on 22 October, He had on that day entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary for judgment.² Edson also compared this entrance of Christ to the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage in Matt 25:10.³ Apollos Hale and Joseph Turner added to the bridegroom symbolism by pointing to Luke 12:36, where the guests were to wait for their master to return from (not go in to) the wedding.⁴ A few years later White accepted the idea that Dan 8:14; 7:9,10, and 13-14 were all describing the same event. As she saw it, the work which Christ started in 1844 was an examination of the heavenly record books and a final blotting out of the sins of the repentant. When that work was

¹In making this prediction, Samuel S. Snow (1806-1870) built on a suggestion by Miller himself that the time of the Jewish cultic feasts predicted the time of events in salvation history, and that the autumn feasts looked forward to events associated with the second coming of Christ. Snow arrived at the 22 October date by connecting Dan 8:14 with the annual Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month, which by the Karaite Jewish reckoning fell on 22 October that year. Hence the expectation of 22 October came to be called the "seventh-month movement." See Samuel S. Snow, The True Midnight Cry, 22 August 1844; William Miller to Joshua V. Himes, Signs of the Times, 17 May 1843, p. 84; GC 399-401.

²Hiram Edson, MS "Experience in the Advent Movement" (Heritage Room, Andrews University, n.d.); GC 352-53, 424.

³GC 393-94, 398.

⁴Apollos Hale and Joseph Turner, "Has Not the Savior Come as the Bridegroom?" Advent Mirror, January 1845. See also GC 427.
finished, she wrote, then Christ would return to receive His people and make an end of sin on earth.\(^1\) With these concepts she both explained the disappointment in 1844 and also lent special urgency to the following period. The judgment was in session and none could know when his name might be considered or when the entire task would be finished.

The second angel's message,\(^2\) in the belief of the Millerites, applied to their experience in being driven out of their churches in the summer of 1843.\(^3\) Charles Fitch's sermon, "Come Out of Her, My People,"\(^4\) was the first to make the application. While his call to separate from the churches was not accepted by all Millerites, his interpretation of the prophecy did give significance to the experience of those who suddenly found themselves without church homes.\(^5\)

Between 1846 and 1849 the Advent believers who accepted the heavenly sanctuary explanation of the 1844 disappointment combined with it the seventh-day Sabbath reform.\(^6\) This development was seen

\(^1\) GC 479-91.

\(^2\) "Another angel, a second, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion'" (Rev 14:8).

\(^3\) GC 380-89. \(^4\) Midnight Cry, 21 September 1843, pp. 33-36.

\(^5\) White did not believe that the Protestant churches were completely fallen in 1844, however. In the 1888 Great Controversy she described the future "loud cry," when the message of Rev 14:8 would be repeated, with the mention of the corruptions which had entered the churches since 1844. See GC 603.

\(^6\) The first Adventist group to begin keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath was that in Washington, New Hampshire. They learned of it in 1843-1844 from Rachel Oakes Preston (1809-1868), a Seventh Day Baptist.
as fulfilling the third angel's message of Rev 14.1 The "beast" of Rev 14:9 represented the papacy;2 the "image of the beast" represented a future union between Protestant churches and the American government which would seek to enforce religious laws by civil power.3 The mark of the beast would be a future national Sunday law, based on the belief that the papacy was responsible for the

1"And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.' Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:9-12).

2GC 438, 443-45. This understanding of the symbol had been common among Protestants since Puritan days. See Froom, Prophetic Faith, 2:786-87; 3:744-45. But it should also be noted that the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of virulent anti-Catholicism in the United States. A massive Catholic immigration from Ireland began in 1820. Twenty years later, a blight which ruined the potato crop in Ireland sent to America a million more emigrants to compete in the job market with native Protestants. See Ahlstrom, A Religious History, p. 540. From 1830 on, the idea of a secret Catholic plot against American democracy gained increasing credence among Protestant leaders. Lyman Beecher's Plea for the West (1835) was a plea for funds for preachers to save the West for Protestantism. See Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 365. On 10 August 1834, mobs in Boston burned the Ursuline convent and roamed the streets for days afterward. The trial of the leaders was a farce (Tyler, p. 371). The persecution of the Catholics came to a violent climax with the burning of Catholic churches and homes in Philadelphia in the spring of 1844, when twelve lives were lost. See Jerome L. Clark, 1844, Vol. 1, Religious Movements (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Ass., 1968), pp. 267-78; Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860, A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York: Macmillan, 1938). The anti-Catholic bigotry was displaced at last only by antislavery and the threat of secession. (Tyler, p. 371; Ahlstrom, 561).

3GC 445-48. See also EW 64-67; Letter 11, 1890 (TBC 976); ST, 22 March 1910 (TBC 977); Letter 31, 1898, and RH, 13 July 1897 (TBC 980).
original change in the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday and now points to that change as a mark of its authority.\(^1\) White saw the mark of the beast as the apocalyptic competitor of the seal of God, the seventh-day Sabbath.\(^2\) For her the third angel looked forward to a time when the basic questions of her theodicy, the questions as to the authority and justice of God's law, would be forced upon all men. In the final struggle, she believed, every living person would have to make a decision as to his basic loyalty, which would be shown by the day he chose to keep. She laid special emphasis on Rev 14:12 as a call to everyone to keep the "commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ." Only in this way could man escape the doom threatened in the third angel's message.\(^3\)

Shortly before the coming of Christ, when everyone would have decided whether he would obey God and receive His seal or obey man and receive the mark of the beast, White believed, human probation would close--there would be no more changing sides.\(^4\) Then

\(^1\)GC 445-50. Joseph Bates (1792-1872), Advent preacher and with the Whites a founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, led in connecting Sunday observance with the mark of the beast in the third angel's message and also in suggesting that the Sabbath was the seal of God mentioned in Rev 7:1-4. See his The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, from the Beginning, to the Entering into the Gates of the Holy City, according to the Commandment (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1846); and A Seal of the Living God: A Hundred Forty-Four Thousand of the Servants of God Being Sealed, in 1849 (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1848).

\(^2\)GC 613, 640. In her view, Sunday keeping was not yet the mark of the beast, but would become so when it should be enforced by a national Sunday law. See GC 604-5 and MS 118, 1899 (7BC 977).

\(^3\)GC 436-38.

\(^4\)GC 490-91. She referred to Rev 22:11,12 as the decree to be made at that moment by Christ, and cited the closing of the door of the ark a few days before the flood as an illustration of it.
would come the great time of trouble, with the righteous standing under a death threat at the hands of the wicked\(^1\) and the wicked suffering the seven last plagues.\(^2\) Referring to Rev 16:13-14, she held that the climax of Satan's deceptions would occur in an impersonation of Christ. In his assumed character Satan would claim that he had changed the Sabbath to Sunday, but the people of God would recognize the error of his claims by the Scriptures. Although threatened with boycott and death, they would remain secure under the protection of heavenly angels.\(^4\)

At the time of the greatest extremity of His people, White wrote, Christ would arise to vindicate His own honor and deliver the righteous.\(^5\) Amid tremendous convulsions of nature He would raise from the dead all who had died "in the faith of the third angel's message... and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people... to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."\(^6\) Her interest in a theodicy is apparent here—key figures on both sides of the controversy are raised in a special resurrection to see the victory of Christ. This becomes even more apparent in her use of Ps 50:6, which reads, "The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!"

Literalizing the Hebrew metaphor, she wrote that shortly before the appearance of Christ a hand would appear against the sky holding

\(^1\) GC 615, 631.  \(^2\) GC 627-29.  \(^3\) GC 624-25.

\(^4\) GC 631-34.  \(^5\) COL 178.

\(^6\) GC 637 (4SP 454). White quoted Dan 12:2 and Rev 1:7 as biblical support for this statement. In her earliest description of it (LSG 205 [1858]), the special resurrection of the wicked was omitted.
the two tables of stone folded together. The purpose of this revelation of the law was to convince the wicked of their sin in trampling on God's requirements.¹

Then, White said, Christ would appear in the clouds of heaven to raise the righteous dead, change the righteous living to immortality, and take them all to heaven.² The living wicked would be blotted out, and Satan would be imprisoned on the desolate earth during the millennium. During the thousand years the saints in heaven would sit in judgment on the wicked, and at the close of the millennium, Satan would be loosed from his imprisonment by the resurrection of the wicked.³

At the same time, as White described it, Jesus would descend to earth accompanied by His saints and the Holy City. The wicked would organize to attack but would be stopped by the appearance of Christ's great white throne above the city. A panoramic replay of human history would appear in the sky—this is how White pictured the opening of the books in Rev 20:11,12. By the scenes portrayed above them the wicked would be convicted of their wrong and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord indeed. Then the fires of God would be

¹GC 639-40 (4SP 457). Omitted in 1SG.
²GC 642-52 (edited from 4SP 460-69). Cf. 1SG 206-9. In GC 645 and 1SG 208-9, White's description of Christ standing head and shoulders high above the saints just before entering the Holy City, as he gives crowns to each, is similar to that found in 2 Esdras 2:42-48.
³GC 657-61 (edited from 4SP 474-75).
poured out, and they would be destroyed. After the fire had done its work it would die out, leaving a purified earth.

The final act in the drama, as White saw it, would be the re-creation of the earth as the home of God's people. Their life in the future would be a continuation of the life they enjoyed during the millennium. The only reminder of sin which would remain, she said, would be the marks of the crucifixion of Christ. Life in the new earth would be not unlike present life, except for the absence of sin and death (she resisted attempts to spiritualize it into something intangible). Marshaling texts from both testaments to enhance her vision of the life with God, her final word was that all things would finally declare that God is love.

The Three Angels' Messages as the Basis of Ellen White's Eschatology

As we sketch White's description of the final events, we note that every major theme can be traced back to the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12 or to prophecies which she associated with them. She saw the first angel's message fulfilled in the investigative judgment in heaven while the believers were calling men to worship God on earth. The conflict between the seal of God and the mark of the beast came from her understanding of the third angel's message. The plagues on the wicked were a part of the wrath

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1 GC 622-73 (4SP 476-89). The description of history being replayed is much more fully developed here than in White's earliest treatment in 1SG 214-17. Even there, however, the idea that the wicked will see what they have lost is not missing.

2 GC 673-78 (Edited from 4SP 489-92). The description of the new earth in 1SG 218-19 is very brief.
threatened in the same message, and the persecution of the righteous predicted in the associated prophecy of Rev 13:11-17. The difference between her and Miller was that he saw Christ coming after the second angel's message, while she saw Him coming after the third.

White's entire theodicy seems to have originated in and to have taken its inspiration from the three angels' messages. She found there the basic themes of conflict over God's law and of loyalty to Him rather than to competing powers. It was her conviction that God would vindicate His law to the world just before the end that led to her idea that He would display the tables of stone in the sky. There had to come a time when He would convict all men of their sin and His righteousness. Other essentials of her theodicy were the saints' judging the wicked during the millennium and of the final judgment before the great white throne. In her view, righteous and wicked alike must come to see the justice and mercy of God. The righteous have their questions answered as they judge the wicked during the millennium; the wicked are convicted by the panoramic review at its end.

The three angels' messages told White what Jesus has been doing in heaven since 1844 and what His church should be doing on earth. The three messages set forth the events and issues of the last days. The first announced that Jesus had started His work of judgment. The second announced the final apostasy in the churches. The third called men to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Taken together, White believed, the messages laid on the people of God the responsibilities of personal reformation and
public proclamation, in order to be ready for the return of Christ.

They explained why Christ did not come in 1844, and at the same time continued to affirm that He would return soon.¹

¹White consistently held that the 1844 experience was what had made the pioneers into Seventh-day Adventists. The purpose of the three angels' messages was to prepare a people to meet God. So important were they to her thought that she made them a hermeneutical key to other parts of the Bible. Any who had not passed through the 1844 experience, she wrote, were in danger of arriving at erroneous views in their study of the Scripture; she urged them to believe on "their word" (that is, on the testimony of--) those who had passed through the experience (MSS 31 and 32, 1896, reprinted in 2SM 101-17, see especially p. 111). The doctrines they had developed were "testing truths" which were essential for salvation. To tear up the application of the three angels would tear up the very foundation of their faith. She pronounced a woe on anyone who would "move a block, or stir a pin" in those messages (See 1SG 168 (1858), reprinted in 2SM 104 and in CW 26). Among those who had given up their faith in the 1844 experience there was great confusion. White was convinced that the very essence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would be changed if their understanding of the three angels were altered. "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great Advent Movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people" (GC 423). The three angels, therefore, supplied the meaning for their lives (See EW 254-56). They gave the Seventh-day Adventist Church its unique mission: "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world" (GT 19 (1909)).

In 1851 White urged that while there were many truths in the Bible, what the believers needed at that time were such subjects as the sanctuary, the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus—all being integral parts of the three messages (See EW 63). In 1858 she wrote that the third angel lighted up the past, present, and future (1SG 163-64). In 1903 she warned that nothing must disturb the foundation laid in 1843-44. It was "as the Rock of ages," her guide since it was given (See "Our Duty to Leave Battle Creek," RH 14 April 1903, p. 17). The "old truths" given at the beginning were still to be heralded far and near ("A World-Wide Message," RH, 20 August 1903, pp. 8-9; see also Letter 329, 1905 [ISM 160-62]). At the end of her ministry she retained the same conviction: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us in the past, and His teaching in our past history" (LS 196 (1915)). It appears that White thus elevated the early Adventist experience to a position of authority nearly equal to that of the canonical Scriptures. For further discussion, see pp. 80, n. 2, and 81, n. 1 infra.
How White kept her faith in spite of the disappointment

Because it was so important to her entire eschatology, White went to considerable lengths to defend the 1844 proclamation in the face of the great disappointment. Soon after the passing of the time she pictured the remaining believers traveling to heaven on a path high above the world.\(^1\) Christ was at their head, and the midnight cry was a great light behind them shining over the whole way. For those who denied that God was leading them, she wrote, the light went out and they "fell off the path into the dark and wicked world below." She pictured Christ coming for them, raising the dead, and taking them all to heaven. There she saw Charles Fitch and Levi Stockman, two Millerite preachers who had both died a short time before the day of expectation.\(^2\) This description makes the point that the midnight cry was of God, but that Christ's coming was still ahead. It also said that only those who kept their faith would go to heaven at Christ's coming. Her seeing Fitch and Stockman in heaven emphasized that those who died in the advent faith would be raised at Christ's coming. God had not forsaken His disappointed people; Christ was leading them and would soon come for them.

White took pains to defend William Miller's character against the criticism that he was dishonest or fanatical. He was upright, honest-hearted, and "possessed an irreproachable moral character and an enviable reputation." He had "more than ordinary intellectual strength," and "sincerely desired to know the truth." She defended the idea that truth could come through a self-taught

\(^{1}\)EW 13-20. \(^{2}\)EW 17.
layman by pointing to the fact that God revealed the news of Christ's first advent to shepherds rather than to the priests and rabbis.\textsuperscript{1} She referred to Miller's "sound principles of interpretation" and argued that "to deny that the days ended at that time was to... renounce positions which had been established by unmistakable fulfillments of prophecy."\textsuperscript{2} She indicated that his reticence to publish his views showed that he did not work from motives of self-aggrandizement.\textsuperscript{3} Finally, she referred to the nearly complete absence of fanaticism in the midnight cry movement as another evidence of God's leading.\textsuperscript{4}

The question can still be raised, however, as to what really enabled White to retain her understanding of Daniel's prophecies when nothing happened on the expected day. We have already mentioned the confusion which followed the disappointment (p. 39 supra); most of Miller's followers gave up their faith in the 1844 date, and some gave up their faith in God. How did White keep hers?

There seem to be two answers. The first was the fact that no one, not even his opponents, had been able to refute Miller's computations; the other was the revival which she had seen in the movement. She wrote:

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{GC} 312-14, 317.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{GC} 410-11, 328, 351. For his principles of Bible interpretation, see Appendix B, p. 259.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{GC} 329, 331. She referred to his two years of initial study before he arrived at his understanding of the prophecies, and his nine years of re-checking to make sure of his conclusions before he began to preach publicly.
\textsuperscript{4}\textit{GC} 401.
The fruits of the advent movement, the spirit of humility and heart searching, of renouncing of the world and reformation of life, which had attended the work, testified that it was of God. They dared not deny that the power of the Holy Spirit had witnessed to the preaching of the second advent, and they could detect no error in their reckoning of the prophetic periods. The ablest of their opponents had not succeeded in overthrowing their system of prophetic interpretation. 1

She was certain that if they renounced their faith and denied "the power of the Holy Spirit which had attended the message," they "would be drawing back toward perdition." 2 It seems

1 GC 405. See also the chapter, "A Great Religious Awakening," pp. 355-74, where she pointed to prophetic expositors in widely scattered countries who came to similar conclusions about the same time Miller did.

2 GC 408. She wrote also: "The special blessing of the Lord, both in the conversion of sinners and the revival of spiritual life among Christians, had testified that the message was of Heaven" (GC 491). "It bore the characteristics that mark the work of God in every age. There was little ecstatic joy, but rather deep searching of heart, confession of sin, and forsaking of the world. A preparation to meet the Lord was the burden of agonizing spirits. There was persevering prayer and unreserved consecration to God" (GC 400-1).

She was consistent in this attitude throughout her ministry. In 1858 she wrote that in the Millerite revival sinners repented and made restitution for their sins. The Spirit led their affections away from worldly things to a consecration never before experienced. They sought the Lord with fasting and almost constant prayer. The image of Jesus was reflected in them, for they had made a full consecration (note the similarity to Methodist terminology). See LG 133-34, 142-43, 157. In 1876 she wrote that their faith in the near coming of Christ had aroused them to seek for new strength and grace from God. It had inspired hope, peace, joy, and love for Jesus, the prayer-meeting, the Bible, and prayer. "Mrs. Ellen G. White, Her Life, Christian Experience, and Labors," ST, 2 March 1876, p. 100.

In 1896 she wrote that even the search for answers after the disappointment was blessed with evidences of the Lord's presence. As they were searching the Word, "the truth was opened point by point, and entwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies." "Three Angels and the Other Angel," MS 32, 1896; see also LSM 109. And in 1904 she wrote of how they took care during the time of expectation to have every sin confessed when they went to bed every night. "The Day of the Lord Is Near, and Hasteth Greatly," RH, 24 November 1904, p. 17; reprinted in GT 48.

The spiritual attitudes seen during that revival became a model for many of White's exhortations. They provided a point of
clear that White's personal experience enabled her to go on believing while she waited for the explanation which came from Hiram Edson, Apollos Hale, Joseph Turner, and Joseph Bates.

Her eschatology, therefore, was based on Scripture and confirmed by the spiritual fruits of Miller's proclamation. Accepting the accuracy of his date 1844, she retained her faith after the disappointment because of the revival she had seen.¹

1. This statement agrees with one made by Dr. Paul Schwarzenau: "Prior to and underlying every particular church doctrine, however objectively it may be based on biblical exegesis and theological argument, are experiences of faith which have left an indelible mark on that doctrine and are the source which consciously or unconsciously determines the questions, inquiries and teachings of the church in question. . . . The living resonance of the Protestant 'Scripture principle' rests on the fact that Luther had earlier experienced in the depths of despair the converting power of the Gospel. . . . And it is very much to the point that Adventist doctrine is rooted in and derives strength from an event which Adventists later referred to as 'the great disappointment'" (Ecumenical Review, April 1972, pp. 201-2).

Schwarzenau's statement points up the fact that experience usually precedes theology. This was true of the twelve disciples. As they associated with Christ they came to see Messianic significance in OT prophecies which no one had recognized as Messianic before. None of them, with the possible exception of John the Baptist (John 1:29) understood that the sacrifices pointed to a dying Redeemer until Christ actually died and rose again. Their experience with Christ provided the key which unlocked many OT mysteries. It was true also of Paul, whose theology grew out of his Damascus road change from legalism to Christ. In Rom 6 he reflected on the meaning of baptism, which his readers had already experienced. Rom 6:1-10 is not prescriptive but descriptive.

It was true also of the development of the doctrines of the Trinity and the nature of Christ in the early Catholic Church. It

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Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter we have surveyed eschatological expectations of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in order to provide historical background for the work of Ellen G. White.

The Puritans in the seventeenth century expected Christ to return literally to raise the saints and judge the world. Adopting the historicist method of interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, they believed that the antichrist figure was fulfilled by the papacy, which would be overthrown at the coming of Christ. They saw the signs of the times being fulfilled in their own time, and some set dates for the parousia between 1650 and 1660.

Those who studied the millennium are divided into a-, pre-, and postmillennialists, with most of the Puritans favoring the pre-millennial view. In this they believed they were in agreement with the views of many expositors among the ante-Nicene fathers of the church. For all of them the return of Christ was the blessed hope which meant deliverance from sin and death, and life with their heavenly Bridegroom forever. Their views were taken to the New World by ministers who fled from persecution in England.

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was reflection on their experience with Christ and the Spirit that determined the questions about the nature of Christ.

To say that experience precedes theology, of course, does not settle the question of ultimate truth. In quoting Schwarzenau we are not attempting to establish the truth of White's theology, but are looking at historical facts in order to understand. Ultimate truth involves questions of its existence and norms which lie beyond the limits of this study. Our purpose is to examine the structure of White's thought on the nearness and delay of the parousia within her own milieu, and to point out values and weaknesses as measured by biblical and logical norms which she would have recognized.
Puritan influence helped spark the Pietist revival in Germany, but Spener and Bengel developed a peculiar double millennium which tended to support postmillennialism. Bengel set the date 1836 for the beginning of the first millennium. Back in England, John Wesley included his views in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.

Jonathan Edwards was the first major postmillennialist in America, although he shared historicist methods of prophetic interpretation with the Puritans. Like John Milton before him, he gave study to the plan of salvation from the standpoint of a conflict between God and Satan. Both men were concerned with a theodicy.

Premillennialism experienced a resurgence in England during the first half of the nineteenth century, but under the influence of John Nelson Darby it gradually accepted the view that most of the Apocalypse would be fulfilled in the future. Darby defined Israel and the church as completely separate from each other, and divided Scripture into the sections which he thought applied to each. Since the church as a completely spiritual body was not foreseen in prophecy, he felt it necessary to postulate an unannounced coming of Christ especially for the church, with a public coming seven years later to deal with the remainder of men—the Jews and Gentiles. The seven-year period derived from the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy, which was separated from the first sixty-nine by the church age, during which the prophetic clock was thought to stop ticking. His system enabled him to advocate an every-moment expectancy for the coming of Christ, but it ignored or destroyed historical applications of the prophecies which had been held since the Puritans.
Premillennialism in the United States in the early nineteenth century is largely the story of the Millerite movement. Claiming to have derived his principles of prophetic interpretation from the Bible and the concordance alone, Miller nevertheless shared much with premillennialists before him. He was a historicist; he followed the principle of a day for a year in his computations; he applied the antichrist figure to the papacy, and he also thought Christ would come in his day. He differed from the others in seeing no special role for the Jews in the final events. His movement produced a widespread revival in America, but ended in confusion when Christ did not appear on 22 October 1844.

Premillennialism in America was then eclipsed by an optimistic postmillennialism, but revived in the 1860s and 70s. A series of annual meetings which came to be known as the Niagara Bible Conference was organized by premillennialists, and a notable Prophetic Bible Conference, which tried to distance itself from Millerism, but nevertheless shared many of his distinctive views, was held in New York City in 1878. The Bible Conference movement remained premillennial but increasingly accepted Darby's futurism in the last two decades of the century.

Ellen Harmon experienced a conversion which combined elements of Wesleyan perfectionism and Millerite adventism. After the great disappointment in 1844 she married James White and became one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her writings usually confirmed suggestions made by others, and she had great influence upon developing Adventist theology, polity, and practice. She helped the fledgling group maintain their faith that God had led
in the Millerite experience; she confirmed their acceptance of the seventh-day Sabbath; she urged them to organize for greater efficiency; she pushed them to extend their efforts to other lands; and she led in founding medical, educational, and publishing institutions.

White's eschatology followed Miller's hermeneutics and accepted his 1844 date for the judgment. She agreed with his historicism, his applying the antichrist to the papacy, and his seeing the signs of the times fulfilled in his time. Where she differed was in dividing the day of judgment into pre- and post-advent phases. She differed also in seeing the prophetic time periods behind her, which meant that the coming of Christ was near but unknown.

Miller's proclamation of the 1844 date provided the point of entry for White's eschatology and the basis of her understanding of the prophecies, but her uniqueness lay in the heavenly-sanctuary explanation of the disappointment which she accepted from Hiram Edson, Apollos Hale, and Joseph Turner. This new view not only affirmed God's leading in the Millerite revival but also inspired much of White's ministry. It held that in 1844 Christ began His final work as man's mediator in heaven, which was a pre-advent judgment. When He was finished He would return for His people on earth. In the meantime the church had the task of proclaiming His near return and of living holy lives in preparation for Him.

White agreed with premillennialist teachings of her time in seeing the parousia as near while refusing to set any dates. She agreed also with their general historicist approach to the
prophecies, with their view of the manner and purpose of Christ's coming, and with their concept of the tasks to be done before the end. She agreed also in their disagreement with the postmillennialists. The latter took an optimistic view of the present age, convinced that the proclamation of the gospel would eventually succeed in converting most of the world, and thus Christ could come at the end of the millennium to reign over a kingdom which was well prepared for Him. The premillennialists, on the other hand, were pessimistic about the present age, believing it would get worse and worse until the end, and that the most the proclamation of the gospel could accomplish was to gather a remnant who would be ready for Christ.

White's reflections on the judgment led her to develop a theodicy similar to, but more fully worked out than, those of Jonathan Edwards and John Milton. The cross of Christ provided the great vindication of God, but the controversy with Satan had to continue in order that all men and angels might see clearly the righteousness and mercy of God and the evil of sin. This theodicy, however, was not the basis of White's eschatology, for her thought developed in the opposite direction: that is, from the 1844 proclamation and experience to the "great controversy" theme.

It was the experiences of 1844, both pre- and post-disappointment, summarized in the messages of the three angels of Rev 14:6-12, which provided the basis for White's sequence of final events. The first of those messages was fulfilled, she believed, in the Millerite proclamation itself. The second pointed to the Millerites' exclusion from their churches in 1843-1844 and gave the
Advent believers a negative stance toward those churches, although White believed that the complete fall of Protestant "Babylon" was still future. The third message White saw fulfilled in the seventh-day Sabbath reform which she and her colleagues adopted from 1846 to 1849. Connecting the third message with the prophetic outline found in Rev 13, White foresaw increasing struggle over the day of worship as a symbol of loyalty to God, with future Sunday laws and persecution at the hands of religious tyrants. In addition to predicting the future crisis, however, the same three messages also set forth the duty of the church in the last days: the angels' words were a summary of God's message as adapted to eschatological needs. The gospel which all premillennialists agreed must be proclaimed to the world was thus given an apocalyptic interpretation which White accepted as the unique message and responsibility of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was this distinctive conviction of the unique mission of her church, as well as her view of the two phases of the judgment, that set White's ideas apart from those of other premillennialists.

White's convictions about the 1844 expectation and the subsequent explanation of the disappointment were supported in her mind in two ways: one was the cogency of William Miller's biblical arguments, and the other was the power of the revival experience which she enjoyed in that movement, which became a model for the spiritual attitudes she enjoined on her readers for the rest of her life. The 1844 complex of doctrines provided the inspiration and conceptual framework for her entire eschatology.
It is not possible to separate history from theology in White’s thought. We cannot do justice to her eschatology without looking at the experiences which inspired it. We have already noted that her negative attitude toward other Protestant churches developed from the Millerites’ being disfellowshiped by them in 1843–44. Her even more negative attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church must have been influenced by her Puritan heritage and by the rampant anti-Catholicism in America which came to a tragic climax in 1844. The extent to which these negative attitudes continued in her later life will be examined in chapters 2 and 3.

Another area in which history affected White’s eschatology was her attitude toward the centuries which had elapsed since the first advent of Christ. Believing that the time prophecies of Daniel marked out the “time of the end” and that according to 2 Thess 2 Christ could not come until that time, she did not concern herself with the questions which have occupied New Testament theologians since Albert Schweitzer. Any talk of delay in her writings, therefore, refers only to the period since 1844.

White was a product of the Millerite revival, which, following hermeneutical principles and eschatological beliefs inherited from the Puritans, predicted that Christ would return to earth in 1844. Disappointed when He did not appear, White and her friends nevertheless believed that God had led and that prophecy had been fulfilled in their experience. Her addition to Millerite eschatology lay in her explanation of the disappointment and in her applying the prophecy of the three angels of Rev 14 to her own experience and that of her friends. For her, those angels not only
explained the past, they gave the Seventh-day Adventist Church its commission, pointed to its future, and marked out its unique place among the churches of the last days.
CHAPTER II

THE NEARNESS OF CHRIST'S COMING

On first reading, White's statements on the nearness and delay of the parousia seem to harmonize very well, but closer study reveals apparent contradictions which raise the question as to whether there is an underlying principle which could explain their tensions. We seek to answer this question by separating the two streams of thought, examining her thoughts on nearness in this chapter and delay in the next, with a synthesis in the final chapter.

In analyzing her theme of nearness, we seek to determine how she understood it at different times in her ministry, what her biblical bases were, and how the theme functioned in her many exhortations. We compare her approach with those of certain other modern premillennialists, and finally point out where its strengths and weaknesses appear to lie.

The Sovereignty of God

In Ellen White's writings, the certainty and the time of Christ's coming are based on the sovereignty of God.¹ She gained

¹Evidence for White's belief in the sovereignty of God may be seen throughout her writings, notably in her discussions of creation and the plan of redemption, the exodus from Egypt, the raising up of the judges, the choice of the first two kings of Israel, the sending of the prophets, the exile and return, the first and second advents of Christ, the final end of the wicked, and the
her concept of God's sovereignty from the general structure of the Scriptures and the time prophecies in particular. Referring to the time of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, she observed, "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay." She said that just as Israel had left Egypt at the end of the predicted four hundred years, "So in heaven's council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem." White inferred from Gal 4:4 that the time of Christ's birth was predetermined: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son." But behind that verse, in her mind, lay the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24-27, the same prophecy which formed a key element in Williams Miller's predictions.

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1 DA 32. 2 DA 31-32. 3 Other statements of God's sovereignty White based on prophecies of the return from Babylonian exile. She pointed to Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years and Isaiah's prediction of
Reflecting on the vision of God's glory which came to Ezekiel while he was troubled over the state of his people, White wrote that the symbols of the vision "revealed a power above that of earthly rulers." The hand under the wings of the cherubim told Ezekiel that human events are under divine control. Even though every nation has failed its test of fidelity to God, nevertheless His purposes have been working out through their movements. The prophecies clearly revealed the sovereignty of God to Ellen White.

God is also sovereign in the church, in her thought. In spite of its checkered history, she wrote, "Not one cloud has fallen upon the church that God has not prepared for. . . . All has taken place as He has predicted through His prophets." Here also her basis lay in the prophecies. The "cloud" she referred to was the great disappointment of 1844, which she believed had been predicted by Rev 10. The church would be successful in its mission to the world, for "the cause of present truth. . . is destined to triumph gloriously." Commenting on the parable of the mustard seed, White said that it would reach "a signal and triumphant fulfillment" in the last generation, when the warning message would go to all the

Cyrus (PK 551-53). Of Cyrus she wrote, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. All kings, all nations, are his, under his rule and government" ("The Return of the Exiles—No. 2, The Decree of Cyrus," RH, 28 March 1907, p. 8). Again, commenting on Dan 10:12,13, she wrote, "by His supreme power He holds in check and controls earthly potentates" (Letter 201, 1899, reprinted in 4BC 1173).

1"Our Present and the Coming Crisis," RH, 11 January 1887, pp. 17-18 (Ed 177-78); see also PK 535-37 and ST 752.

2MS 32, 1896 (2SM 108).

3GC, 29 May 1913, p. 515; ST 135 (1909).
world and "take out of them a people for His name." In spite of
the time of trouble which lay ahead for the church—"her most severe
conflict," "her darkest hour,"--God would still be sovereign. There
was no doubt in White's mind but that God would protect His own and
give them final deliverance and victory.¹

God would give success to the church, White believed, by
giving it a special measure of the Holy Spirit.² She looked forward
to a time when the angel of Rev 18:1-4 would unite with the three

¹COL 79 (1900).
²TM 20, quoting RH, 17 October 1893; PK 725, 720, 730-32;
Letter 32, 1892 (Ev 707).

She gained more support for her confidence in the success of
the church's mission by making another application of Ezekiel's
vision. She wrote that the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim
assures the church that "it is divine power that gives success.
Those whom God employs as His messengers are not to feel that His
work is dependent on them. Finite beings are not left to carry this
burden of responsibility. He who slumbers not, who is continually
at work for the accomplishment of His designs will carry forward His
work." (PK 176). Speaking of the gospel commission, she wrote, "He
made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon
Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed
His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail"
(DA 822).

³See "The Final Warning," GC 603-13. This special gift of
the Spirit would be given near the close of the gospel harvest (p.
611), during the time when the final warning against the mark of the
beast is being given by the church, and the world has reached the
depths of apostasy. While civil penalties are threatened against
those who refuse to obey the law enforcing the false sabbath, the
Spirit will bring multitudes to obey God's law. See also EW 278.
Her statements on this subject give only limited indication of her
thought about the time of the parousia, however, because she wrote
that she had "no specific time of which to speak when the outpouring
of the Holy Spirit will take place." See "It Is Not for You to
Know the Times and the Seasons," RH, 29 March 1892, p. 193 (TBC
984). For further discussion see pp. 112-115 infra.

⁴"After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven,
having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his
splendor. And he called out with a mighty voice, 'Fallen, fallen is
Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a
angels of Rev 14 in bringing a "loud cry" to the world, just as the midnight cry was joined to the message of the second angel in 1844 (we note the constant orientation to the 1844 experience). This final revival would be greater than that of 1840-1844 or the sixteenth-century Reformation. It would be a "latter rain" even greater than the "early rain" of Pentecost. The finishing of the work of the three angels, which for White was the work of the church, was very much under God's control.

There is evidence that for White the time of the parousia was fixed. She wrote that in her first vision she heard the day and the hour of Jesus' coming, thus clearly indicating that God Himself knew when the time would be. In a later elaboration of this statement she wrote, "The apparent tarry (sic) is not so in reality, for at the appointed time our Lord will come." She could not tell

haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird; for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness.' Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.'"

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1EW 277-78; GC 603-13. In EW 278 (1858) she wrote that the loud cry would come to people who had come to years of accountability since the three angels' messages were given, as well as to pious slaves. Both ideas indicate that at that time she expected the parousia within a very few years at most--slavery was a live issue in 1858.

2GC 611.

3COL 121; DA 827.


5SW 15.

6Letter "To My dear Sister," 11 August 1888, Letter S-38-1888, MS Release #815. Other sections of the letter are printed in ISM 75-76.
the date, however, for she said that after the vision she had no remembrance of it.

Even in statements where White implies a delay in the coming of Christ, she includes ideas that point to a fixed time. Commenting on the parable of the master coming home from the wedding feast, she wrote that the "Lord intimates a delay before the morning finally dawns," but then added, "now the moments are fewer than before the passing of the first watch,"¹ and "every passing day leaves us one less to proclaim the message of warning to the world."² Her thought does not seem to have been that of a moving horizon which always beckons but never comes nearer; rather, it was the concept of an event whose time is fixed by God but unknown among men.³ A view of time which sees each day as one day less

¹ "Worldliness in the Church," 2T 192-94 (1863). She pictured two classes of waiting ones; the one were encouraging each other with the thought that since the Master had not come in the first or second watches, He would surely come in the third. The other "were engrossed with earthly things, and were unfaithful in watching." They argued that since the Master had not come in the first or second watches of the night, He might not come in the third either--so they thought it best to lay up treasure on earth to be secure against want. It is probable that for White the "first watch" stood for the 1844 expectation. The "third watch" was the time in which she was writing--she was therefore expecting Christ to come in less time than had elapsed since 1844. For further discussion of the attitudes of the waiting ones, see pp. 115-24 infra.


³ We have noted that White's strongest statements supporting God's absolute sovereignty appear in her comments on the Jews' return from exile, and the birth of Christ. The declaration, "God's purposes know no haste and no delay" (DA 31-32), appears to be universally applicable and must be given its due weight in connection with the time of the parousia, but it was actually written of Christ's first coming. There is no similar statement of a schedule for the second; while its unconditionality may be inferred, it is not spelled out unambiguously by White. The reason is that her thoughts on sovereignty in the exile of Israel and the earthly life
presupposes a fixed schedule which is gradually reaching its end.¹

The Prophetic Succession of Events
And the Signs of the Times

The time prophecies were primary to White,² and the signs of the times secondary.³ When she took up the signs of Matt 24, she tied them to the prophetic time periods of the 1260 days and the 2300 days of Dan 7 and 8. The first of the signs, she wrote, was

of Christ were based on time prophecies, but she saw no time prophecy reaching to the second coming. The prophecy she referred to in speaking of the exile was Jer 25:11,12, and that which pointed to the first advent of Christ was Dan 9:24-27. The latter, of course, was basic to William Miller's hope. White's expectations in 1844 were focused on the second-advent implications of Dan 8 and 9; in 1898 (Desire of Ages) she was working out the first-advent application of the same chapters. She traced her view of salvation history backward and forward from the prophecies which for her pointed to 1844.

¹She did not believe that Daniel and Revelation were written primarily for the original readers, for she wrote, "These messages were given not for those that uttered the prophecies, but for us who are living amid the scenes of their fulfillment" 2SM 114. See also 5T 406, 438.

²Her assurance for the future was based on prophecies fulfilled in the past. She wrote, "All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order" (PK 536). See also MS 32, 1896 (ISM 114).

³During the first forty years of her public life White wrote very little about the signs of the times. After a passing reference to them in connection with the first disappointment in the spring of 1843, she reverted immediately to a discussion of William Miller's chronological calculations as the ground of their confidence (see 1T 52 [1858]). She mentioned signs again in the midst of the Civil War, briefly, in an appeal to the believers to be spiritually alive and awake (1T 260 [1862]). See also "An Extract from a Letter Written to a Distant Female Friend," RH, 16 September 1862, p. 126. During the first few years of the existence of the Signs of the Times, the articles by Ellen White dealt with practical godliness, but not with the signs of the times. There is no exposition of Matt 24 and its parallels in Spiritual Gifts (1858-1864) nor in Spirit of Prophecy (1870-1884).
the Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755, which occurred after the centuries of persecution; the next was the darkening of the sun and moon, which with Miller's associates she believed occurred on 19 May 1780 within the 1260-year period of Papal supremacy but after the persecution had ended (referring to Mark 13:24). "The last of the signs" was the star shower of 13 November 1833, which occurred, she wrote, two years after William Miller started his public proclamation.\(^1\) She believed that the Litch prediction of Turkey's fall helped to corroborate Miller's hermeneutics, which of course dealt with the same time periods.\(^2\)

In her *Desire of Ages* exposition some fifty-four years after the 1844 experience, White maintained the same succession of events. First she described the destruction of Jerusalem, then the centuries of apostasy and persecution, then the signs in the heavens.\(^3\) Another corroboration may be seen from 1881 when White wrote that the signs of the times proclaimed the end of all things at hand, but immediately added, "Prophecies fulfilled have become facts of history, clearly defining our position."\(^4\) It was the fulfilled prophecies which defined the Adventists' position in salvation history, not the signs. The prophecies pointed to "the great landmarks," which showed that they were almost home.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) *GC* 54-55, 304-8, 333.

\(^2\) *GC* 334-35. For Litch's publications, see p. 36. n. 1 supra.

\(^3\) *DA* 628-31.


In her Desire of Ages exposition of Matt 24, White mentions Matt 24:34 for the only time in her writings. If she had believed that the "generation" could be used to set a date for the second coming, she surely would have indicated it in this book, published as it was sixty-five years after the star shower of 13 November 1833. On the contrary, she ruled out date setting immediately after her comment on vs. 34 by referring to vs. 36: "The day and the hour of His coming Christ has not revealed." The most she would say of vs. 34 was that the second advent was "near," and therefore constant readiness was demanded. Her interpretation of vs. 34 as "near" rather than chronologically delimited was surely due not only to vs. 36 but also to her foundation in the time prophecies already fulfilled. Since they were fulfilled, she saw the parousia as near. Since there were no more to be fulfilled, she would not set another date, not even on the basis of vs. 34.

1 "He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand," DA 632.

2 Neither is there any evidence that the Synoptic writers used the statement to set a date, although they wrote from thirty to forty years after Christ spoke.

3 DA 632.

4 Adventist church leaders who met in the 1919 Bible Conference did not give sufficient attention to the connection which White saw between the signs of the times and the prophetic succession of events. They struggled to understand the "generation" of Matt 24:34 in terms of the years which had passed since 1833 or 1844, delimiting what she had left open-ended. They concluded at last that the "generation" meant the preaching of the three angels' messages since 1844, while yet holding to some kind of delimited period. See the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), Minutes of 1919 Bible Conference for July 17 and 18.
The only specific events in her lifetime which Ellen White pointed to as signs were earthquakes and Sunday-laws. She pointed to the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco and the 1909 earthquakes in Italy and Sicily. Outside of the Desire of Ages and Great Controversy expositions on Matt 24, she made no further reference to the Lisbon earthquake, the celestial signs of 1780 and 1833, the fall of Turkey, or the signs which she had inherited from the Millerites.

Agitation for Sunday laws in a number of states in the mid-1880s impressed White that the final crisis was at


3 Her only other reference to Turkey appears in a report of a sermon by Uriah Smith. See LS 255 and 4T 279. P. I. Magan wrote on Turkey in RH, 5 August 1908, p. 7, but White's article, "A Great Revival Needed," on the same page ignored it.

4 Adventists were prosecuted and convicted for working on Sunday in Georgia (1879), Arkansas (1884), Tennessee (1885, 1889, 1892, 1895), and in Missouri, Maryland, and Virginia. In 1887 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists appointed a committee on religious liberty, which became the Religious Liberty Association in 1889. See A. W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1962), 2:239-63; and William Addison Blakeley, comp., Legislative, Executive, Judicial American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation, rev. and enl. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Religious Liberty Association, 1911), pp. 653-80, 718-26. On p. 726 Blakeley gave a summary for 1895 and 1896: seventy-six Seventh-day Adventists were prosecuted in the United States and Canada; twenty served time in jails and chain-gangs, aggregating 1,144 days.

Since the laws under which these people were prosecuted did not command work on the seventh day of the week but only forbade work on the first day, they could have avoided trouble by simply obeying the law. The reason they did not was suggested by the testimony of an Adventist minister by the name of Marvin given at the trial of L. A. Callicott at Dyersburg, Tennessee, on 21 July 1890. Under cross examination, he admitted that Adventists did not believe it
hand. In 1888 Senator H. W. Blair of New Hampshire introduced a bill in Congress which sought to make Sunday the holy day for the nation. While White was in Australia (1891-1900), there were

was a sin to rest on Sunday, but he said they believed that when the law required rest it would be a sin to obey it because that would be keeping a Sunday law. See Blakeley, p. 679. Ellen White apparently solved the problem later by advising Adventists to refrain from their ordinary work on Sunday and devote it to missionary effort. This counsel seems to have been given first in a council held at the Avondale camp ground on 20 November 1895, and dealt with the methods that should be used in working for the Negroes in the South and in foreign fields where prejudice against Sabbath keepers was strong. See "Spalding and Magan's Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Ellen G. White, Taken from the Private Collections of E. A. Sutherland, Percy T. Magan M.D., David Paulson M.D., O. A. Justice, and A. W. Spalding," duplicated by A. W. Spalding and Percy T. Magan in 1915-1916 (Lincoln, NE: Union College Library), pp. 19-26. See also 9T 232-38 (1902), and "A Study of Principles--No. 5," RH, 6 April 1911, p. 6.


Interestingly, White had written in 1862 that the time when the mark of the beast would be enforced was "at the door." See "An Extract from a Letter Written to a Distant Female Friend," RH, 16 September 1862, p. 126. The fact that she could write the same statement twice, twenty-six years apart, indicates that the second coming was always near, always imminent, for her. Yet, the Sunday law agitation in the late 1880s and 1890s seems to have impressed her that the end was literally nearer.

2 Senate Bill No. 2983, introduced on 21 May, would have forbidden all labor, commerce, recreation to the disturbance of others, military drills, and the carrying of the mails on the first day, "commonly known as the Lord's Day," and denies that pay could be collected for work done unlawfully on that day. Dying in committee, the bill was reintroduced the following year with an exemption in favor of those who observed a different day, but once again it died in committee. See Blakeley, pp. 360-63. A similar effort in 1829
similar efforts by the authorities there to enforce Sunday sacredness and have God acknowledged in the constitution.\(^1\)

Adventists had expected a Sunday-law crisis as a fulfillment of the third angel's message since their early years. In 1887-1888 White saw the prediction being fulfilled.\(^2\) She believed that God keeps an account of the sins of the nations, and the effort to enforce Sunday observance was a sin which added to the total; the "rapidly swelling figures" showed that the time for God's visitations was nearly come.\(^3\) The time of trouble was just before the

to forbid the carrying of mail on Sunday had been beaten back so decisively on the grounds of separation of church and state that it was not attempted again until 1888. See Blakeley, pp. 225-28; Warren L. Johns, Dateline Sunday, U.S.A.: The Story of Three and a Half Centuries of Sunday-Law Battles in America (Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press, 1967), pp. 35-41.

\(^1\)White to Brother and Sister Belden, 29 July 1897, Letter 28, 1897, pp. 1-2 (MS Release #816). White wrote that the Adventists were making a vigorous stand against the proposed laws. Curiously, she spoke of the Sunday-law agitation there as a fulfillment of what they had been talking about for the past thirty-five years—which would take the first mention of it back to 1862. Actually, Joseph Bates had suggested that the first day of the week for the Sabbath was the mark of the beast in The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, p. 57, and in a letter to Bates dated in April 1847, White agreed that the mark of the beast was the act of giving up God's Sabbath and keeping the Pope's. See Joseph Bates, Ellen G. White, and James S. White, A Word to the "Little Flock" (Brunswick, ME: James White, 1847), p. 19; see also pp. 70-73 supra. The message of the seventh-day Sabbath had always been an essential part of the three angels' messages. In 1899, however, White wrote that no one yet had the mark of the beast—Sunday keeping would not become the mark until men had had the light and had seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. See Ev 234. Nevertheless, she wrote in the Belden letter in 1897 that the same persecution which was suffered by the early church would soon come to the believers of her day.

\(^2\)GC 579 (1888).

Prophecies were being fulfilled; old controversies were being revived (religious persecution had a long history), and new controversies were sprouting up. So sure was she that the final crisis was beginning that she wrote, "If any delay, the character of God and his throne will be compromised."  

In speaking of the signs, White referred to general conditions much more than to specific datable events. Increasing wickedness was a common sign of the end. She cited violence, contempt for the law of God, corrupt courts, and intemperance, oppression and affliction, and building giant buildings with money gained through oppression of the poor. Wickedness would prevail, she believed, as

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1 "God Warns Men of His Coming Judgments," RH, 5 November 1889, p. 689.

2 "The Crisis Imminent," MS 27 (from Melbourne, Australia, 18 February 1892), published in Special Testimonies Series A, by Ellen G. White, Complete With Variations (Payson, Arizona: Leaves-of-Autumn Books reprint), No. 1a, p. 38. The sentence, "If any delay, the character of God and his throne will be compromised," is uncharacteristically incomplete, which raises a question as to its authenticity. Why did it not say, "If there is any delay..."? A. O. Tait (1858-1941), religious liberty secretary of the General Conference from 1891 who joined the editorial department of the Pacific Press in 1898, quoted it in "Great and Solemn Events," RH, 19 April 1898, p. 246, but White herself edited it significantly in 1895 to read, "Something great and decisive is soon to take place, else no flesh would be saved. The character of God will not be compromised" (MS 30, 1895, published as "Prepare to Meet the Lord," RH, 27 November 1900, p. 753). The statement in Special Testimonies must have been based on a stenographer's notes on a sermon by White, and the notes were incomplete. When she edited it for publication in the Review and Herald later, she must have corrected it as she wanted it to appear.

3 "Individual Consecration Needed," RH, 23 November 1905, pp. 6, 7 (also in 5T 714 and TM 364); 9T 92; COL 177; "The Advent Faith," RH, 29 November 1881, p. 337.

4 "Nearness of the End," RH, 14 March 1912, p. 3; T2 25.

5 COL 177.  6 9T 11-17; PK 276.
in the days of Noah. All these were signs proclaiming in thunder tones that the hour of God's judgment was come and the end of all things was at hand.

White often referred to various calamities without naming any particular occurrences, always to make a moral appeal. If men would not heed God's voice speaking through the Holy Spirit, she wrote, then He would speak through judgments. The judgments call the solemn warning, "Be ye also ready." They force men to make great decisions.

In the early years of the twentieth century White spoke several times of preparations for war as a sign of the end.

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1 DA 633. She was making a homiletical and not an exegetical application of Matt 24:37-39, for the emphasis in the Scripture passage is not on the wickedness of Noah's day, but on the flood's overwhelming men while they were engaged in legitimate activities. White combines vs. 37 with Gen 6:5 to make her application. See also PP 101; 9T 92; "Drunkenness and Crime," RH, 25 October 1906 (Te 25); and "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," RH 2 August 1898, p. 485.

2 PK 278, commenting on conditions in Nineveh. It is often said that Matt 24:14 is the greatest of the signs (as by C. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ [Grand Rapids, MI: Zerdmans, 1972], p. 251; Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time, rev. ed. (London: SCM cheap ed., 1962), p. 160; and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), Minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference. White, however, did not see it that way. She saw it rather as the task to be completed before the second coming. We will therefore defer consideration of this verse until chapter 3.

3 DA 636; 8T 252-53 (1905); 9T 11-17 (1909); PK 276; "What Manner of Persons Ought Ye to Be?" ST, 1 October 1894; pp. 739-40; "The Day of the Lord is Near, and Hasteth Greatly," RH, 24 November 1904, p. 16; "The Time of the End," RH, 23 November 1905, pp. 6-7; MS 1, 1890 (2SM 51).


5 9T 252.

Although there was not yet a general engagement, for the forces of 
war were being restrained while the servants of God were being 
sealed, yet prophecies were fulfilling. The daily papers reported 
"indications of a terrible conflict in the near future." Her moral 
appeal based on such preparations was that believers had no time to 
spend in faultfinding and contention, no time to lose in doing the 
work of God and in preparing for the great day.

Sometimes White mentioned "signs of the times" without 
pointing to any specific signs at all. The particular signs were 
not important; what was important was the fact that she was living 
in the age of signs—and the signs were always the basis of exhortations. Because the signs showed the parousia near, Christians 
must show practical godliness in their daily lives, awake out of 
sleep and accept His gift of righteousness, study their Bibles, and

16T 14 (1900); see also "A Message to Our Churches," RH, 
28 January 1909, p. 7 (ISM 221-25).
In DA 628 White applied Matt 24:6, concerning the wars and 
rumors of wars, to the period before Jerusalem fell, not to the 
parousia. She wrote that the Jewish leaders thought the wars of 
that time were God's judgments on the nations for holding them in 
bondage, but Christ indicated that they were rather signs of their 
destruction.

2 9T 11.

3 "The Day of the Lord Is Near, and Hasteth Greatly," RH, 
24 November 1904, p. 16; "The Time of the End," RH, 23 November 
1905, pp. 6-7; 9T 11-16 and 48.

4 See, for instance, COL 227 (1900); AA 260; 7T 14; TM 364; 
"The Christian's Hope," ST, 29 May 1884, p. 321; "The Perils and 

5 AA 262.

6 "The Coming Crisis," ST, 3 October 1901, p. 643; "What Manner 
of Persons Ought Ye to Be?" ST, 1 October 1894, pp. 739-40;
live soberly in the world. They were to keep their sins always confessed, purify themselves, show true godliness, transfer their treasure to heaven, and thus reflect the light of God as His representatives.

Along with living holy lives, the believers were urged by White to preach the gospel. They were to give the last message of mercy and warning to the world; they were to "Work, O work! keeping "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days," RH, 22 November 1892, p. 722.

The last article cited above also says, "The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." Leroy Edwin Froom, Movement of Destiny (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), pp. 369-70, says that this statement is evidence that the 1888 session of the General Conference was the turning point in the experience of the Adventist church. He argues that Christ could not have come before that time, because the believers did not have a proper Christology nor a proper soteriology, but those problems were solved by the presentations of A. T. Jones (1850-1923) and E. H. Waggoner (1855-1916) at the conference. Three facts weaken the force of Froom's argument, however: (1) White made only one reference to the parousia during her published sermons at the conference: "Now, brethren, we are almost home; we shall soon hear the voice of the Saviour richer than any music, saying, Your warfare is accomplished" ("Advancing in Christian Experience," preached 20 October 1888, reprinted in A. V. Olson, Through Crisis to Victory, 1888-1901 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1966), p. 268). This sermon does not make the second advent contingent upon the response of the believers. (2) The statement quoted by Froom appeared four years later. (3) Equally "near" statements appeared both before and after 1888. For further discussion, see Chapter 3, pp. 169-70.


4"A Present-Day Work," 9T 97 (1909); TM 364.
eternity in view"; they were soldiers doing their duty, that the
world might hear the warning. In this century especially she
called them to give the message in the cities. Because the task
must be done under the pressure of a short time, the workers must be
trained speedily. The signs exerted a continual pressure toward
holy living and zealous witnessing.

If one should attempt to use the signs of the times for
dating the parousia, he would encounter a certain ambiguity in
White's thought. On one hand the signs proclaimed in "thunder
tones" that the hour of God's judgment had come; but on the other
hand she wrote that the day of God was approaching with "footsteps
... so muffled that it does not arouse the world from the death-
like slumber into which it has fallen." Wicked conditions in
society and natural disasters in nature can be taken as natural
events or as God-given signs. The signs speak in thunder tones to
believers but come with muffled footsteps to the unbelievers, the
sleepers. This was the reason White continually called her readers
to be awake, watch, and pray.

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1 "The Day of the Lord Is Near, and Hasteth Greatly," RH,
24 November 1904, p. 16.


3 "Speedy Preparation," FE 334-35 (21 March 1895). White
wrote this letter from Australia at a time when students sponsored
to attend Battle Creek College in Michigan were being encouraged by
teachers at the college to extend their years of study in the United
States, thus depriving the mission field of their needed assistance.

4 PK 278; FE 335. See also 9T 135 (1909).

5 1T 260 (1862); 8T 28, 252 (1904); TM 364 (24 September
1895); AA 260 (1913) and others. For further discussion see pp.
122-24 infra.
Since the social conditions which White pointed to as signs were the kind of events which every generation could see in its own time, it might be asked what warrant White had for believing them to be more relevant in her lifetime than in previous centuries. Her warrant was her orientation in the 1844 movement. Since for her the year 1844 marked the beginning of the time of the end, the conditions which in fact have characterized every age took on apocalyptic significance. After 1844 all wickedness and all calamities became signs of the end. Whether wickedness was increasing was beside the point; the point was that after 1844 it became a sign of the end as it had not been before. White saw herself as living in the age of signs.

**Time Known**

During most of her life Ellen White expected to live until Christ returned. In 1849 she held that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time could last but a very little longer.\(^1\) She identified herself with those who would live at the commencement of the time of trouble and go out to "proclaim the Sabbath more fully."\(^2\) In 1850 she said that "time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they [newcomers to the faith] will have to learn in a few months."\(^3\)

\(^1\) "To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God," broadside, 31 January 1849, reprinted in *EW* 58.

\(^2\) "To the Remnant Scattered Abroad," *RH Extra*, 21 July 1851 (EW 33).

\(^3\) 27 June 1850 vision, *EW* 67. The same article said that the newcomers would have to "know what it is to suffer for Christ's sake," probably referring to the Whites' own sufferings during
years later she wrote of some attending a conference in Battle Creek, that they would "remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus." Just before the Civil War she spoke of the last call of the third angel being carried "even to the poor slaves, and the pious among them poured forth their songs of rapturous joy at the prospect of their happy deliverance. Their masters could not check them; fear and astonishment kept them silent." In 1883 she wrote of some aged workers that "they may be permitted to remain till Christ shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven," or "they may drop out of the ranks at any time, and sleep in Jesus." 

In 1888 she wrote that some who were then alive would see the prediction verified and hear the voice of the archangel. Three

the early years after 1844 when they struggled in extreme poverty to unite the scattered believers.

1SG 18 and IT 131-32. "I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: 'Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.'" The main point of the article was not the time of the parousia but pride of dress. Why, she argued, should believers spend time and money decorating "their poor, mortal bodies?" Some wasted hours "studying this or that fashion to decorate the poor, mortal body, which might in a few days be food for worms." "The very ones that profess to be washed by the blood of Jesus, spilled for them, can dress up and decorate their poor, mortal bodies, and dare profess to be followers of the holy, self-denying, humble Pattern" (IT 131,134,136). In view of this context, it does not seem legitimate to put heavy stress on the supporting statement that some would live until the parousia.

21SG 196 and EW 278. The latter page mentions some hearing the final loud cry who had come to the age of accountability since 1844. Sabbatarian Adventists made no effort in the southern states before the Civil War; therefore the loud cry in fact was not proclaimed to the slaves before they were set free.

3"Notes of Travel," RH, 13 November 1883, p. 705.

times in this article she referred to the time prophecies upon which her confidence was based. The purpose of the doctrine of the near advent of Christ, she held, was to make men fear the Lord. It was not enough to believe that Christ would come some time in the future; it must be soon. Everyone must constantly live with reference to the day of the Lord.

The following year she again identified herself with the final generation: "We are living in the last days, and the generation that is to witness the final destruction has not been left without warning of the judgments of God." While we find no later definite statements that she expected to live until the end, we do find her continuing to write of the final events in a way that presupposed a literal chronological nearness. Even after the drive for Sunday-laws faded, she continued to write that the "great crisis," the "stupendous crisis" in the history of the world, was just before her.

doubtless be living when the voice that is heard everywhere . . . shall be heard . . . calling to life the sleeping dead." The addition of the word "doubtless" significantly diluted the prediction, because it can carry the meaning of "probably" rather than "certainly." This article echoes another theme from White's first vision: some were saying that the city was a great way off.

1"God Warns Men of His Coming Judgments," RH, 5 November 1889, p. 689.

2"Preparation for the Final Crisis," 6T 404 (1900); Ed 179 (1903); "The Judgments on God on Our Cities," RH, 5 July 1906, p. 9 (LS 413).

Because White believed in the soon coming of Christ, she seldom used the risk of sudden death as a motive in her exhortations. We find only two such statements: 5T 487; and "It is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons," RH, 5 April 1892, p. 209. Although she usually spoke of an imminent parousia, there is some evidence that in her own mind she maintained a rough time frame of between one and twenty years: "You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put
What did Ellen White intend by these statements? How did she regard them herself? She lived long enough to see that they were not fulfilled, yet there is no evidence that she experienced any crisis of delay. It would be an easy matter to join her critics who gave the facile answer that she was wrong, but if one takes this position prematurely, he cuts off the possibility of determining the inner structure of her thought. In view of the fact that she decried all date setting, it does not seem likely that she intended these statements to do what she condemned. It is more probable that they simply showed she took the nearness of Christ's coming seriously.

One fact must be kept in mind as we look at them. In each case the moral appeal was primary and the time element secondary.

off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years." See "It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons," RH, 22 March 1892, pp. 177-78 (ISM 189); also "Walking in the Light," RH, 25 October 1881, p. 257; and MS 32, 1896 (2SM 113-14). Since the earliest and latest such statements appeared seventeen years apart with no essential difference between them, it appears that her time frame remained constant. There was a measure of the "moving horizon" about it.

1 One such critic was A. C. Long of Marion, Iowa, who published a Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications, 2nd ed. (Stanberry, MO: Church of God Publishing House, 1911; the first edition appeared in 1883). He charged her with being a false prophet because she had been speaking of the soon coming of Christ for nearly forty years, but He had not come yet. We shall consider her important reply in chapter 3. See also former Adventist minister, Dudley M. Canright (1840-1919), who turned against the Seventh-day Adventist church and became a bitter enemy of White, in his Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet; Her False Claims Refuted (Nashville, TN: B. C. Goodpasture, 1953), pp. 240-41; and Seventh-day Adventism Renounced (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1961 reprint from 14th ed. printed in 1914), pp. 146-47.

2 See following section.
Her declaration that Jesus' time in the Most Holy Place was nearly finished supported an admonition to take time for Bible study and receive the seal of God.\(^1\) Her prediction about preaching the Sabbath more fully at the commencement of the time of trouble was part of her 1847 vision on the importance of the Sabbath.\(^2\) We have already noted that her description of some being food for worms and some living until the end was part of an admonition against pride in dress.\(^3\) Her expectation that the last call would go to the poor slaves was a prediction about the power of that last call—"strength far exceeding the midnight cry."\(^4\) The purpose of the 1888 word that some then alive would see the final events was clear from the title of the article, "Cast Not Away Your Confidence."\(^5\) In each case she was using nearness to motivate holiness.

The fact is that White's faith in the soon coming of Christ was little affected by the passage of time. In 1875 she described meeting some aging believers in Maine who first heard the message from her husband in his early ministry. Now they understood the doctrine more fully and had a more firm and rich experience in it; they spoke of their hope and faith with animated countenance, as they looked forward to and hastened unto Christ's coming.\(^6\) Again in 1884, at the Syracuse, New York, camp meeting, she met other aged workers whose countenance lit up with fresh assurance as they

\(^1\) EW 58.  \(^2\) EW 33.  \(^3\) See p. 108, n. 2 supra.  \(^4\) EW 27.  
\(^5\) RH, 31 July 1888, pp. 481-82.  
\(^6\) E. G. White to W. C. White, 3 September 1875, Letter 31, 1875, pp. 3-4 (MS Release #816).
listened to the presentation of the truth which had kept their
hearts warm through the years.\(^1\) It is plain that there was a
dynamic in this faith far greater than that of a mere calendrical
expectation. For them the nearness of Christ's coming was a way of
expressing its certainty--this is why the passing years did not
diminish their assurance.

**Time Unknown**

God is sovereign in White's thought, but she refused to set
dates. The 1844 proclamation had been "ordered of God," but no
later calculation would be approved.\(^2\) She applied Matt 24:36---"No
man knows the day or the hour"---to her time. In this she parted
company with the Millerites, who argued that the time had come when
the day and the hour could be known. White took the verse at face
value because of her basis in the three angels' messages. The time
prophecies had ended, therefore the parousia was near; but because
they had ended, no further date could be set.

White's eschatology did not include a specific chart of
final events which would enable one to pinpoint his distance from
the end. Her thrust was rather to prepare a people who would be

\(^1\) "Notes of Travel, Syracuse, NY," RH, 28 October 1884, p. 673.

\(^2\) GC 457. Connecting Rev 10:5,6 with the 1844 proclamation,
she concluded that the angel standing with one foot on the sea and
one on the land proclaimed the end of prophetic time periods, so
there could be no time period reaching beyond the close of the 2300
years in 1844. See MS 32, 1896 (2SM 107-8). In 1851 she had
written that time had not been a test since 1844 and would never
again be a test. The third angel's message would be proclaimed to
the children of the Lord, but "it must not be hung on time." It
was "stronger than time can be." EW 75.
ready for the end. Her object, she wrote, was to bring out principles from the struggles of the past so as to shed light on the pathway of those who in the future might have to witness for Christ at the cost of all earthly good. Her purpose was evangelistic; she hoped that through her work souls might "be delivered from the power of darkness, 'partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'"1

In apparent contradiction to the idea that White did not include a chart of final events were her statements beginning in 1884 that the investigative judgment was about to pass to the cases of the living.2 She believed the judgment of the righteous dead had been going on almost forty years, and therefore the judgment of the living must be about to begin. Once started, it would finish quickly, and the parousia could not be long delayed. All during the twenty-one years from the earliest to the latest of these statements, White clearly expected the Lord to come almost immediately. Even here, however, she disclaimed any attempt to set a date, for in 1889 she denied a rumor that she had been shown that the judgment had already passed to the cases of the living. She insisted she knew not when that would be.3

1"Introduction," GC, p. xii. The root of the expression, "shed light on the pathway," in her first vision is apparent.

2"The Christian's Hope," ST, 29 May 1884, p. 321; 4SP 315 (1884); E. G. White to G. I. Butler, 6 September 1886, Letter 51, 1886, p. 11 (MS Release, #816); GC 490 (1888); 5T 525, 692 (1889); 6T 130; "Lessons from the Life of Solomon—No. 9," RH, 9 November 1905, p. 10. In the last-mentioned article, White up-dated the statement to say that the work of the judgment had been passing in the heavenly sanctuary for sixty years.

35T 692.
Date setting involved two dangers for Ellen White. On the one hand, disconfirmed dates\(^1\) threw "contempt upon all efforts to explain the prophecies, and cast reproach on the great Advent Movement of 1843 and 1844"; on the other, the date setters would eventually set a date too far in the future and would be "led to rest in a false security."\(^2\) Even a date just six months in the future would militate against the believers' "going to God daily and earnestly desiring to know their present duty."\(^3\) Any such message would be false. Any date setting would put the coming of Christ farther off than a "near" expectancy.\(^4\)

White said she had no special light as to when probation would close, but it was time to work while the day lasted.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)The term was suggested by Leon Festinger, et al, *When Prophecy Fails*; see p. 39, n. 3, supra.

\(^2\)GC 457.

\(^3\)"It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons," RH, 22 March 1892. Preached at Lansing, MI, on 5 September 1891, this sermon appeared in RH, 22, 29 March and 5 April 1892 (also in ISM 185-91). The statement referred to was written on 21 June 1851, rebuking some who expected Christ to come in the fall of that year and were selling their property in preparation. If they had gone to God to know their duty, presumably they would have kept it. The sermon mentions a warning to another date setter in Jackson, MI, in 1884. Still another appeared in MS 32, 1896, reprinted in 2SM 113. In the latter case, the source of the man's inspiration, White drily noted, was the morphine given him for pain in his terminal illness.

\(^4\)Instead of speculating about times and seasons, White urged believers to yield to the Holy Spirit and give the bread of life to others. Speculations diverted men's minds from present truth and present duty. RH, 29 March 1892, pp. 177-78. See also 4T 307. The thought of G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 95-86, is similar. He wrote that the believer is not to reckon but constantly reckon with the coming of the Lord. It will be unexpected, but it will not be un-expected.

Believers were to be ready constantly, as though each day were their last.¹ They must live soberly, diligent to be without spot and blameless, always working for God—sharing the message of the coming of Christ.²

Judging by White's warnings that no one knows the day or the hour, it is plain that she did not intend her own statements to be used to set dates. Her basis in the 1844 prophecies led her to believe that Christ would come soon, but the prophecies also led her to refuse any new dates. Thus she steered a middle course between excitement and apathy, either of which, she believed, would destroy spirituality.

**Nearness Impels Holiness**

No one can read far in White's writings before he discovers that she carried a profound pastoral concern for holy living, motivated by her belief that the Lord's coming was near. In this she followed the example of William Miller and the Puritans, as we noted in chapter 1. A sincere faith in the soon coming of Christ always produces ethical results.

We shall now examine the relation between White's belief in the imminent advent of Christ and her many exhortations in some detail. There are five reasons why this is necessary. In the first place, the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12 which formed the


basis and conceptual framework of her eschatology not only proclaim the near return of Christ but also proclaim a ringing call to repentance and godly living. The two cannot be separated. White once wrote that "every true reform has its place in the work of the third angel's message."\(^1\) Second, this study is necessary in order to set White in her historical context. There were others in her time who also called for holiness because they believed the Lord was coming soon, and White's relation to them must be set forth. Third, we must examine the effects of her faith and determine what kinds of activities she advised. There are people today who are laying in stocks of food and weapons against the turmoils of the last days. We need to know what White counseled. Fourth, in studying her exhortations we hope to see more clearly how she defined the nearness of Christ's coming, and whether her understanding changed with the passing years. Finally, because leading Adventists have understood White to teach that the return of Christ is contingent on a significant number of believers' attaining a certain level of preparedness,\(^2\) it is imperative that we seek to discover what she herself taught. When we find that she used both themes of nearness and delay as motivations for similar exhortations, we shall have reached the heart of our problem, and perhaps a clue to its solution.

Ellen White was like the classical prophets of the Old Testament in giving numerous exhortations to holiness, but in her case many of them were explicitly motivated by her belief that

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\(^1\)ST 110. \(^2\)See pp. 2-3 supra.
Christ was coming soon. Thus the bright light of the midnight cry in her first vision cast its rays over her whole life. Basic to all her admonitions were certain fundamental attitudes. She called her readers to deny self, die to the world, and reflect the image of Jesus. Self-denial in view of the imminent return of Christ involved "greater humility, greater purity, and greater faith."\(^1\)

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\(^1\) EW 64, 67, 69-72 (1850 and 1851). Compare the later development of the idea of reflecting the image of Jesus in COL 69 (1900). On dying to the world see also EW 107-10 ("To the Brethren and Sisters," RH, 10 June 1852, p. 21); "Worldliness in the Church," ST 183-99 (12 June 1868); "Practical Remarks," RH, 29 March 1870, p. 113; "The Coming of the Lord," ST, 10 November 1887, pp. 673-74; "I Will Come Again," ST, 27 January 1888; "The Work of the Gospel Minister," ST 261; "The Church the Light of the World," ST 457 (1885). The latter statement warns against taking more interest in money-making, trades, farms, houses, and merchandise, than in giving the light of the warning messages to others.

On denying self, see also, "We need not say: The perils of the last days are soon to come upon us. Already they have come. We need now the sword of the Lord to cut to the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions," from "Importance of Seeking True Knowledge," 8T 314-15 (1904); "'The great day of the Lord is near,' . . . we have no time to spend in self-gratification. All around us there are souls perishing in sin," from "The Need of Earnest Effort," 9T 48 (1909); "It will be well for us to consider what is soon to come upon the earth. This is no time for trifling or self-seeking. If the times in which we are living fail to impress our minds seriously, what can reach us?" from "Words of Greeting from Sister White," RH, 29 May 1913, p. 515.

\(^2\) ST 88 (1882); 9T 203 (1909). Although not the only one, the soon coming of Christ was a major motivation behind White's exhortations. She wrote, "Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man" (EW 58). She said that the Lord was soon coming: the believers should talk it, pray it, live it, and make it a part of their lives (Letter K-66-1901). In counsel to workers in the southern field she wrote that they were to be filled with the spirit of Christ's second advent, so that whether they were found working in the field, building a house, or preaching the Word, they might be ready for Him (Letter B-25-1902, p. 5, Release #816.)
White often urged her readers to give in order to support
the messengers who were proclaiming the three angels' messages.\(^1\) They were to study the Bible, for there was no time for unimportant reading. One purpose of such study was that they might know "the
great landmarks," an expression White used in referring to the time
prophecies.\(^2\) They were to avoid being overwhelmed with business
cares so that they had no time for giving heed to solemn truths,\(^3\) but they were still to be faithful in the ordinary business of life:
faithfulness in the least would show them ready for much.\(^4\)

Early in her ministry White used the near advent as a motive
to warn against "pride of dress and appearance."\(^5\) At the same time
she found some who made a virtue of being dirty and unkempt and
warned them that in view of the near advent they ought to keep their

\(^{1}\) EW 48-51, 58, 266-67; ST 442; "Looking for That Blessed
Hope," ST, 24 June 1889, pp. 369-70. Such calls were much needed
in the days before the church organized a regular system of support
for the ministers. Later White called for means to build institu-
tions. See "Carrying Forward the Lord's Work," RH, 24 December
1903, p. 8; ST 441.

\(^{2}\) "To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God,"
Broadsidé, 31 January 1849 (EW 58); ST 18-19; "Preparation for the
Final Crisis," ST 407 (1900); "The Christian's Hope," ST 29 May
1884, p. 321.

\(^{3}\) "Notes of Travel--No. 6; Loma Linda and Los Angeles," RH,
5 September 1907, p. 9. See also earlier warnings against loving
the world in ST 191, 194-95; "Practical Remarks," RH, 29 March
1870, p. 113.

\(^{4}\) "Preparation for Christ's Coming," ST 309; see also ST
178-82; and COL 325-64.

\(^{5}\) EW 120 (1854); see also "To the Saints Scattered Abroad,"
RH, 17 February 1853 (EW 111); "Communication from Sister White;
homes neat and in order. She urged religion in the home, along with individual purity. Her emphasis on health reform was motivated by her belief in the third angel's message and by the need to be fitted for translation. She said the health reform was just as closely connected with the third angel's message as the arm and hand are with the body.

The reason she called health reform a part of the third angel's message became clearer when she wrote in connection with temperance reform that "every true reform has its place in the work of the third angel's message." The third angel's message was a call for holiness, and White saw health reform in general and temperance in particular as contributing to holy living. Good health was a part of good religion.


2"A Solemn Message to the Church," RH, 8 November 1906, p. 8.

3IT 486-87. The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the third angel was their unique contribution as compared with the Millerite view of the first two angels of Rev 14, but the Adventists came to hold that the third angel's message not only climaxed but also included the other two. See "Three Angels' Messages," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, p. 1484. While Ellen White favored the term "third angel's message" over "three angels' messages," she seemed to include all three when she wrote of the third. In 1896 she wrote that there could not be a third without the first and second; all three were still to be proclaimed (MS 32, 1896 [2SM 105, 116]). She said also that all three were to be linked together in the church's proclamation to the world (RH, 6 December 1892 [2SM 117]; MS 52, 1900 [7BC 985]; MS 10, 1900 [7BC 949]; GC 435, 453-54).

4IT 110. See also PK 678: "In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored."
White's writings on educational reform were also motivated by her eschatology. Because they believed the Lord was coming soon to take the faithful to the higher school in heaven, she wrote, their schools ought to meet a standard "very much higher than those who do not believe these solemn truths." The purpose of education was to prepare the student "for the joy of service in this world, and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come." Looking to the future did not lead her to neglect the present, because the way to prepare for the future was to make wise use of the present.

White espoused several other reforms without directly mentioning the coming of Christ, but in view of the fact that she believed men needed a moral renovation—a preparation of character—to stand in God's presence, and that the third angel's message included every true reform, we can say that her eschatology was the motivation behind all her reforms. Her apocalyptic expectations were the foundation of her prophetic exhortations. The great purpose of her ministry was to prepare a people to meet the Lord.

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1E. G. White to Brother Graham, 14 July 1890, Letter 25a, 1890, pp. 4-5 (MS Release #816).
2Ed 13.
3She saw dancing and the theater as dangerous amusements (MYP 398-400; LT 490, 554; 4T 652-53; FE 318). She wrote extensively on proper family relationships (AH, CG, CT) and welfare ministry for the poor (WM). Before and during the Civil War she shared the attitude of the abolitionists toward slavery (LT 253-68, 355-57).
46T 21.
5Many of White's reforms were popular in America before she began to urge them. Several temperance societies were organized in New England in the 1820s, and Maine passed a statewide prohibition

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Occasionally White was quite pessimistic about the readiness of the believers. In the mid-1860s she wrote that not one in twenty of the youth in the church knew what experimental religion was.\(^1\) To the 1893 meeting of the General Conference she said that not one in twenty of those whose names were on the church books was prepared to close his earthly history.\(^2\) Once she wrote, "There is not one youth in one hundred who feels his God-given responsibility."\(^3\)

On the other hand, she expressed definite optimism in her declining years. To the General Conference in 1913 she wrote, "The cause of present truth, to which we are giving our lives and our all, is destined to triumph gloriously."\(^4\)

Underlying all White's exhortations lay the basic call to be loyal to Christ. This was intrinsic to her understanding of the three angels' messages, which involved the call to reject the mark of the beast and receive the seal of God. Men must "empty the soul law in 1846 (Ahlstrom, p. 426; Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, pp. 308-50). Educational reforms were much in the air during the early part of the nineteenth century (Tyler, pp. 227-64). Dancing, theatergoing, and gambling became suspect about the same time drinking did (Ahlstrom, p. 427). By the middle of the century the churches were beginning to see their obligations to the poor (Timothy Smith, pp. 163-77). What White did, in fact, was to take popular reforms of her time and incorporate them into her eschatological program. She did indeed make every true reform a part of the third angel's message.

\(^1\)IT 496, 504, 510, 632.


\(^3\)ST 115 (1882). See also "Christ's Instruction for His Followers," RH, 26 April 1892, p. 258.

\(^4\)General Conference Bulletin for 29 May 1915, p. 515. See also the positive statements in PK 720, 722, 731.
temple of every defilement, and let the Spirit of God take full possession of the heart, that the character may be transformed."¹

Wait, Watch, Work, and Pray

Ellen White often used these four terms to describe the attitudes she felt believers should maintain in view of the soon coming of Christ. They were under continual obligation to "vigilant waiting," watching, and working.² She made a literal application to the disappointed Adventists in 1844: they waited and watched for further light on their experience, which meant that they cherished the light they had and continued to search the Scriptures for more.³ Elsewhere she wrote that by waiting and watching Adventists showed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth; while others were ambitious to secure earthly treasure and lived as though the time were long, the saints were seeking the better heavenly country.⁴ "Waiting could mean praying;⁵ watching could mean working for the salvation

¹"Christ's Instruction for His Followers," RH, 26 April 1892, p. 258. See also the idea that we should consecrate every hour to the service of Christ, for a divided heart will not be in the Lord's army, from "What the Revelation Means to Us," RH, 31 August 1897, pp. 454-56; Letter 11, 1890 (Maranatha, p. 154); PK 188; GC 682-92.


³GC 408.

⁴"Worldliness in the Church," 2T 194 (1868).

of souls.\textsuperscript{1} Then again, working was connected with improving one's talents for Christ.\textsuperscript{2} Watching might mean taking the proclamation of the near parousia seriously, as Noah and Lot did the warnings of destruction in their time. The watchers thus purify their souls by obedience to the truth.\textsuperscript{3} Those who wait, watch, pray, and work will cultivate heart-holiness.\textsuperscript{4} Of the ones who did not show these attitudes, White wrote that idle expectancy led them to deficiency of character; they were following the first great apostate.\textsuperscript{5}

Somewhat surprisingly, White did not use the words, wait and watch, in connection with the signs of the times. Rather, she admonished her readers to watch for the least unholy promptings of their nature,\textsuperscript{6} and to watch the work of their adversaries lest they gain an advantage in deceiving souls.\textsuperscript{7} They were to watch and pray as though each day were their last; they were to be sober but "not

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}2T 373 (1871). White's use of the four terms was quite fluid. One was often interchanged for another.
\item \textsuperscript{2}COL 325 (1900).
\item \textsuperscript{3}DA 634.
\item \textsuperscript{4}"Lessons from the Christ Life," RH, 2 October 1900, p. 625. The four words never appear together in the Bible, although they are used in various eschatological contexts. "Watch and pray" appears in Matt 26:41; Mark 13:33, 35; 14:38; Luke 21:36. "Wait" appears in Luke 12:36; "Work" is used in Mark 13:34 to describe the duty of the servants who "watch" for their master's return in vss 33 and 35. The custom of using the four together may have arisen with the report of the 1878 Prophetic Bible Conference. See Nathaniel West, comp., Premillennial Essays, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{5}"The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days," RH, 22 November 1892, pp. 722-23; "Under Which Banner?" TM 364 (24 September 1895).
\item \textsuperscript{6}ST 534.
\item \textsuperscript{7}ST 572; this was in the context of opposition from "first-day, no-day, and all-days-alike Adventists."
to cherish sadness and gloom."¹ It appears, therefore, that the
four verbs in White's thought expressed the general attitudes which
Adventists ought to exhibit in the last days. Rather than admoni-
tions to study the newspaper for signs of the times they were
counsels on how to live during the last days. They gave a meaning
to the present beyond that of idly waiting for the Lord to come.
They were a constant call to reform.

White's Relationship to the Holiness Movement

In view of White's emphasis on holiness in preparation for
the return of Christ, which we examine in the following section, we
must consider her relation to the Holiness Movement. It is likely
that White owed more than a little of her emphasis on perfection and
holiness to her early life in the Methodist Church,² which in turn
inspired the holiness emphasis during the second half of the nine-
teenth century.

It was Wesley's book, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,
which engendered a perfectionistic emphasis in the great
revivalist Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). Professor of theology in
Oberlin College in Ohio, Finney had already conducted successful

¹ST 148, 200; diary entry for 12 July 1897 (MS 174, 1897,
published in That I May Know Him, p. 141).

²John Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as
Believed and Taught by Rev. John Wesley from 1725 to 1777 (New York:
Eaton and Mains, 187-), gives his own history of how the belief
developed. John Leland Peters, Christian Perfection and American
Methodism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956) gives a good analysis of
it. Rolf J. Pechler, "Sinless Saints or Sinless Sinners?" (Herit-
age Room, Andrews University, 1978) analyzes White's thought in
relation to Wesley's. See pp. 48-50 supra.
revivals in various cities in New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts when he read the book in 1836. He and Asa Mahan (1799-1889), the college president, immediately began to preach the possibility of "entire sanctification." Mahan later retired to England, where with the William E. Boardmans and the Robert Pearsall Smiths, other Americans prominent in the revivalist movement, he helped to inspire the formation of the Keswick Convention in 1875. Mrs. Smith was the Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911) who wrote The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1941 [1875]), which in its chapter topics is quite similar to Ellen White's Steps to Christ (1892). The Keswick influence returned to America in 1891 when

1Timothy Smith, pp. 103-13.
Finney was born in Connecticut and raised in central New York, where he was converted in 1821. See Ahlstrom, p. 461; and Finney's Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney, Written by Himself (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1876); and Lectures on Revivals of Religion, new ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1868). He met William Miller in Boston in the Autumn of 1843 and agreed that the future was "big with portent," but where Miller held that the stone of Dan 2 represented the coming of Christ, Finney saw it as the church, which through gradual reform would set up the kingdom of God and lead the world into the millennium. See his Memoirs, pp. 370-71. He once wrote, "If the church will do her duty, the millennium may come in three years." See William G. McLoughlin, "Revivalism," The Rise of Adventism, Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 145.

2James H. Fairchild, Oberlin: The Colony and The College (Oberlin: E. J. Goodrich, 1883-7), pp. 90-92. Fairchild was the Oberlin president who prepared this fiftieth anniversary history. He evaluated the doctrine of sanctification expounded in the early days as being unscriptural and unphilosophical, on the grounds that the Scriptures do not make a distinction between sanctified and unsanctified Christians, and that the very beginning of the Christian life involved entire consecration--no partial consecration could be acceptable to God. The difference between the mature and the immature Christian, he thought, lay in the continuity of obedience, not in the "genuineness of obedience while it exists." See his pp. 92-93.

3Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, pp. 178-79. Sandeen says
Dwight L. Moody brought F. B. Meyer from Keswick to his summer conference in Northfield, Massachusetts.\(^1\)

In the meantime, another prominent perfectionist speaker of the mid-century in America was Methodist Phoebe Worrell Palmer (1807-1874). She was converted in early life but did not attain "full consecration" until 26 July 1837.\(^2\) She and her husband, Dr. Walter C. Palmer, became prominent in the "Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness," a Methodist ladies' prayer meeting which started in 1835 in New York City. She wrote seven books between 1845 and 1862, which went through many editions, and became an influential revival preacher in the eastern United States, Canada, and England. The Palmers also believed in the soon coming of Christ, as is shown by her hymn, "Watch, Ye Saints."\(^3\)

that the American perfectionists believed in the eradication of sin, while the Keswick teachers emphasized the power of the Spirit to lead the believer away from evil toward righteousness. He adds that the Keswick people were also premillennialists.

\(^1\)See p. 45 supra.


\(^3\)Froom, Prophetic Faith, 4:537-38, says there is correspondence extant between the Millerite preacher Charles Fitch (1805-October 14, 1844) and the Palmers which suggests that they may have learned of the doctrine from him. He wrote to them that it was his practice to "preach on Holiness in the afternoon, and on the Second Advent in the evening." In Fitch, the Palmers, Ellen White, and the Keswick people, the holiness and advent emphases were united.

In view of the fact that Ingemar 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, Bern, Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 253-58, has described White as a holiness prophet like Phoebe Palmer and Hannah Whitall Smith, it is useful to compare their ideas. There is a
rather large common vocabulary of ideas between them, but there are also significant differences.

White and Palmer both spoke of the need for unconditional surrender of one's body and property to the control of Christ, and said that this surrender must be constant. See Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, Entire Devotion to God (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, Rare Reprint Specialists, 1979 [ca. 1850]), pp. 48, 65-76; and White, AT 382; EW 66-67; IT 169; 4T 120; 5T 514; SC 62; DA 324. Both carried a heavy burden for the souls of their friends, and expressed it in similar ways. Palmer, p. 27; White, LS 41-42. Both referred to stars in the crowns of the redeemed in heaven representing souls they had won on earth. Palmer, p. 40: White, EW 61; IT 198. Both quoted Rev 22:11,12 as referring to the close of human probation on earth, although Palmer saw it at the moment of death, while White put it shortly before the coming of Christ. Palmer, p. 48; White, GC 490-91, 613. In their youth, both had similar visions of Jesus and His look of love toward them. Palmer, pp. 48-52; White, LS 35.

Palmer and White both emphasized that one sin could keep a person out of heaven, although White qualified it by the term "cherished sin." Palmer, p. 68; White, SC 33. Both spoke of the human body being a temple for the Holy Spirit, although they differed in the application. Palmer concluded that she must exercise "minute circumspection in the sustenance and adornment of my body," while White based her entire health reform program on this thought. Palmer, p. 73; White, 2T 70; CH 83.

The two leaders agreed that the Christian never gets beyond the assaults of Satan. Palmer held that a belief in eternal security in this life would be "the dreadful doctrine denominated 'perfectionism,'" which White called "holy flesh." Palmer, Full Salvation; Its Doctrine and Duties, pp. 148-51; White, 2SM 31-36. Both believed that the promises of God have conditions—they require complete surrender. Palmer, Full Salvation, p. 165; White, Gw 284; PP 621-22. Both used the expression about being willing to die rather than to knowingly offend God, although Palmer applied it to herself, while White applied it to the apostles and prophets (Palmer, p. 175; White, AA 561).

[Obviously Palmer was using the term "perfectionism" in a different sense from those who called her a "perfectionist." In theological parlance "perfectionism" refers to the belief that religious perfection is possible and necessary in this life. In this sense Palmer was a perfectionist, but she always saw this perfection as based upon faith in, and surrender to, Christ. When she condemned the term, however, she referred to the idea that one could become perfect in himself, and hence beyond the possibility of sinning. In this sense she was not a perfectionist, and neither were John Wesley or Ellen G. White. It would be helpful to theological thought if each one who uses the terms would specify what he understands by them. To use the terms in a pejorative sense is to voice a rather severe criticism of John Wesley and all his Holiness descendants.]
The so-called Holiness Movement in America in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth developed from groups within Methodism which arose protesting the decline of discipline. Finney's Oberlin theology, Palmer's reviv- alism, and the British Keswick movement all had a part in it.¹

For all their common expressions, however, there were important theological differences between the two women. Palmer developed the idea that the altar upon which the Christian is to lay himself and his property is Christ, and since the altar sanctifies the gift which is placed upon it, the moment the Christian makes his surrender as a living sacrifice he is perfectly sanctified and holy, saved from all iniquity. Palmer, Entire Devotion to God, pp. 65, 6-9. In this point she went beyond Wesley, and while White used altar phraseology also, she never held up the hope of instant sanctification. She always said rather that sanctification was the work of a lifetime. AA 560; COL 65-66; ISM 317; JT 325; ET 312-13. At this point it is difficult to see the distinction which Palmer tried to draw between her own position and that of other perfectionists.

Another difference between White and Palmer was that Palmer seems to emphasize the sacrifice that the believer makes for God, while White gives more emphasis to the sacrifice Christ has made for man. See White, PP 66-67, 503; DA 565, 660, 756-57; GC 52. Finally, there was a curious sentimentalizing, almost a sexual, expression in Palmer's description of the believer's covenant with God which was completely missing in White. Comparing the covenant to a marriage, Palmer wrote: "The union is consummated! 'Hallelujah to God and the Lamb for ever!' With comminglings of intense yet solemn joy, and holy fear, I do at this eventful hour resolve, in the strength of the Lord Jehovah, on minute circumspection in the suste- tainment and adornment of my body. . . . Thou dost condescend to espouse me to Thyself in the bonds of an everlasting covenant in all things well ordered and sure, and from henceforth all my interests in time and eternity are blended in everlasting oneness with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. My fellowship is with the Triune Deity, my citizenship in Heaven! And now, O Lord, I will hold fast the profession of this my faith before Thee, before angels, and before men" (Entire Devotion to God, pp. 73, 75). Her use of the words--consummated, intense yet solemn joy, espouse, and oneness--seems to suggest a relationship that is almost physical.

We conclude that Lindén is correct in comparing Ellen White to Phoebe Palmer as a holiness prophet, but that while the two had many concepts in common, there were significant differences in their theology.

¹"Holiness Movement, American," NTCC, pp. 474-75.
Holiness leaders who became influential in this country for their preaching or books were A. T. Pierson (1837-1911), F. B. Meyer (1847-1929), A. J. Gordon (1836-1895), and the South African Andrew Murray (1828-1917). ¹

Excursus: Last-Generation Holiness?

As the Adventists reflected on the idea that Christ began to cleanse the sanctuary in heaven in 1844, Mal 3:1-3 came to their minds as throwing additional light on their experience. ² Here the Lord was said to come "suddenly to His temple"—suddenly, they thought, because they had not expected Him in that location. Ellen White identified the Dan 8:14 cleansing of the sanctuary with the Mal 1:1-3 coming of the Lord to His temple,³ which involved also the


²The text reads, "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord." Damsteegt, p. 123, says that the first to relate Mal 3 to the cleansing of the sanctuary was Otis Nichols (1798-1876), who was one of the first Adventists to accept Bates' Sabbath teaching and Ellen Harmon's visions. See Nichols to Jacobs, Day Star, 27 September 1845, p. 34. White's earliest use of the theme appears in The Great Controversy, pp. 424-26. (See also her brief mention of the Refiner in 2T 355 (1870).

³White believed that the coming of Christ to the most holy place in heaven for cleansing (Dan 3:14), the coming of the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13), the coming of the Lord to His

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purifying of the sons of Levi. While the temple was being cleansed in heaven there would be a "special work of purification of God's people" on earth. This cleansing would make the church glorious, "nor having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," ready "to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator." The work would be done "through the grace of God and their own diligent effort."¹

The statements that those who are living on earth when Christ finishes His intercession in heaven must stand in the sight of God without a mediator, and that their robes must be spotless, appear to be a description of sinless perfection, and have often been considered so by Adventist writers.²

¹GC 425. When she later wrote on the life of Christ, White applied Mal 3:1-3 to Jesus' cleansing the temple in Jerusalem, which she said was a type of His work of cleansing human hearts from sin. See DA 34, 161; PK 700. Thus she saw a triple fulfillment: the temple in Jerusalem, the temple in heaven, and the temple of the human heart. In this way the Sabbath-keeping Adventists retained part of Miller's expectation of a cleansing on earth.

²M. L. Andreasen (1876-1962), who at various times was a college president, conference president, field secretary of the General Conference, and teacher in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Washington, D.C. and wrote numerous articles and at least thirteen books, in The Sanctuary Service, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), pp. 229-334; and The Book of Hebrews (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), pp. 417-70, took the position that Christ overcame sin in human flesh just like ours and thus gave us an example of what we can and must do by depending on God as He did. Perfected saints will make the final demonstration that God's law can be kept, showing that what Christ achieved can be reproduced by those who believe in Him. A thorough critique of Andreasen's position has been written by Roy Adams, The Sanctuary Doctrine, Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1981), pp. 165-235. See also Herbert E. Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. LaRondelle, and C. Mervyn Maxwell, Perfection, the Impossible Possibility (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1975). Douglass, one-time college president, associate editor of the Review and Herald,
Four questions come to view as we examine this formulation:

1. What was the nature of the special purification and how necessary was it in White’s thought? In the passage referred to above, White described the result of this cleansing in terms of Eph 5:27—the church would be glorious and without spot or wrinkle. On

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now book editor of Pacific Press; and Maxwell, Chairman of the Department of Church History at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, both follow Andreasen’s lead. Heppenstall, former Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at the Adventist Theological Seminary, and LaRondelle, professor of Systematic Theology at the Seminary, hold that perfection consists in trusting in and daily walking with Christ. La-Rondelle’s chapter is based on his dissertation, Perfection and Perfectionism: a Dogmatic-Ethical Study of Biblical Perfection and Phenomenal Perfectionism, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1975).


Robert D. Brinsmead, The Way to Perfection (Shoohomish, WA: Prophetic Research International, n.d. [pre-1970]) at one time held that sin will be blotted out of the believer’s subconscious mind by a miracle when his name is considered in the investigative judgment. Thus he would become sinless and presumably fit to stand before God without a mediator. Brinsmead was disfellowshipped from his home Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia in 1961 for divisiveness and divergencies. In 1971 he reversed his position on instantaneous perfection as part of the investigative judgment and espoused a more Lutheran view of justification by faith. See R. W. Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), pp. 456–60.

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the Savior's coronation day, she wrote, He would not acknowledge anyone as His who bore spot or wrinkle.⁴ The "spots" were character defects and defilements of the soul which had to be removed before one could receive the seal of God.⁵ Occasionally she used the term to specify particular sins, such as a church's failure to care for the poor in its midst,³ too great familiarity between men and women,⁴ and gratification of animal passions.⁵ Her remarks on "cherished sin" which could "eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel"⁶ were another description of such iniquities.⁷ Cherished sin to her was sin which the sinner did not desire to give up but intended to continue.

To be spotless and without wrinkle was essential to final salvation. The redeemed, White believed, would reach "the condition

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¹RH 5 May 1903 (4BC 1157).
²ST 211-16; see also Letter 12, 1900 (7BC 980); 4BC 1161.
³ST 261. ⁴ST 592; see also p. 216; TM 445-46.
⁵2T 453. "Animal passions" was a term favored by White during the 1870s and 80s to describe temptations to anger, gluttony, and sexual excess. In 2T 61-63 she set the term over against being refined, intellectual, obedient, conscientious, and religiously inclined. In most of her statements the sexual emphasis was predominant, referring to impure thoughts, self-abuse (masturbation), fornication, and adultery. See 2T 365, 391, 404, 409-10, 415-16, 449-59, 470-80; 3T 472, 561; 4T 98.
⁶2T 453. See also: "The soul temple must not be defiled by any loose or unclean practice. Those whom I will acknowledge in the courts of heaven must be without spot or wrinkle" (Letter 270, 1907 [7BC 969]).
⁷SC 33. See also: "The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin. . . . He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of character. He expects us to overcome in His name" (COL 316, 366).
of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. The spiritual goal was the perfection of Christ's character.

The state of being spotless was a prerequisite for receiving the seal of God, which was the "passport through the gates of the Holy City." White held that the seal would become visible in the individual's keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, but it would not be placed on all who professed to keep the Sabbath—only on those who bore a likeness to Christ in character. The seal signified that the individual's relationship to Christ had become a constant way of life; it was "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved." Such people would be dependable; they would "represent to the world the ineffaceable characteristics of the divine nature."

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1 MS 122, 1901 (6BC 1118).  2 MYP 144; IT 163.

3 RH 10 June 1902 (6BC 1117-18). While holding up the perfection of Christ as the goal, White believed this was to be reached by the "mighty power of the Holy Spirit which works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent."

4 Letter 164, 1909 (TBC 970); ST 214.

5 MS 27, 1899 (TBC 970).  6 ST 213-14.

7 RH, 21 May 1895 (TBC 970).  8 MS 173, 1902 (4BC 1161).

9 Letter 125, 1903 (TBC 969).

10 Letter 270, 1907 (TBC 969). See also: "God requires perfection of His children . . . . When those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven. Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. They have a right to join the blood-washed throng" (COL 315).
On the other hand, White did not believe that the sealed ones were beyond the possibility of sinning. She rebuked those who said, "I am saved," in this sense, for she said they were in danger of trusting to themselves.\(^1\) Being spotless did not mean that one could have "holy flesh"; this was impossible in this life. But one could have "Christian perfection of the soul." The first signified supposed sinless perfection through "what man can do"; the second referred to trust "in what God can do for man through Christ."\(^2\)

2. How do believers become spotless? Ellen White did not believe that her standards could not be reached. No one was to regard his defects as incurable, for God would give faith and grace to overcome them.\(^3\) She differed from Martin Luther in emphasizing man's responsibility to yield his will to God, where Luther underlined God's initiative in persuading him to make that surrender.\(^4\)

\(^1\)COL 155.

\(^2\)SM 32-33. White was rebuking fanatics in Indiana who claimed they had holy flesh and were therefore beyond the reach of sin. Perfection of soul which she spoke of involved a conscience freed from condemnation through forgiven sin, and sanctification through surrender to Christ to be molded in His likeness. She said that while sin may be forgiven in this life, its results are not wholly removed until Christ returns.

\(^3\)GC 489. She also wrote, "It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. . . . We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse." GC 477. Her use of Mal 3:3 shows that it is the Lord who purifies the people. GC 425.

White believed that man has freedom of choice, and through the power of Christ he can resist the world, the flesh, and the devil.\(^1\)

God's part in cleansing the one who is spotted by sin includes both justification and sanctification. White saw justification as the forgiveness of sin, declaring the sinner righteous through transferring his sins to Christ and imputing the righteousness of Christ to him.\(^2\) Christ's sacrifice makes a complete atonement and "pardon covers all transgression."\(^3\) Then through the work of the Holy Spirit the believer becomes fitted for heaven, advancing from "grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character."\(^4\) The believer's justification is retained through continual surrender.\(^5\)

Both justification and sanctification were seen as gifts of God to be received by faith. White used the wedding garment in

\(^1\) MYP 105. White's clearest reference to the issues raised in the Luther-Erasmus debate may be found in DA 466. There she pictured the man who refuses to give himself to God as being in slavery to Satan, although he fancies that he is following his own judgment. The 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," however, sets him free from the law of sin and death; he is then free to choose whom he will serve. When he chooses to serve God, the Holy Spirit gives him power to carry out his choice. Through it all, there is no sense of compulsion; in turning to Christ there is the highest sense of freedom. See also DA 258, 458; SC 43-44, 47-48, 72; MH 176; Ed 178, 489.

\(^2\) ISM 392. See the entire section on "Christ Our Righteousness," in ISM 350-400.

\(^3\) COL 156. See also ISM 371, 375; SC 52; MH 90; 9T 266.

\(^4\) ISM 395. See also COL 157: "He will shape and mold our characters according to His own will. In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ."

\(^5\) ISM 397.
Christ's parable to illustrate the righteousness of Christ which He imparts to all who receive Him as their Savior. That robe had in it "not one thread of human devising," yet she used it to describe the change which Christ produces in the believer's life. When He has merged the human will in His will, the human mind with His mind, and the Christian's thoughts are brought into captivity to Him, then He sees on the believer His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of God.1

The sinner's part in being cleansed is to believe God's promises, confess his sins, give himself to God, and "will to serve Him." As the sinner believes that he is cleansed, God supplies the fact—Christ binds up his wounds and cleanses him from all impurity.2 Pardon is extended to him as soon as he repents. He

1"Without a Wedding Garment," COL 310-12. In her understanding of justification and sanctification White's position is very close to that of John Wesley. She believed that "The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven" (RH, 4 June 1895 [MYP 35]).

Wesley had written: "Does not that expression, 'The righteousness of the saints,' point out what is the 'wedding garment' in the parable? It is the 'holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.' The righteousness of Christ is doubtless necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed, that they are necessary in different aspects. The former is necessary to entitle us to heaven; the latter to qualify us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we would have no claim to glory; without holiness we could have no fitness for it. By the former we become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. By the latter 'we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'" "The Wedding Garment," The Works of the Rev. John Wesley (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, 1831), 7:314. White's chapter "Without a Wedding Garment" seems to be modeled on this sermon. See also his sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness," vol. 5, pp. 241, 244.

2Sc 50-51; see also DA 266; COL 158; TM 147.

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gains no merit for surrendering his will to God, for the surren-
er itself is a result of God's first working in his heart, yet in
White's view the believer has the responsibility of cooperating
with God. In his life good works replace unrighteousness. Faith
leads him to care for the poor and to go about doing good as Jesus
did. His face reveals that he has been with Jesus, for his heart
is filled with joy.

In some of the passages we have been examining, the sinner
is pardoned and declared righteous as soon as he repents and sur-
renders his will to the Lord, but in her chapter on the investi-
gative judgment in The Great Controversy, White seems to delay
justification until the believer's name is considered in the
heavenly tribunal. She declared that when the books of record are
opened in the judgment and it is seen that men's sins have been
pardoned and their characters are in harmony with the law of God,
then their sins will be blotted out of the records, and they will

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1ISM 397.  2ISM 398.

3ISM 162. On the other hand, in White's view there are some
who never experience peace because they do not make an entire sur-
rrender of their wrong habits. "Without entire surrender there is no
rest, no joy." 1SM 399-400.

4White illustrated this point in her comments on the healing
of the lepers (DA 266-67), which she took as a symbol of His work in
cleansing sinners. In some cases of healing, she wrote, Jesus did
not grant the blessing immediately, but "in the case of leprosy, no
sooner was the appeal made than it was granted."

5"Facing Life's Record," GC 479-91. The chapter, "Without a
Wedding Garment," COL 307-24, also presents justification in the
context of the investigative judgment. On the other hand, the chap-
ters, "Two Worshipers," COL 150-63, and "Justified by Faith," 1SM
389-98, affirm that the Lord grants justification and acceptance
immediately upon the sinner's belief and repentance.
be accounted worthy of eternal life. She pictured Satan as accusing
them before God as transgressors, but Christ claims forgiveness for
them as He shows their penitence and faith. Then Christ clothes
"His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present
them to His Father 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle,
or any such thing.'"¹ This would be the complete fulfillment of the
new covenant promise that God would forgive their iniquity and
remember their sin no more.

The question is whether true believers stand in jeopardy in
the investigative judgment: are they not really justified until
then? Did White envision a chance that some might lose their justi-
fication? She described them as having repented and claimed the
blood of Christ already. They have already been pardoned; they have
overcome through faith; they are accounted worthy; they will rise in
the resurrection of the just.² What happens in the judgment is that
their justification is confirmed against the accusations of Satan.³

¹GC 483-84.  ²GC 482-84.

³The accusations of Satan occupy a prominent place in
White's picture of the final events, as we have seen in our survey
of her theodicy. Satan has always tried to impugn the character of
God and frustrate His purposes for the human race (GC 484). White's
picture of him accusing the saints during the investigative judgment
is intended to dramatize his constant attitude toward them and
toward Christ, as well as Christ's power to cover them with His own
righteousness.

There is a timelessness about White's descriptions of these
accusations which becomes apparent in her comments on the vision of
Joshua and the angel from Zech 3:1-7. See ST 467-76 (1885); see
also PK 582-92. She gave the vision a triple application: to the
Israelites returning from exile in Babylon; to sinners who turn from
sin to Christ; and to the investigative judgment in heaven. We
examine these three in turn:

1. When the Lord would bring Israel back from their exile,
Satan resisted, pointing to the sins which had separated them from
God and left them the prey of their enemies. Joshua confessed their
But in White's view there are many who do stand in jeopardy in the judgment. They are those who have "sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven," \(^1\) which she called "cherished sins." \(^2\) They have not been justified before and they are not justified now; rather, their names are blotted out of the book of guilt, and the Angel, Christ, took away their filthy garments and clothed them with change of raiment—His own righteousness.

2. When any sinner seeks the mercy and favor of God, Satan always resists, White believed. Knowing that those who seek God for pardon will obtain it, Satan presents their sins before them to discourage them. But again Jesus the Advocate causes their iniquity to pass from them and clothes them with change of raiment. After that, she wrote, no one who in "penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power" (ST 470-71). They cannot be content with a sinful life, however; they are "to exert every energy of the soul in the work of overcoming, and ... look to Jesus for strength to do what they cannot do of themselves" (p. 474).

3. In the time of the investigative judgment also Satan is pictured as resisting Christ in His efforts to save His people. This resistance mounts three attacks. On one side, he stirs up wicked powers of earth to persecute God's people. On another, he tries to destroy their assurance of salvation with "the thought that their case is hopeless" (p. 473). Finally, he accuses them before God with the thought that He cannot be just in saving them while He excludes Satan from heaven (p. 473). God is pictured as allowing Satan to try the saints, in order to refine them as gold in the fire (p. 474). White often pictured trials as God's instruments for purifying His people (See 3T 541; 4T 85, 221; 4BC 1181-82). They are secure in Christ, but because of Satan's accusations they do not know it. At last Christ gives the command to take away their filthy garments and clothe them with His spotless robe of righteousness. The seal of God is placed upon them, and "they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices" (ST 475). Whether this security is granted before the parousia is not stated in this chapter in Testimonies, vol. 5. What is clear is the continuous conflict between Christ and Satan, and its triumphant conclusion through His merits and power.

In the light of the parallel discussion of the judgment in connection with the vision of Joshua and the angel, it seems clear that in GC 479-91 White is saying more about the great controversy between Christ and Satan than she is about the time when the individual is justified. Within this broad framework there is harmony between her differing descriptions of justification and judgment.

\(^1\) GC 483.  
\(^2\) SC 33; COL 316.
of record, and their good deeds are forgotten. Although hidden from men, their sins cannot be concealed from the eyes of God.¹

Even the saints, in White's view, cannot disregard the investigative judgment. Like the Israelites of old who were to afflict their souls while the high priest was in the most holy place on the Day of Atonement, so all who hope to have their names retained in the book of life "should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance."² The present time, White believed, because it is the antitypical Day of Atonement, is a time of special solemnity. The essential thing was sorrow for sin and true repentance—only so could the believers be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."³

¹GC 486-88. ²GC 490.
³As White conceived it, the doctrine of the investigative judgment was a review and confirmation of previous decisions. The doctrine was developed originally as a description of what Jesus would do when He entered the most holy place in 1844, but it became an important element in White's evangelistic appeals. While it was not intended to threaten Christian assurance, White did use it to advocate the need for constant preparation through repentance and obedience to God's law. It engendered an every moment solemnity among believers, because White held that human probation would close at the finish of the judgment a short time before the coming of Christ (GC 490-91), and no one could know when that might be. Therefore they must "watch and pray always."

White's doctrine differs from the classical doctrine of the final judgment in that it is seen as already in progress, and it takes an appreciable amount of time before Christ can return to earth. On the other hand, White's doctrine of the investigative judgment is similar to the classical doctrine in what L. Berkhof called the "Cognitio Causae," the time when God takes cognizance of the whole past life of man, in reference to the opening of the books in heaven (Berkhof, Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941], p. 734), although Berkhof, to be sure, did not see this happening in 1844. White's doctrine is similar to the classical doctrine also in its standard of judgment (the revealed will of God), in the identity of the Judge (Christ—see DA 210; GT 185; COL 74), and in the parties to be judged (the entire human race; her division
The answer to the question of how last-day Christians become spotless enough to stand before God without a mediator appears to be the same as the way of salvation for previous generations. On God's side it means justification and sanctification, which White, like John Wesley, insisted are both necessary. On man's side, it means believing God's promises, confessing sin, and choosing to serve Him. Good works replace unrighteousness in the believer's life as he cooperates with the Holy Spirit working in him. The investigative judgment confirms the believer's previous justification in the face of the final accusations of Satan. The fact of the judgment now in progress lays a solemn obligation upon all men to afflict their souls by repentance and obedience; this was another way of describing the "special work of purification" during the last days.

3. When do the believers become spotless and does the idea of the "special work of purification" imply that the final generation of believers achieves an experience beyond that of all their predecessors?\(^1\)

\(^1\)This was the view of M. L. Andreasen. See p. 130, n. 2. Because of the logic of the position, as well as his title, "The Last Generation" (The Sanctuary Service, pp. 299-321), it has come to be called "final-generation holiness."
A careful reading of White's thinking on this point reveals that the special purification was simply another way of describing the fruit of the three angels' messages, which began in 1844. She believed that the coming of the Lord to His temple for judgment (Mal 3:1) occurred at the same time as His sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver to purify the "sons of Levi" (Mal 3:2,3). She emphasized this by adding that the special work of purification on earth would be accomplished while the investigative judgment was going forward in heaven. The two activities were simultaneous in her mind. She summarized her position by saying, "This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14." She believed that believers in the last days stand under a solemn obligation to afflict their souls, repent, and put away sin, but "last days" do not mean "last generation." The obligation to holiness which grew out of her concept of the three angels' messages applied to all believers who have lived since the messages began to be preached and not to a hypothetical last generation.

Repeatedly she wrote that the refining work was to be done now, for "Christ is soon coming." The truth was elevating the

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1 Connecting Mal 3:1 with Dan 7:13,14 and 8:14. GC 424-25. See also pp. 129-30 supra.

2 GC 425.

3 And it is correct to say that she believed this obligation to be greater for the last days than for previous times. This would indicate that activities which God once winked at should now be reformed. See TM 147.

4 It appears, therefore, that Andreasen misunderstood White.

believers now; the sealing time was now (in 1849); it was very short and would soon be over. It would finish when the third angel closed his work on earth and Jesus finished His work in heaven.

The great decisions as to whether men would receive the seal of God or the mark of the beast were being made as White wrote. She believed that among her contemporaries God had a people who were following the Lamb wherever He went, implying that they had already received the seal.

1 2T 355. 2EW 43-44. 3EW 58. 4EW 279.

5"The Need of Educational Reform," 6T 130-31. The thrust of White's thinking on the seal of God is evangelistic, not chronological. She used it much more as a motive in her exhortations than as an indication of when the Lord might come. In this particular article, the appeal is to organize the church's schools so that the students would learn to prize the Scriptures and be loyal to God, His truth, and His law.

6RH, 12 April 1898 (7BC 978). She was referring to Rev 14:4 which describes the 144,000 who have the Father's name in their foreheads. If there were some who had the seal (the name) in 1898, then it seems clear that in White's mind the seal was not reserved only for the final generation but was available for every generation since 1844.

Thus the concept of the seal of God seemed to carry a double meaning in her mind. She applied it to the eschatological sign which the Lord applies to His faithful ones just before the final time of trouble—the Sabbath sign which is given to all who are found to be without spot or wrinkle. See GC 613; EW 48, 71, 279; 5T 212; TM 446, 510. For the giving of this sign the Lord commands the four angels of Rev 7:1-4 to restrain the winds of strife on earth. But White applied the seal concept also to ordinary Christian experience. She called it the "sign of the cross of Calvary in the Lord's adopted sons and daughters, who are obedient to all His commands" (Letter 126, 1898 [7BC 968]). She also said of those who have it that "their words and their works are to reveal that they are laborers together with God" (Letter 270, 1907 [7BC 969]). Once she said that the early disciples were sealed with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (MS 85, 1903 [6BC 1055]).

Very seldom did White acknowledge that anyone had reached the high standards she set up, and when she did it was usually in the third person. When she said that God had a people who were following the Lamb wherever He went she did not tell who they were, and in the next paragraph she reverted to exhorting her readers to follow the Lamb on earth if they expected to follow Him in the courts.
In White's thought the believers become spotless and sealed
during all the time since 1844, through their response to the three
angels' messages. There were some who had reached the goal during
above (7BC 978). Only once have we found her saying that any living
contemporary had reached the standards ("Letter to an Aged Sister,"
Letter 299, 31 October 1904), although she occasionally spoke of
persons already dead who were sealed and would come up in the first
resurrection (in a letter of condolence to a man who had lost his
wife, Letter 101, 1850; see also her reference to the apostles and
prophets who "would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly
commit a wrong act" [AA 561]). Neither did she claim to be perfect
herself, for she said during her final illness:
"I do not say that I am perfect, but I am trying to be per-
fect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not
associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not
know what I should do.
"I try to treat the matter the best that I can, and am
thankful that I have a spirit of uplifting and not a spirit of
crushing down. . . . No one is perfect. If one were perfect, he
would be prepared for heaven. As long as we are not perfect, we
have a work to do to get ready to be perfect. We have a mighty
Saviour. . . .
"I am going to keep my mind as much as ever I can on the
prominent things of eternal life. They are not dwelt upon enough.
I rejoice that I have that faith that takes hold of the promises of
God, that works by love and sanctifies the soul. A sanctified soul
will not blunder a great deal. . . . The Lord wants us each to do
all we possibly can, and fight the good fight of faith" ("The Last
153 Days," RH, 23 July 1970, p. 3, quoting a letter from her son,
W. C. White, to the editor of the Pacific Union Recorder, 23 April
1915).

Ellen White consistently held up spotlessness as the goal
for last-day saints and insisted that it could be reached but
never claimed to have reached it herself. In this she was like
Wesley, who preached the possibility of complete sanctification, but
never claimed to have reached it himself. It is significant that in
the statement above, after admitting that she was not perfect, White
said, "We have a mighty Saviour," and "I have that faith that takes
hold of the promises of God." It appears, therefore, that White's
view of being ready to meet Christ at the parousia was to hold up
perfection as the goal and justification as the assurance. The
church ought to be and is called to be perfect yet it cannot claim
it. Perfection is found only in Christ. See also comments by G. C.
Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972),
p. 138. White was consistent in saying, "So long as Satan reigns,
we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as
life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we
can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the
result of lifelong obedience" (AA 560-61).
her lifetime, and all who might prove themselves loyal to Christ in the final test would also reach it. There is little evidence that she saw the seal as reserved for a hypothetical last generation. Every true Christian in the last days would receive it. She saw a difference between the last days and earlier times in that the post-1844 period was the time of judgment in heaven and of sealing on earth. The time of the sealing was the time when the Sabbath would be the distinguishing mark between those who were loyal to God and those who were not. She saw it as the climactic issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and the final guarantee of security during the time of trouble. It was the mark of perfection, of spotlessness, of complete loyalty to God. The way of receiving it, however, was the same as the way of salvation in all ages: justification and sanctification on God's side; repentance, surrender, loyalty, and obedience on man's side, through the power given by Christ. The fact of living in the sealing time lent new urgency to man's constant responsibility to his Creator.

4. Was the coming of Christ seen as contingent upon the saints being cleansed? After describing the special work of purification among God's people on earth, White observed, "When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." She did not say that when the work was done the Lord would come. There is not the note of contingency here that many have seen in it. 

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1GC 425.

for the purifying of the saints forbids this interpretation—the
cleansing of the saints is contemporaneous with that of cleansing
the sanctuary in heaven which has been going on since 1844. She
wrote also that those who should live on earth when Christ ceases
His intercession in heaven must be spotless and purified, but she
did not say that the end of His intercession was contingent on their
spotlessness. The most that can be said in this connection is that
White pictures a sequence of events for the last days: there is the
judgment in heaven simultaneous with the cleansing of the saints on
earth, followed by the Lord's appearing in glory to execute judgment
upon the wicked, but it is not said that the one is contingent on
the other.¹ Contingency there is in White's writings,² but this
chapter in The Great Controversy is not dealing with it.

¹We have noted that in her explanation of what happened in
1844 (GC 425-26) White applied Mal 3:1-3 to the Lord's work for His
people in the last days. It may be significant that she later
applied the passage to Christ's cleansing the temple in Jerusalem,
as a figure of the work He desires to do in every human heart. See
DA 161 (1898); 4BC 1181-82 (1905); and PK 715 (1915). Her medita-
tions on the life of Christ obviously led her to see that Mal 3:1-3
applied to the first as well as the second coming of Christ.

Other texts on the purity of God's people which White
applied to the last-day church were Eph 5:27 (GC 425) and Rev 14:1-5
(on the 144,000 who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, for they are
without fault and no lie is found in their mouth—see GC 648-49;
5T 475-76; 4T 125; 2SM 380; EW 15-16; AA 590-91). The last-day
believers, she said, must be spotless and without guile (see p. 143 —
supra). She apparently did not see that both texts have OT roots
(see Psa 15; 32:1,2; Zeph 3:13) which have been thankfully claimed
by every sincere Christian, and which, like Mal 3:1-3, must have
referred to both advents of Christ.

²See Chapter 3.
Ellen White's faith in the soon coming of Christ was the motive not only for exhortations to holy living but also for proclaiming the gospel to the world. She saw Seventh-day Adventists set as watchmen for the world.\(^1\) They had a responsibility given to no one else, because they alone understood the messages of the three angels in their prophetic setting. They were God's channels of light.

The nearness of Christ's coming in White's view was a constant motive for all believers to share their faith. They were to speak to everyone they met, because their time for work would soon be past.\(^2\) Each day that passed was one less in which to warn the world.\(^3\) In 1881 White wrote that they had only a little while to urge the warfare.\(^4\) The times therefore demanded energetic activity. Very soon the Lord would arise to shake the earth; therefore there was no time for trivial things.\(^5\) Unmistakable evidences pointed to the nearness of the end, but there remained in 1909 much work to be done in the cities to prepare the way for the coming of the Prince of Peace.\(^6\) Repeatedly White's approach was that the end was near, but there was a great work to be done: how diligently therefore must the believers do it!

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\(^1\)"The Time of the End," RH, 23 November 1905, p. 15 (9T 19).
\(^2\)9T 15-16. \(^3\)9T 88; see also 9T 27.
\(^5\)9T 36-37, 252. \(^6\)9T 25.
The three angels of Rev 14 represent the preaching of men. Angels prepare the way, but men carry the burden which "can never be laid down till the whole earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord." The believers were to be "bodies of light" and "signs to the people." Right principles were to be manifest in individual Christians, families, and institutions; each was to be a type or symbol of "the saving power of the truths of the gospel."

White saw the church's light as the hope of the advent of Christ and a revelation of Christ's character of love. The believers were to reveal the "goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God." Therefore "Seventh-day Adventists, above all people, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation.... They look for the near return of Christ in the clouds of heaven." She also characterized the light as the righteousness of Christ, the bread of life, and the gospel.

The position of the last-day messengers, in White's concept, was analogous to that of Noah; they were to warn the world as he

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1PK 717; GC 311-12; GW 470. White did not believe in universalism, however, for not all would receive the light.
2"Witnesses for God," ST, 8 October 1902, p. 642.
3COL 296-97.
5"God's Purpose in the Church," 6T 12-13.
6CT 321.
did. She also compared the last-day messengers to John the Baptist, who called men to repentance before the first advent of Christ. The purpose of the proclamation, in White's view, was to glorify God and save souls by warning them of fast-approaching judgments. She called the proclamation of the near advent "present truth," just as justification by faith was present truth in Luther's day.

During the first generation of Seventh-day Adventists White said little about proclaiming their message in foreign fields, but in 1872 she began to call for workers who would be willing to go if called. Her counsel on 1 April 1874 that the message was a worldwide message and was to go to all cities and villages apparently helped persuade the officers of the General Conference committee to send J. N. Andrews (1829-1883) to Switzerland as their first...
missionary later the same year. In following years she referred to foreign needs several more times. But when she went to Europe herself she saw them more clearly and tied them to the nearness of the end. Time to work was short, and there was a world to be warned. She quoted the language of the first angel's message to emphasize that the message must go to all nations, tongues, and peoples. There was great need for workers and for means to support them. White's understanding of the work to be done was increasing, but her view of the nearness did not change. Rather, it became ever more the motive for earnest proclamation.

While there was an element of contingency in White's urging the church to proclaim the gospel, it was not at all prominent. Her characteristic approach was that the parousia was near and therefore the church must preach the warning. The nearness of the coming of

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1 He sailed from New York City with his two children on 15 September. He had begun to keep the seventh-day Sabbath with the Whites in 1846, was ordained as a minister in 1853, and preached extensively in the northeastern states before going to Europe. He was president of the General Conference from 1867-1869, and edited the Review and Herald during the following year. He did significant theological work on the tithing system, church organization, non-combatancy, the interpretation of Rev 13, and the history of the Sabbath and Sunday. Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, is named after him. See "Andrews, John Nevins," SDA Encyclopedia, pp. 43-44.

2 3T 407 (1875); 4T 426, 479 (1880).

3 C. C. Crisler, Comp., Sowing Beside All Waters: An Appeal for Setting in Operation All the Working Agencies in the Church. Selections from the Manuscripts and Published Writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White With Notes and Statements by Other Writers Regarding Conditions in Mission Fields (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1886]), p. 31. This pamphlet is a part of Special Testimonies, Series 3. See also Historical Sketches of Seventh-day Adventist Missions, p. 151; "The Conference in Sweden," RH, 5 October 1885, p. 610; "An Appeal," RH, 12 October 1886, p. 625.
Christ was the constant motive. Vigilance and fidelity had always been required of Christ's followers, but because of the nearness of the end, White urged double diligence.\(^1\) The believers ought to show even greater zeal than did the early church at Pentecost in telling "the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified."\(^2\) The message must be given; if it were not given in favorable times, it would have to be proclaimed under great difficulty. "We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do; but soon it will be more difficult than we can imagine."\(^3\)

In 1885 White stated that the church was far behind in the work it should have done. Although the members knew that the end was near, and that multitudes around them could not be "saved in transgression," yet they took more interest in their trades, farms, houses, merchandise, dress, and tables than in the souls of the men and women whom they would meet in the judgment. "The people who claim to obey the truth are asleep,"\(^4\) she mourned. The belief in the

\(^1\)ST 460.

\(^2\)7T 33. Here the nearness of the second coming was a motive to proclaim the blessings of the first coming. The way to be prepared was to accept Christ as Redeemer.


\(^4\)ST 457 (1885). A balancing statement on secular affairs appeared in the Review and Herald about the same time. In it White wrote that "belief in the near coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven will not cause the true Christian to become neglectful and careless of the ordinary business of life. The waiting ones who look for the soon appearing of Christ will not be idle, but diligent in business" (RH, 20 October 1885, pp. 641-42). She obviously did not regard secular affairs as worthy in themselves.
soon coming of Christ entailed constant obligations to Christian service.

Institutionalizing

Ellen White's exhortations very early turned the young church toward a program of building institutions to give standing to the proclamation of its message. With this development came a new context for the idea of nearness, because of necessity institutions are long-range activities; but White did not see them as putting the advent farther away. Quite the contrary; the nearness was the motive for this activity as well. The explanation can only be that she saw the institutions as essential to help proclaim the three angels' messages:

The influence of these messages has been deepening and widening, setting in motion the springs of action in thousands of hearts, bringing into existence institutions of learning, publishing houses and health institutions; all these are the instrumentalities of God to cooperate in the great work represented by the first, second, and

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1The trend toward institutions started with the founding of the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1866. See Dore's Robinson, The Story of Our Health Message (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1944), pp. 123-33. Of that institution D. T. Bourdeau wrote somewhat improbably that it was "one of the strongest proofs that the Lord is near," because it brought about "a state of preparation for Christ's return." He added that some were saying the health institution was a denial of faith in the speedy coming of Christ just as they had once objected to the publishing of the Review and Herald and the organizing of the publishing association. See "The Health Reform," RH, 12 June 1866, p. 12.

The drive for an institutionalized church gained momentum with the founding of Battle Creek College in 1874. See "Andrews University, II," SDA Encyclopedia, pp. 146-47. Later, as we have mentioned in our survey of White's life (p. 55), she helped to found other institutions in Australia and Europe as well as in America.
third angels flying in the midst of heaven to warn the inhabitants of the world that Christ is coming again with power and great glory.\footnote{1}

Her interest in education came from the same source. Education for her involved character reform, and for that "the time remaining is but too brief a span."\footnote{2} In view of the shortness of time, the most necessary education was a knowledge of the Scriptures, which would help the students be loyal to the God of heaven.\footnote{3} Extraneous subjects were to be excluded; she pleaded for a speedy education for prospective workers. There were activities which might be appropriate if they had a thousand years, but their time was limited; there simply was not time for the students to multiply their years in school.\footnote{4}

\footnote{1}"Let the Trumpet Give a Certain Sound," RH, 6 December 1892, p. 754 (6T 18, 25M 117-18).

\footnote{2}Ed \textsuperscript{184}. See also "Make Proper Use of Talents," sermon preached at Battle Creek, Michigan, 22 August 1891, MS 9, 1891, pp. 7-8 (MS Release \#816).

\footnote{3}"Advice to the Young," 5T 526 and 587 (1889). See also 5T 11-12; "The Bible in Our Schools," RH, 17 August 1897, p. 513; "The Need of Educational Reform, 6T 130; "The Work of Soulsaving," TT 11; "How Shall Our Youth Be Trained?" 8T 229.

\footnote{4}E. G. White to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, 21 March 1894, written from New South Wales (FE 334-67). Young people from New Zealand were being sponsored at considerable expense for training in Battle Creek College, with the expectation that they would return as workers. According to a letter written to Dr. Kellogg on 15 April 1894, White herself had sponsored some of them. But once they were in Michigan they were being encouraged to extend their years of training and even go on for advanced degrees in Ann Arbor. White's counsel was consonant with her firm belief in the soon coming of Christ, but here she used it for very practical purposes: "Send those young people home! We need them in the mission field."

Lest her counsel be seen as advocating a watered-down course of study, White wrote a balancing letter to O. A. Olsen, president of the General Conference and a trustee of Battle Creek College, in May. In it she explained that she did not intend that the college's education should be superficial, "as is illustrated by the way in
On the other hand, there were some in the church who quite naturally argued that if Christ was coming so soon there was no need to put their money into institutions, no need to use good material for their churches, and no need to spend money on foreign work.

Some may say, "If the Lord is coming soon, what need is there to establish schools, sanitariums, and food factories? What need is there for our young people to learn trades?" Thus the nearness of the advent became an alibi for their selfishness. To them White replied that they must obey the gospel commission: how could they be ready "while failing to carry out his commands"? Her reason for using good material in buildings was that they would not dare to dedicate to God a house made of cheap materials, and put together so faultily as to be almost lifted from its foundation when struck by a strong wind. . . . And I would not advise anyone to put worthless material into a house. It does not pay.3

She took a common-sense approach to the business of life and the work of the church, while remembering that it could be cut short at any time.

The obligation of the gospel commission would continue in effect, she wrote, until the Lord should bid them "make no further

which some portions of the land are worked in Australia. The plow was only put in the depth of a few inches" (see FE 368).

1 "To Those in Positions of Responsibility in the Southern Field," B-25-1902, p. 4 (MM 268). See also MS 127, 1901 (Evan 378).

2 "The Necessity of Receiving the Holy Spirit," ST, 1 August 1892, p. 599.

3 MS 127, 1901 (Ev 378). See also "Labors in California," RH, 12 February 1901, p. 97, where she defended spending six thousand dollars for her home: she needed a suitable place to do her work. Actually she had realized a gain on the sale of her home in Australia and used some of the money to make loans to institutions there.
effort to build meeting-houses and establish schools, sanitariums, and publishing institutions." Because the end was near they were to "make the most of every entrusted ability and every agency" that would offer help to the work. They were to give and "increase the facilities, that a great work may be done in a short time."¹ She implied that these activities might continue until Christ came, for she wrote that they must be filled with the spirit of Christ's advent so that when He should come He would find them ready, whether they were working in the field, building a house, or preaching the Word.²

The building of schools, sanitariums, and food factories took the work of the church far beyond direct preaching, and yet the nearness of the parousia remained the motive. With the institutions the warning message became also a healing message. "It should lead us to do all we possibly can to bless and benefit humanity."³ Only

¹"The Increase of Facilities," 6T 440-41. This became the basic rationale for the institutions. See also MS 9, 1891, a sermon preached at Battle Creek, Michigan, on 22 August 1891.

²Letter B-25-1902, p. 5, MS Release #816.

³Ibid., p. 4 (MM 268). See also Special Testimonies B, Number 13, p. 11 (1906): "Never are we to lose sight of the great object for which our sanitariums are established,—the advancement of God's closing work in the earth." See also 7T 51: "In all parts of the world they are to establish sanitariums, schools, publishing houses, and kindred facilities for the accomplishment of His work. The closing message of the gospel is to be carried to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Rev 14:6. In foreign countries many enterprises for the advancement of this message must yet be begun and carried forward. The opening of hygienic restaurants and treatment rooms, and the establishment of sanitariums for the care of the sick and suffering, is just as necessary in Europe as in America." Cf. 2T 169 (1909); and CH 248 (1912).

These statements support our contention that to White's mind the way to be ready for the future was to do good in the present. Thus it developed that the exhortations of premillennialist Ellen White adopted some of the activities of the postmillennialists.
by tracing White's motives back to the three angels can we understand these admonitions. One would expect that the nearness of the end would lead to neglect of every activity that did not directly prepare for that day. But White's concept of the task came to include faithfulness in every legitimate activity of life, with special emphasis on those which would aid in proclamation.

The activities which she urged upon the church were not the kind which could be "finished" in the sense that the believers could some day say they had finished their work, and now it was time for the Lord to do His. Although she wrote of the world being lightened with the glory of the loud cry, she had a kind of tokenism in mind. The goal was to place symbols of God's plan in every place, but there was no way to know when such a task would be finished. Commenting on Matt 10:23, she wrote that there would always be places to work, hearts to receive the message, calls for effort in behalf of the institutions, and opportunities for the canvasser to work "as long as the message of mercy is to be given to the world,... until in heaven is spoken the word, 'It is finished.'" White's concept was that the church must be constantly engaged in its task until the Lord should announce its completion.

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1 COL 296-97. Her strategy was to have the institutions small and scattered throughout the world. When the church concentrated its major efforts in Battle Creek, Michigan, she resisted vigorously, saying that because the end was near they must work out of and away from the places where they had done so much in the past. See TT 100, 140-41; "A World-Wide Message," RH, 20 August 1903, pp. 3-9; 8T 49. The facilities were to be increased so they could do a great work in a short time. See 6T 441. She mentioned the South in particular; small institutions must be built there because the opportunities for work would soon be past. See TT 235.

2 8T 478 (1900).
It would not be ready for His coming if it did not. In her exhortations White always put more emphasis on the work to be done and the life to be lived, than she did on the time of the end. God only knew when the end would arrive, but the Christian must always work and live in the belief that it was near.

White did not always mention the coming of Christ in connection with her exhortations. She often cited non-eschatological motives, as in her comments on the gospel commission. Commenting on the parable of the good Samaritan, she wrote that true religion consists "in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness." But the nearness of the end was never far from her thinking. She believed that even if the end were not near, Christians ought to live lives of simplicity and self-denial, but the end IS near: "How much more, then, is it incumbent upon this people to manifest unfailing zeal and consecration!" She pointed to Enoch as one who walked with God for hundreds of years, implying that he did so even though the parousia was not near for him; but then she added that he was a representative of the saints who live amid the perils and corruptions of the last days.

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1"Go Teach All Nations," DA 318-28; See also "Go, Preach the Gospel," RH, 15 and 22 March 1898, pp. 165-66 and 181-82.
2DA 497.
4"Look to Jesus," 2T 121-22 (Maranatha 65).
Evaluation

Development of White's Eschatology

It appears that White's eschatological thinking began with the 1844 experience and moved backward from it to the significance of other events in salvation history. Backward to the seventy-week prophecy of Dan 9, which began with the Jews' return from exile and ended with the ministry of Christ, and at the same time dated the beginning of the 2300-day prophecy which ended in 1844. It was her conviction that the Christian era was covered by the 1260- and 2300-year prophecies of Dan 7-9 that enabled her to avoid the problem of an eighteen-century delay in the parousia. It was the fulfillment of the seventy-week prophecy which convinced her that God is sovereign; His purposes, therefore, know no haste nor delay. Because past predictions have been fulfilled, the future is certain. He knows the time when Christ will return; the task He has given the church is sure to be accomplished, for He has made Himself responsible for its success.

From the 1844 experience White's eschatology also moved forward to the end of history. Her view of the future grew out of the prophecies summarized by the angels. It is likely that her entire theodicy received its original inspiration from the same prophecies. The thought that Christ had started His pre-advent judgment in 1844 naturally led her to reflect on the purpose of the judgment, which in turn led to the larger questions of the conflict between Christ and Satan. There were precedents in John Milton and Jonathan Edwards for this kind of theodicy, but White's immediate inspiration was the 1844 complex of doctrines.
Her largely negative attitude toward other churches grew out of her experience of being disfellowshiped from the Methodist Church in 1843 and the churches' refusal to accept the seventh-day Sabbath --both of which, she believed, were marks of apostasy which had been predicted by the second angel. Her picture of the time of trouble in the future received its Sabbath-Sunday content by her interpretation of the third angel. The three angels together proclaimed a call to holiness and ethical living which formed the basis of her many exhortations.

The Place of the Signs of the Times

So important were the three angels to White's eschatology that they took precedence over the signs of the times. Very seldom did she mention specific datable events as signs. Often she referred to signs in general and immediately reverted to a discussion of the time prophecies fulfilled in the past. Many of the signs she referred to were natural calamities or general social conditions which have been common throughout history, but in her thought they took on the quality of signs because they occurred in the time of the end. Living in that period, White saw every calamity and every sin, every oppression and every apostasy, as another sign. Since they were common occurrences, however, they could be recognized as signs only by men of faith--to all others the end was coming on muffled feet. Rather than prognostications of the future, the signs were calls to faith and commitment.

This attitude reminds one of that expressed by Regin Prenter, who believes that the signs are not historical events which foretell the end so unambiguously as to make the worship of
watchfulness no longer necessary.\footnote{Regin Prenter, Creation and Redemption (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 553-54. The fact that they occurred also in Old Testament times weakens his point. He has not explained why there should be signs of the parousia after the resurrection of Christ any more than before. White's construction is more logical.} White differed from him in seeing significance in the signs only since 1844, whereas he said that since they have been taking place since the death and resurrection of Christ and will continue to take place, the parousia is therefore always equally near at hand. He regarded the parousia as a suprahistorical event which cannot be dated in any sense, but White saw it as essentially nearer in her time because of the time prophecies. Within her "time of the end," however, she would have agreed with his expression that it was always equally near at hand.

The most prominent specific event which White pointed to as a sign of the end was the Sunday-law agitation of the 1880s and 1890s. This is significant because she saw it as the fulfillment of the third angel's message which the Adventists had been proclaiming for forty years; it seemed to be the beginning of the final crisis.\footnote{This statement must be modified by the fact that she did not feel the church was ready for the final crisis and therefore called on the members to pray for a delay. It looked as though the end were coming in spite of the church's unreadiness. See pp. 213-215 infra for a fuller discussion.} During the time of this agitation she wrote several times of the judgment being about to pass to the cases of the living, which was another of the very last events before the end. But Christ has not come yet.
Failure of the Sunday-Law Sign?

The fact is that the Sabbath-Sunday issue has not [yet] developed as White expected it would. The problem diminished when she herself counselled the believers to use Sunday for missionary work. Today, a century later, the five-day work week is common in America. The National Reform Association was actively pushing for Sunday legislation in 1880, but in 1980 the Executive Director of its successor, the Lord's Day Alliance USA, wrote a laudatory foreword for Adventist professor Samuele Bacchiocchi's study of the Sabbath, and the same professor's dissertation on the origin of Sunday observance was accepted by the Gregorian University in Rome. In much of the late twentieth-century world a man is more likely to be persecuted for his politics than for his religion.

Jonathan Butler, an associate professor of church history at Loma Linda University, believes that with the apparent fading of the Sunday-law issue Seventh-day Adventists face prophetic disconfirmation because Sabbatarianism is no longer an issue, and even those

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1 There are still many countries, however, where a five-and-a-half-day work week causes hardship for those who would observe the seventh-day Sabbath.


who believe it will be in the future have to admit that it would be a reversal of present secular tendencies in society. To accept White's view of the Sabbath-Sunday test today, he says, one has to accept her as a prophetess first, and take her word for it in a way that was not necessary one hundred years ago.\(^1\) No one claims that the Sabbath is any longer the great divisive issue, for the Protestant establishment against which she warned has now become a post-Christian pluralistic society.

Whether White's view of the final conflict will be fulfilled in detail, only time will tell. It is true that she wrote out of and to the issues of her day, many of which have been superseded by others. But Butler points out correctly that regardless of the details, White's sense of urgency was constant. For her the end was always SOON. The non-fulfillment of specific predictions did not alter this consistent attitude (see section entitled "Time Known"). Butler believed that she made apocalyptic relevant to her time by properly re-interpreting earlier predictions.\(^2\) In his view, she did not so much herald a chronology of events as call for a new quality of life; she spoke more concerning what the kingdom is that of when it will come.\(^3\) Her modern readers would do well, he says, to embody the spirit of her message by preserving her sense of urgency.

The hope for the soon coming of Christ has been a dynamic conviction at various times in the history of the Christian church. Its non-occurrence so far has not destroyed faith; the failure of

\(^1\)"The World of E. G. White and the End of the World," p. 3.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 11.
subsidiary details has not altered its essence. White's own ministry illustrates this fact. Although in her early years she expected the end in a few months, and although she lived for fifteen years after the waning of the Sunday issue, she continued to write that Christ's coming was imminent.

Paul Althaus's description of eschatology also seems to be a useful parallel to White's attitude. He held that true "biblical eschatology is always the imminent expectation of the end," and that the most characteristic feature of the language which Jesus used about the end is not that it is apocalyptic, but "that everything serves as the basis of a call to decision, faithfulness and vigilance." All serious and living eschatology sees the signs of the parousia in its own time—it uses its interpretation of the time in which it was written to interpret one's own present existence in the light of the ultimate decision. The signs of the times point directly to the present moment. The church must arm itself not for the final battle which may be far off, but for the battle it is facing now and which must be fought as though it were the last.  

While the expressions of Butler and Althaus are helpful in evaluating the passing of a century since White faced the Sunday-law agitation in 1880, they are not completely parallel to her thought. Butler and Althaus tend to make the parousia timeless, so that in fact nothing can be said about the time, but White believed in a genuine chronological nearness. Althaus does not see the parousia


2 ibid., p. 289.
as part of history, which is bounded by death; therefore the consummation must lie beyond death.¹ For him the parousia is the final revelation of what Christ has already achieved. It is not related to the present as the harvest to the seed but as direct vision to faith.² While White agreed in making the cross the foundation of her theology, she saw the parousia as a new achievement which climaxes and completes what has gone before. It is God's taking unambiguous control of history—when he acts directly and not through secondary agents. It therefore occurs at a definite time like any other historical event, even though the date has not been revealed.

Near, But Unknown

Our study has shown that White took the nearness of Christ's coming very seriously; it would not be accurate to say that she made it merely timeless. This certainty grew out of the 1844 expectation. Surely the Lord's coming would not be many years after the end of the prophetic periods! She felt she was living on borrowed time; the Master could be expected at any time. This was the reason she fully expected to live until the end and used the nearness of Christ's coming rather than the threat of sudden death as the great motive in her exhortations. She was not looking for an advent that might be a millennium in the future; no, she expected Him literally in her lifetime.³

¹Ibid., pp. 285-86.
²Ibid., p. 280.
³There may be significance in the fact that the definite statements on Christ's coming in her lifetime ceased soon after her return from Europe in 1887. The church had a task to do, and it is
There is an apparent conflict between White's nearness statements and her warnings against setting dates, however. The Millerites had believed that Matt 24:36 no longer applied—the Lord intended that they should now know the day and the hour—but White continued to take the warning seriously. The reason was that while the time prophecies showed Christ's coming near, the fact that they were all past showed the date was unknown. Christ's warning would therefore retain its validity until the end.

Prophetic Demands and Apocalyptic Expectations

It is sometimes said that the greatest contribution of the classical prophets was their teaching concerning the ethical character of true religion. They denounced social evil, injustice, and oppression of the poor. It has also been said that this social ethic is largely absent from the apocalyptic writings. Within the canon this statement is more true of Revelation than of Daniel. Daniel's prayer of confession (chap. 9) presupposes the social admonitions of the classical prophets (see vss. 5, 6, 10-11, 16; and Dan 4:27, where he admonishes Nebuchadnezzar to break off his sins

probable that she came to realize it was larger than could be finished in her lifetime—but she continued to speak of a great crisis impending and of the nearness of Christ's coming. See chapter 3.

1 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."


3 D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), p. 100, compares the two but agrees that the social ethic was not altogether absent from the apocalyptic writings.
by practicing righteousness and showing mercy to the oppressed).
But in Revelation the ethics called for are vertical rather than horizontal; they deal almost exclusively with the believers' relation to God rather than his relation to men. The purpose of the book was to urge the believers to be faithful to God in times of persecution.¹

Ellen White's eschatology, however, combines the ethical stance of the classical prophets with the apocalyptic expectation of the parousia. The three angels proclaimed far more than a simple announcement that the end was near. In White's eschatology they extended to include every true reform and undergirded all her exhortations, even those which did not mention an apocalyptic motive.

White's emphasis on holiness and practical righteousness was in harmony with her Arminian-Wesleyan roots, as well as with the holiness emphasis which was prominent in America and England in her lifetime. She believed justified Christians must show their faith by their works and therefore carry a responsibility for their own salvation and the salvation of the world. No more than John Wesley did she teach righteousness by works, for the works she advised were the product of God's work in man, but she emphasized the believer's obligation to cooperate with God. Therefore she continually urged holiness and witness.

Hundred-Yard Dash vs. Marathon

Her ethical stance in view of the nearness of Christ's coming may be illustrated by the analogy of a race. While she was

in the Millerite movement from 1842-1844 her attitude was like that of a sprinter in the hundred-yard dash. She put everything she had into the Millerite revival. She took the little money she earned and used it all to buy literature to spread the message. She was deeply concerned about sanctification until she found peace in Christ. Like Phoebe Palmer she carried an unusual burden for the salvation of her young friends. Every weight was laid aside; she was intent upon the race which was brief but all-encompassing.

After 1844 she found herself running a marathon but always tried to maintain the zeal, drive, and dedication of the sprint. She urged her readers to give sacrificially in order to spread the message. She admonished them to dedicate themselves to the Lord as though each day were to be their last. As in 1844, they must love Christ rather than the world; they must make sure their sins were confessed before they went to bed every night; they were to live in peace and harmony as they had in 1844; and they were to carry the same burden for the salvation of their neighbors that they had in 1844. In every way they were to continue the drive of the hundred-yard dash throughout the marathon. The nearness of Christ's coming exerted a constant pressure toward holiness and witness.

White's synthesis of prophetic and apocalyptic attitudes produced a unique combination of world affirmation and world denial. In her mind the way to be ready for the coming of Christ was to do all the good one could in this life without succumbing to love of the world. Thus she led her church in founding sanitariums to improve man's health, food factories to improve his diet, and schools to educate his children for this life and the next. She
was concerned that each Christian be a source of blessing in his own circle, yet did not believe these efforts could set up the kingdom of God on earth, for the world would grow progressively worse in spite of Christian efforts for its betterment. Nevertheless, they must continue in obedience to God's command until He should announce, "It is enough!" The gospel commission was an open-ended assignment.

When White led her church into an institutional pattern of growth she gave a new context to the concept of nearness. The only institution she advised during the first generation was the publishing house, which was directly involved in proclaiming the message. It was later that her definition of the warning message expanded to include health and education. The implications of this development were not lost on covetous believers who saw an excuse to hang on to their money. But White defended the institutions on the ground they were necessary to give standing to the proclamation of the church. As a matter of fact, they were an adaptation to the conditions of the marathon. Although there was no time for building sanitariums and liberal arts colleges during the sprint, they became necessary during the longer race.1

1White's theology, including as it did the seventh-day memorial of creation as well as the second coming of Christ, produced an appreciation for both creation and redemption. This is the reason that Seventh-day Adventists have not restricted their colleges to the Bible college pattern but have developed strong departments of music, art, science, business, and medicine in addition to theology and evangelism. They see God at work in the "secular" as well as in the "spiritual" world. But such developments could only be possible during the marathon.
Although White never admitted that they pointed to a lengthened time expectation before Christ's return, institutions by their nature presuppose an appreciable time to grow and make their contribution. They were a tacit admission of the marathon. Of themselves they did not indicate that White thought the parousia had been delayed. Quite the contrary, for we note an instance where White prayed for a delay so that the institutions could be built (see chapter 3). It was not the existence but the non-existence of the institutions which indicated delay in her mind. But the institutions in fact were signs of an apocalyptic sect which was developing into a long-term church. The only things which preserved a genuine near expectation were White's thoughts that the entire program could be terminated at any time by the coming of Christ, and that nearness was always a motive for building.

Last-Day Cleansing of God's People

White believed that while Christ was engaged in His work of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary there was to be a special work of cleansing among His people on earth, and thus it appears that she conceived of a greater urgency behind Christian admonitions in the "time of the end" than before. This applied to the entire period of the three angels and was not restricted to a hypothetical last generation. While her eschatology was inspired by the 1844 experience and her ethics were focused by the three angels, the moral effect was similar to that produced by belief in the soon coming of Christ among the Puritans, the Montanists, and the early Christian church. A conviction that Christ is coming soon has always been a powerful motive for holy living.
White's belief in the nearness of Christ's coming produced a constant conviction of living in a time of crisis, particularly after 1888 when the Sabbath-Sunday issue became prominent, but it was larger than that issue, for the preparation she called for was a general spiritual preparation. She wrote that those who would stand in the final trial must have courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word.\(^1\) The church's schools, she believed, could prepare the youth to stand by giving them books that would encourage sincerity of life and lead them to open the word.\(^2\) White usually spoke of the crisis impending, shortly to come, or even present.\(^3\) The fact that she could speak of a present crisis and use it as an appeal to choose the right reading materials for the young people in 1915 when Sunday laws were no longer an issue, indicates that in her mind the crisis was existential as well as eschatological. She said the time was not far distant when the test would come to every soul.\(^4\) She saw every Christian facing a test in the time of the end that would decide whether he would be loyal to Christ or not. Because her expectations were not tied to a date on the calendar, she did not experience a crisis of delay. The crisis she spoke of was continually impending and always exerting its pressure to choose for Christ and salvation.

In this chapter we have examined White's use of nearness as a motive for holiness and witness. In chapter 3 we will examine the other stream in her thought, in which the delay of Christ's

\(^1\) AA 431. \(^2\) FE 547. 
\(^3\) ST 16; FE 547. \(^4\) ST 31.
coming also becomes a motive for holiness and witness, but to be
fair to White we must not overlook the stream analyzed in this
chapter.

Comparison With Other Premillennialists

It is useful to compare White's eschatology with that of
Darbyite Dispensationalism. Dispensationalism holds an every-moment
expectancy for the rapture of the church which means that there are
no signs which must precede Jesus' coming. White also believed that
Jesus' coming was near, although she looked for certain events which
must occur first, but the Scriptural bases for the two eschatologies
are quite different. Dispensationalism's basis is its definition of
the church as a purely spiritual body which is not involved in bib-
lical prophecies and whose history is entirely separate from that of
the Jews. Since there are no events which must happen beforehand,
the rapture can happen at any time. White's basis, on the other
hand, was the three angels' messages of Rev 14, which she applied to
the church.

Because of its futurism, Dispensationalism finds it diffi-
cult to make a present ethical application of its apocalyptic escha-
tology. It foresees a sequence of judgments on Babylon, the beast
and the false prophet, fallen angels, the Gentiles, and Israel,¹ but
all of them occur after the church has been removed and therefore
can have no effect on the life of the church today.² In White, on

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come: a Study in Biblical
Eschatology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972, pp. 364, 368, 422,
415, 413.

²Pentecost discusses what he calls "the judgment seat of
Christ," which has to do with the judgment of the saints and refers
the other hand, we have found that the judgment now in session was a powerful reason for ethical living and witnessing. Concluding from the first angel's message that she was living in the day of judgment, she used this concept with great effect to urge her readers to make sure their lives were right with God.

One would assume that the every-moment expectancy of the Dispensationalist would lead to evangelistic appeals. It is a curious fact that neither in the Scofield Bible nor in Pentecost's systematic development of Dispensationalism do we find this kind of exhortation. It may be that the Dispensationalist assumes his readers are already sure of being raptured, and so no ethical appeals are necessary.

The Dispensationalist is interested in charting the future. His eschatology is cognitive. He is a Christian looking at an Israel-centered future based on OT prophecies. He is interested in

to the term, *κρίτηρια*, used in Jas 2:6 and 1 Cor 6:2,4, as the instrument or means of judging, the rule by which one judges, or the place where judgment is given. He also refers to the word, *βήμα*, and associates it with a place of rewards. Passing over *κρίτηρια* with a brief mention, he interprets *βήμα* not as the place where the Lord decides the salvation of His people, but where He decides their rewards. He reasons from Rom 8:1; John 5:24; 1 John 4:17, that faith in Christ has perfectly delivered the believer from all judgment already, therefore there could be no real final judgment for him. For this reason, therefore, even the judgment seat of Christ can have but minimal effect on present Christian living. See his pp. 219-22.


2 A well-known example is Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth; God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages (Glenside, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin, 1918).

3 Classical premillennialism has seen the books of Daniel and Revelation as predictions of the same periods of history, the only difference being that Revelation began with the time of Christ while
events which will occur after he is removed from the earth. Ellen White used her eschatology, on the other hand, to appeal to man's moral nature. She was interested in future events as the climax of the present controversy between Christ and Satan and believed that her church had a crucial part to play in the final drama. Every item in her sequence of events was the basis of ethical appeals: the judgment, the shaking time, the loud cry, the latter rain of the Spirit, the time of trouble, and the close of probation. The direction of her thought was the spiritual obligation to prepare for the future and to proclaim the three angels' messages.

White and the Dispensationalist agree that a climactic period of tribulation will come before the glorious appearing of Christ, but they disagree in that the pre-tribulation Dispensationalist believes that the church will be removed from earth beforehand, while White believed it will remain on earth to endure it. The Dispensationalist's position prevents him from making a present ethical appeal, whereas White saw the time of trial as imminent and therefore used it as a motive for powerful appeals. It appears therefore that while both White and the Dispensationalist are pre-millennialists, their differences are greater than their similarities. Their scriptural bases, their attitudes toward final judgment, their ethical emphases, and their use of their sequences of future events are all quite different.

Daniel began with sixth-century-B.C. Babylon. Dispensationalism, on the other hand, denies the connection between the two books. The Dispensationalist, as we have seen in our review of Darby, believes that Dan 2 and 7 predicted the existence of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, followed by judgment and the setting up of God's kingdom, but that the greater part of Revelation will occur after the rapture.
Another eschatology with which it is useful to compare White's belief system is that of the Pentecostals, twentieth-century descendants of the Holiness Movement. Pentecostals believe that their movement is, or is under, the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. They hold that as the apostolic church received the former rain at Pentecost and brought forth the firstfruits, their movement is God's latter rain bringing in the last fruits of the harvest just before the second coming of Christ. They maintain that the latter rain of the Spirit is being poured out now and is particularly evident in the charismata of the Spirit. Ellen White also believed in a latter rain of the Spirit to ripen earth's harvest just before the coming of Christ, but she saw it as a future experience. To be ready for the gift (here we see again her constant evangelistic appeal) the believers must daily yield themselves to God. The gift would revive the messengers and strengthen them to pass through the time of trouble. Unlike Pentecostals, she pointed not to the special presence of the Spirit as evidence that Christ's coming was near but to the time prophecies which were fulfilled in the past.

The doctrine of the latter rain in both White and Pentecostals appears to be a development from John Wesley's doctrine of the "second blessing." He believed that sanctification by the Holy Spirit

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2GC 611-13.  

3AA 55.

4RH, 27 May 1862 (7BC 984). See also EW 71, 86, 271, 279; Evan 702; RH, 29 November 1892 (7BC 984); RH, 22 March 1892 (7BC 984); TM 506.

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Spirit was a blessing which would follow that of justification by Christ. The latter rain was an eschatological application of Wesley's doctrine. The Pentecostals applied the experience to themselves and admonished every Christian to seek it. White applied it to the future and admonished every Christian to prepare for it. The Pentecostals taught that the gift was available to everyone who met the conditions. White agreed on the conditions but left the time of the gift to God's sovereign choice.

Comparison With New Testament Attitudes

We have noticed that White believed that most of the Christian era was covered by Paul's prediction in 2 Thess 2:3, which with many premillennialists she applied to the papacy and dated from A.D. 538 to 1798—the period of the 1260 years predicted by Dan 7:25 and Rev 12:6,14. Since the time of the end did not begin until the latter date, she did not see the NT picture of the last days beginning with the first advent of Christ. Such verses as Acts 2:17, 2 Tim 3:1-6, Heb 1:2, Jas 5:3, 6

1 Bruner, p. 62.  
2 Ibid., pp. 87-117.

3"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." See GC 611; MS 4, 1908 (4BC 1175); EW 78.

4"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, . . . Avoid such people." See COL 411; GC 444.

5"In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." See ISM 293, where the "last days" expression is ignored.

6"Your gold and silver have rusted, . . . You have laid up treasure for the last days." (ἐξπολύσατε ἐν ἐβδομής ἡμέρας). See RK 651; 9T 90-91, where the verse is applied to those who will live just before Jesus' coming.
1 John 2:18, 1 Pet 4:7, and Jas 5:8, she consistently applied to her own time and the near future. The closest she came to recognizing the NT attitude was in saying that the kingdom of heaven was divided into two phases, the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory, with the latter beginning only at the parousia.

The reason White and the premillennialists of her time placed the time of the end in the modern era was their understanding of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. The ground of White's belief was prophecy fulfilled in her time, while the ground of the New Testament church's belief was prophecy fulfilled in

1"Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour." White does not quote this text.

2"The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers." See GW 125, where she applies it to proper deportment "now."

3"You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." PK 732; 9T 288; the language is used of the future.

4So also did other premillennialists of her time. See Nathaniel West, Premillennial Essays, and the writings of the Millerites. It is likely that the insight that the New Testament saw the last days beginning with the first advent of Christ was discovered by Albert Schweitzer. See his The Quest of the Historical Jesus, A Critical Study of Its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948 [1906]), pp. 358-90.

5DA 234-35; GC 347-48. See John Milton's earlier use of this rubric in A Treatise on Christian Doctrine Compiled from the Holy Scripture Alone (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Co., 1825), 2:223. Long before C. H. Dodd, however, White had some of the concepts of realized eschatology. She wrote, "As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. . . . All that human nature can bear, we may receive here." But she never believed that realized eschatology can replace a real future eschatology. The next sentence in DA 331-32 is, "But what is this compared with the hereafter?" followed by a quotation of Rev 7:15-17.
their time: namely, in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.¹ This explains why she gave as much space to the events of 1844 as she did to the life of Christ in her earliest presentation of the great controversy theme.²

This is not to say that she minimized the achievements of Christ on the cross. She believed that church history centers around the cross.³ She said that all the blessings of the present and future life come stamped with the cross.⁴ It is stamped on every loaf of bread and reflected in every water spring.⁵ On the cross Christ paid the redemption price for the lost world.⁶ Man could have no union with the Father without the cross of Christ.⁷ It was the means of man's atonement.⁸ Removing it from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky.⁹ In White's thought the first advent of Christ was related to the second as

¹Oscar Cullmann has pointed out that the enthusiasm of the early church was not called forth by the expectation of the end as such, but by the "already" that gave a foundation to it: death was vanquished, for Christ was risen. Their expectation of the parousia near was a consequence of their certainty that the coming kingdom was already existent in Christ. See Salvation in History (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 173-79.

²In her 1858 presentation (1SG), White's chapters on Miller and the three angels number eight, of fifty-one pages (pp. 28-79), nearly equaling the eight chapters, of fifty-four pages (pp. 128-172) which she devoted to the life of Christ. In later presentations the proportion given to the life of Christ increased, but the three angels' experience still occupied a major place. In 4SP (1884), pages 202-93 are devoted to the three angels, totaling ninety-nine pages, while pages 9-382 in 2SP (1877) and pages 9-262 in 3SP (1878), totaling 626 pages, are devoted to the life of Christ. In GC (1888) the pages devoted to the three angels are 317-491, totaling 174, while DA (1898) totaling 835 pages deals entirely with the life of Christ.

³⁰⁴³³. ⁴AA 209. ⁵DA 660. ⁶ST 603.

⁷AA 209. ⁸ST 236. ⁹AA 209.
seed sowing to harvest. Throughout her ministry the two advents
formed the foci of her theology.

If White had seen the New Testament idea that the last days
began with the first advent of Christ, she would have had to deal
more seriously with the eighteen centuries which have passed since
New Testament times. She would have had to harmonize her view of
chronology based on Daniel and Revelation with the nearness pre-
presented elsewhere in the Bible. How she would have answered these
questions is fruitless to speculate. As it was, her sequence of
events subsequent to 1844 enabled her to hold a constant nearness
without setting a date but had the effect of seeing the Christian
church through most of its history waiting for the last days,
whereas the New Testament church saw itself as living in the last
days already, while it waited for the climax.¹

How Soon Is Soon?

How near then is near? How soon is soon in Ellen White's
thought? As we look at her sequence of final events, do we find
indications of where we may stand in relation to the end? The
answer is that we do not, not since the Sunday-law issue of the
late 1880s. If we did find such an indication, we would have a

¹The New Testament itself speaks of the "end" in a variety
of ways. While Christ appeared at the end of the age (Heb 9:26),
there is also a future end of the age (Matt 13:39f., 49; 24:3; 28:
20). Along with Christ's coming in the fulness of time, we read of
God's intention, "as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all
things in Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth" (Eph 1:10).
Paul writes of being saved by hope for what we do not see (Rom 8:24,
25). The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the
sons of God (vs. 19), for it is now subjected to futility and we
ourselves groan inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies
(vss. 20-23). See comments by G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ
much more exact date than she was willing to give while she was alive. She did not fall under the criticism of Augustus Hopkins Strong,\(^1\) or A. L. Moore,\(^2\) who mistakenly believed that Adventists continued to set dates in the tradition of William Miller. When as twentieth-century western Christians we ask how many years we may have to wait until the Lord comes, we are asking the wrong question of Ellen White. She did not intend to give an exact chronological schedule of final events, and those who draw charts from her writings are misusing her. She intended rather to prepare a people to meet Christ whenever He might come. The nearness she presented was an evangelistic appeal for the present rather than a prognosticator's forecast for the future. It was nearer than any date could be. In the words of William Miller after the disappointment, it was "Today and Today and Today, until He comes."\(^3\)

Thus the doctrines represented by the three angels' messages in Rev 14:6-12, which White believed had their fulfillment in the Millerite revival of the 1840s, were the foundation and guiding principles of her entire eschatology. They marked out her place in salvation history, told her she was living in the last days, and gave her church its mission in the world but did not set a date for Christ's coming.


CHAPTER 3

THE DELAY OF CHRIST'S COMING

Our concerns in this chapter are to define the concept of delay as used by White at different times in her life, to note its place in her eschatology as based in the three angels' messages of Rev 14, to examine the reasons she assigned for it, and to analyze the use she made of it for hortatory purposes. Finally we shall evaluate the delay stream in her thought by the norms of Scripture evidence, self-consistency, and theological cogency.

Early Ambiguity

White's earliest statements on a possible delay appeared, not surprisingly, about fourteen years after the 1844 disappointment. While she had written in 1849 that time was short and "very soon" every case would be decided for life or for death, 1 in 1858 she said that Jesus could not come yet because the believers who were disappointed in 1844 must yet "suffer for Jesus and endure greater trials. They must give up errors and traditions received from men and turn wholly to God and His word. They must be purified, made white and tried." 2 Here we see a strong note of contingency: the return of Christ was dependent on the spiritual


2 ISG 148 (1858, reprinted EW 243 in 1882).
experiences of the advent believers. The contingency was weakened, however, by the sequence of events described in the remainder of the book. Christ, she wrote, went into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 to "make a special atonement for Israel, and to receive the kingdom of his Father, and then return to earth and take them to dwell with him forever." Then she described the three angels' messages, the time of trouble, and the actual coming of Christ to deliver His people. The contingency based on the state of the church was equaled by a contingency based on the work of Christ: He would make the special atonement, receive the kingdom, and then return to earth. This statement, therefore, does not provide unqualified evidence that she believed in a real delay at that time.

The 1858 statement may have been related to an emphasis on the message to the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22) which James White introduced in 1856. The Sabbatarian Adventists, including the Whites, expected the Lord to come within a few years after 1844. By the mid-1850s it appears they began to ask themselves why He had not come yet. In 1856 James suggested the Laodicean message as a possible reason, and many of the believers concluded that their lukewarmness and lethargy were the hindrance. Ellen supported her

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1SG 149 (EW 244; this edited version omits the word "special" before "atonement," indicated a slight shift in White's concept of what Christ was doing in the most holy place).

husband's interpretation in two articles published in 1857, and another in 1859. In the latter she recalled that when the Laodicean message was first applied to the Adventist believers, "Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel." She included herself with this group, for she continued that "if the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character." This attitude agreed with her conviction that Christ would come in a very few years. She probably agreed in 1857 that the church's acceptance of the Laodicean rebuke would indeed remove the obstacle which was hindering the coming of Christ. She said it was

1"Be Zealous and Repent," IT 141-46; "The Shaking," IT 179-84. It is not known whether James or Ellen initiated the application of the Laodicean church to the Adventist believers.

2"The Laodicean Church," IT 185-95. The article appears also in 2SG 223-30, but the section from IT 190 was there given the subtitle, "Systematic Benevolence." The specific exhortations White mentioned were to overcome selfishness, pride, and evil passions, to avoid the immodest dress fashions of the world (small bonnets and hoops), and to be noblehearted and generous. The last section was an appeal to participate in the newly-introduced financial plan for supporting the ministers.

3IT 186 (2SG 224). "Loud cry" was a term White derived from Rev 18:1-4. She believed that the angel of that passage who comes down from heaven calling, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! . . . Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues," would unite with the third angel of Rev 14:9-12 to give great power to his message just before the return of Christ. She also identified this climactic closing movement with the latter rain of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Joel 2:23 and Hos 6:3 (see GC 611-12), which would result in large accessions to the church. The power accompanying the final proclamation, she believed, would exceed that of the midnight cry in 1844. See EW 271, 277-79; GC 603-12; TBC 984-85; IT 182-83, 186-87. When she wrote, therefore, that the Laodicean message was expected to end in the loud cry of the third angel, she saw the parousia as very near indeed.

4IT 186-87  5see pp. 107-12 supra.
designed to arouse the people of God and lead them to zealous repentance that they might be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel.\(^1\) By 1859, however, she saw that the hoped-for revival would not come quickly or easily.

When we compare White's 1857 and 1859 statements on the Laodicean message, we find that her concept of delay was ambiguous, as it was in the 1858 statements. On one hand she referred to the loud cry of the third angel as consequent upon the church's repentance, but on the other she wrote that "this message would not accomplish its work in a few short months," and "He gives them time for the excitement to wear off, and then proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness,"\(^2\) thus pointing to God's sovereignty more than human responsibility.

As a matter of fact time was not the main point of White's articles. Her purpose was to convince her readers that the testimony to the Laodiceans applied to them at that time, and that the reason it had not produced a greater result was the hardness of their hearts. As in her statements on the nearness of Christ's coming, her evangelistic burden here was uppermost rather than the theoretical question of when Christ would return.\(^3\)

\(^1\)\textit{1T} 186. \(^2\)\textit{1T} 186-87.

\(^3\)C. Mervyn Maxwell, in "Expectant Father, Reluctant Children," \textit{Perfection, the Possible Impossibility}, by Herbert Douglass, et al, pp. 175-78, concludes from White's statements on \textit{1T} 186-87 that a complete acceptance of the Laodicean message by the church would have cleared the way for the Lord to come by 1859. He believes that the sentence, "God has given the message time to do its work," on p. 186 showed that in White's mind the three years were enough to accomplish the needed reformation. This interpretation ignores the task of proclaiming the three angels' messages, which they only later came to see as world-wide in extent. The membership in 1857 could not have been more than the 3,500 estimated...
Ten years later White rebuked worldliness in the church, commenting on the parables on watchfulness.¹ Quoting Mark 13:35 she wrote, "The Lord intimates a delay before the morning finally dawns," and added, "He would not have them give way to weariness, . . . because the morning does not open upon them as soon as they expected." Again, however, the evidence is ambiguous. As in the parables, she pictured the believers waiting at night, with the morning corresponding to the coming of the master. The faithful ones were pictured waiting in the third watch of the night; therefore there could be but a little period left: "Now the period of waiting is necessarily shorter than at first."² Yet she also stated that "the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay."³ The article thus has both a fixed time (the period of waiting is necessarily shorter than at first) and a delay. The coming of the morning for the faithful would be the coming of night for the unfaithful. Living in the third watch called for threefold

at the time of organization in 1863 (see R. W. Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant [Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979], p. 151, probably based on the first official membership statistics of 4,320 in 1867— See "Statistical Report," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, p. 1423). To believe that that number of believers could proclaim their appointed message to the world in three years presupposes a miracle of communication beyond anything known in the previous history of the church. In any case the overall thrust of White's article in Testimonies vol. 1 is its ethical appeal rather than its time discussion.


² 2T 192-93. ³ 2T 194.
earnestness. White was using two different hammers to pound the same nail. Her purpose was to urge the believers to be in the "watching" position, which meant to turn from earthly pleasure and riches, and glory rather in tribulation, affliction, and necessities.\(^1\)

Commenting on the days of Noah in 1876, White referred to God's infinite mercy to sinners as a reason for delay. It was to give the world a larger span for repentance, but because of it sinners flattered themselves that He would never come.\(^2\) The fact that this appeared in comments on Noah shows that the delay did not mean that a time had been set and then passed by. The analogy would indicate that God simply set a time far enough in the future that sinners would have plenty of time to repent, not that His plan had been altered because of His mercy. Even this kind of statement points to a nearness within the generation then living, for no one has more than his own lifetime in which to repent. Those who died with the generation alive in 1876 could not be benefited by time that extended beyond their own death.

In the first half of White's ministry we do not find a definite statement that "delay" meant a postponement of God's plans. As the years passed, however, White became aware of the perils of the marathon and reflected on God's purpose in it. The lengthening time provided an opportunity to carry out the exhortations we studied in chapter 2. A few weeks after her husband died in 1881,

\(^1\)2T 195-96.
\(^2\)"The Days of Noah," MS 5, 1876, p. 5 (MS Release #816).
when she must have been longing more than ever for the return of Christ, she wrote poignantly of God's purpose in the waiting time. If the time seemed long and if "bowed by affliction and worn with toil, we feel impatient for our commission to close," they were to remember that God left them on earth to encounter conflicts, to perfect Christian character, and to win many souls to Christ.¹

White's view of God's purpose was influenced also by the parable of the ten virgins. Just as the women were tested by the delay of the bridegroom, so the church would be tested by the apparent delay of the parousia. White's counsel to the believers was to make sure they had the oil of the Spirit; they were to fall on the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permit their old nature to be broken up. They must not only receive the word but assimilate its principles.²

White saw that because of the apparent extension of time the believers were in danger of becoming careless in words and actions.


²COL 408-11. The Millerites had interpreted the parable as a prediction of their own experience in 1844. The tarrying of the bridegroom was seen as the passing of the time in the spring of that year. The cry at midnight announcing the bridegroom's coming they applied to the August proclamation that the Lord would come on 22 October—hence the name "Midnight Cry" for that phase of the movement. When Christ did not appear in October, they found an answer in the parallel passage in Luke 12:36, that they must wait for the master to come home from the wedding feast. See COL 393-95, 398, 400, 402, 426-28. That White gave the parable a more general application in 1900 did not indicate that she had given up the validity of the 1844 experience, however, for the same book carries a chapter on the investigative judgment—"Without a Wedding Garment," COL 307-25. Obviously she could use the parable as a hammer to pound more than one nail, to borrow the felicitous metaphor of Robert Morris Johnston, "Parabole Interpretations Attributed to the Tannaim" (Ph.D. dissertation, Hartford Seminary Foundation, June 1977), pp. 639-40.

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She admonished them to use the time to overcome defects in their characters and help others to see the beauty of holiness.\(^1\) She had seen this danger as early as 1849, when she wrote that because time had continued a few years longer than some expected, they concluded that it might continue a few years more, and in this way their minds were led from the truth and out after the world.\(^2\) She then urged them to use what leisure time they had in searching the Bible which would judge them in the last day. In each case her evangelistic burden was apparent, but her attitude toward a literal delay remains ambiguous.

**Human Perceptions of Delay**

Any consideration of delay must recognize that human perceptions may have nothing to do with actual postponement. To a four-year-old child waiting for Christmas the holiday seems to be long deferred, but there is no real delay unless his parents should decide to celebrate it on 25 January. H. Lummis was correct when he said in 1878 that we are little skilled in celestial arithmetic.\(^3\)

The Millerites experienced what seemed to be a delay in the spring of 1844, the end of the Jewish year 1843, to which Miller's

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\(^2\)To Those Who are Receiving the Seal of the Living God, Broadside, 31 January 1849 (EW 58).

\(^3\)"The Kingdom and the Church," Second Coming of Christ, compiled by Nathaniel West, p. 201.
original calculations pointed.\(^1\) When the Lord did not appear, they found comfort in Hab 2:3, which seemed to predict their experience. It showed that "the vision of time did not tarry, though it had seemed to do so."\(^2\) There was a perceived but not an actual delay.

White borrowed the language of Hab 2:3 again in 1890 to make the point that there has been a seeming delay of Christ's coming ever since the days of Abraham, but again added the thought that "at the appointed time 'it will surely come, it will not tarry.'"\(^3\) The promise to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world could only be fulfilled at the second advent of Christ, and the world is still waiting, but the inheritance will be given at the time God has set. In 1900 White quoted 2 Pet 3:9 in another reference to the seeming delay,\(^4\) and again found a reason for it: the Lord was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Her thoughts on the seeming delay of the parousia were parallel to her statements on the delay of the first coming of Christ, and for the same reason: namely, ignorance of God's

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\(^1\)White explained that "it was not at first perceived that if the decree did not go forth at the beginning of the year 457 B.C., the 2300 years would not be completed at the close of 1843. But it was ascertained that the decree was given near the close of the year 457 B.C., and therefore the prophetic period must reach to the fall of the year 1844." IT 52.

\(^2\)"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (from KJV as quoted by White; see IT 52). Did White believe that Hab 2:3 was actually intended as a prediction of the Millerite experience in 1844? Not necessarily, for she wrote, "We learned to rest upon the language of the prophet" (emphasis mine). See also EW 236. She probably recognized that the Millerites were taking the verse out of context.

\(^3\)P 170. \(^4\)AA 536.
schedule and disappointed expectations. She wrote that Adam and Eve looked for the speedy fulfillment of God's promise (Gen 3:15) and hoped their first son might be the promised deliverer—"but the fulfillment of the promise tarried."\(^1\) Century after century passed away and many expressed their disappointment in the words of Ezek 12:22—"The days are prolonged and every vision faileth."\(^2\) Everyone thought the promise was delayed, but White quoted Gal 4:4—"When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son"—to make the point that "God's purposes know no haste and no delay."\(^3\)

It appears, therefore, that White was well aware of perceived delays which result from disappointed expectations, but the evidence considered so far leaves open the question of her concept of a literal postponement of the last day.

There is another type of "delay," however, which is revealed in White's comments on the parable of the wicked servant.\(^4\) Here the question is not one of a perceived or an actual delay but of a willful attitude which shows itself in evil deeds.

The Wicked Servant Who Says, "My master is delayed"

In the early years of confusion after the 1844 disappointment, White was sometimes accused herself of being the evil servant who said the Lord's coming was delayed, because she refused to accept any of the new dates that were set.\(^5\) But the time came when

\(^1\) DA 31.  
\(^2\) Ibid.  
\(^3\) DA 31-32  
\(^5\) EW 22, IT 72, PSG 58, LS 83, LSM 74.

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she applied the text to others in the church. At the beginning of
the 1870s she wrote that faith in the soon coming of Christ was
waning in the church generally. The members were saying, "My Lord
delayeth his coming," by their words, their works, and their lives.
This was particularly shown in their love for money; White saw
little of the spirit of sacrifice among them.¹

Warnings against loving the world appeared in the 1880s.
Satan, she believed, was leading men to "put off the evil day and
become in spirit like the world, imitating its customs."² It was
the man of selfish, worldly spirit who said in his heart, "My Lord
delayeth his coming."³ Although he professed to be waiting for
Christ, he accepted the world's maxims and conformed to its customs
and practices. He was said to lack "the true advent spirit."⁴

One who truly believed in the soon coming of Christ would
show it by holy living and diligent witnessing, just as the Mil-
lerites had. One who believed it was delayed would show it by sin.
It was the wicked servant who said in his heart that the master was
delayed. In one case she rebuked a prominent worker's wife in these
words:

¹"The Review and Herald," RH, 5 January 1869, p. 11; "The
Laodicean Church," RH, 16 September 1873, p. 109 (3T 255).

²"Preparation for Christ's Coming," 4T 306. The same
article added that one who believed in the near coming of Christ
would show it by being faithful in the business of this life. But
in another context White rebuked wealthy farmers who acted as if at
His coming the Lord would only require them to present to Him their
enriched and improved farms. See ST Extra, 8 February 1892, p. 2.
The doctrine of the soon coming of Christ was a hammer that could
pound many nails.

³"Camp Meeting Address," 5T 9.

I saw that for some time past, Sister J has had a rebellious spirit, has been self-willed. . . . I saw that she did not bring the coming of the Lord as near as she should, and that her mind, instead of being at Rochester [New York], should be all swallowed in the work of God, and she should be seeking opportunity to help her husband, to hold up his hands, and to labor wherever there was an opportunity.\(^1\)

Around 1900 White wrote that those who said the Lord delayed His coming had ceased to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls. She argued that the doctrine of the soon coming of Christ was a means to an end: namely, that the people might be prepared for the final judgment.\(^2\) Ministers who hovered over the churches preaching to those who already knew the truth and neglected to take the message to those who had not heard it, were rebuked for saying the Lord's coming was delayed. Their responsibility was to "give the trumpet a certain sound," and if they failed to do so their influence would remove from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord was coming quickly.\(^3\) They would be left with those whom they did not try to save. Thus the belief in the nearness of Christ's coming and the warning against saying it was delayed were both used as motivations for witnessing.

In 1894 White wrote an article which combined the ideas of fixed time for the end, a literal delay by the Lord, and a stubborn desire for delay on the part of the sinner. She said that each week counted one less to the appointed time of the judgment, but also

\(^1\)MS 3, 1867, p. 1 (MS Release #816). See also, "Many among us put off the coming of the Lord too far, and their works correspond with their faith," "To the Church," RH, 12 June 1855, p. 246.


\(^3\)TM 236-38.
asked why the Lord so long delayed His coming, for the whole host of heaven was waiting to fulfill the last work for the world. She answered her own question by saying that the few who professed to believe had not become burning lights in the world— they were saying in their hearts that their Master was delayed. In this article, the sinful attitudes of the wicked servants were among the reasons for an actual delay.

This article shares the ambiguity which appears in White's early statements on delay. How could she speak of the Lord delaying His coming and also of an appointed time for the judgment? The purpose of the article was to urge the readers to make sure they had the oil of God's grace and to share their faith as dedicated missionaries to the world. The delay and the appointed time were two different hammers used to pound the same nail. Both stemmed from White's belief in the time prophecies and the three angels' messages. The time prophecies indicated there was an appointed time for the coming of Christ, but the three angels laid out the task to be done first. The prophecies showed the sovereignty of God; the three angels showed the responsibility of man.

Theological significance in White's thought on the perceived delay appears only in the use she made of it. She referred to it in two connections: first, to reassure the believers of the certainty of Christ's soon coming; and then to point out their duty to perfect Christian characters and share their message with those who knew it not. The apparent delay had no effect on her confidence in

Christ's coming; but it provided time for repentance, reformation, and witnessing. The rebuke of Christ to the church in Laodicea was thought in 1856-1857 to provide a rationale for the delay, but the evidence that White saw a real postponement at that time is ambiguous. The evangelistic burden was foremost in her mind.

White rebuked those who took the apparent delay as an excuse for selfishness and love of the world. Belief in nearness leads to holiness; belief in delay leads to sin. For White it was not enough to believe that Christ was coming sometime; men must believe He is coming SOON. She used both the nearness and the apparent delay as means of making the advent of Christ real and relevant to the life of the church.

Later Clarity

White's sequence of future events did not indicate either contingency or delay. While she did not hold an every-moment expectancy for the second coming, her predicted events were under God's sovereign control. Seen from this standpoint, it would appear that for Ellen White there could be no delay in the appointed time

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1See pp. 64-75 supra. In her letter to Dear Sister, S-38-1888, she used the sequence as an argument against date setting: "I have ever had one testimony to bear: The Lord will not come at that period, and you [date-setters] are weakening the faith of even Adventists, and fastening the world in their unbelief. There have been plainly set before me events of great and thrilling interest, which must transpire before Christ will come. Satan will move mightily from beneath, and will delude the world, while the Lord God Omnipotent will move from above and prepare a people to stand in the great day of His wrath" (MS Release #616).

2She depicted rather an every-moment expectancy for the time when an individual's name might be considered in the judgment. See pp. 70, 170 supra.
for the coming of Christ. But when the proclamation of the three
angels' messages is seen as a task to be completed by the church,
and the holiness they call for is seen as an achievement to be
attained before Christ can return, then contingency is introduced
and delay is possible.

In 1883 White took a new unambiguous position on delay which
she held alongside the idea of nearness through the rest of her
life. She then wrote that the promises and threatenings of God are
alike conditional, and that Christ could have come if the post-
disappointment Adventists in 1844-1848 had united in proclaiming the
message of the third angel. She compared their experience to the
delay of the Israelites' entrance into Canaan under Moses and
Joshua.\(^1\) She spoke for the first time of an actual delay, a post-
ponement, of the coming of Christ.

The occasion for this statement was the appearance of a
booklet by A. C. Long, of Marion, Iowa,\(^2\) charging White with

\(^1\)ISM 67-69.

\(^2\)Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later
Publications (Stanberry, MO: Church of God Publishing House, 1911
[1883]). Long was a member of the so-called "Marion Party," a dis-
sident Adventist group which was started in 1866 by B. F. Snook and
W. H. Brinkerhoff, first president and secretary respectively of
the newly-formed Iowa Conference. Opposed to the strong church
organization which Seventh-day Adventists were developing in the
1860s, Snook and Brinkerhoff started a campaign of criticism against
church leadership, and especially James and Ellen White. When the
conference constituency replaced Snook by George I. Butler in 1865,
Snook established his own headquarters at Marion, Iowa. He later
abandoned the group and became a Universalist minister, and Brinker-
hoff returned to his earlier profession of law. Their group later
established headquarters at Stanberry, Missouri, as the Church of

White made several references to critics in 1883. In E. G.
White to Bro. Torr, T-11-1883, from Lemoore, California, camp
ground, 12 May 1883, she referred to critics within the church,
probably including Dudley Marvin Canright, the minister who was
suppressing some statements from her early works when she re-published them in *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (1882), charging that she no longer believed in those ideas. Long accused her of being a false prophet because of her 1849 statement, "I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished, and that time cannot last but a very little longer." Since leaving the church at the time. She wrote that she did not design to answer the critics or make mention of their falsehoods against her, but continued that they were preparing matter to quench the flood of venom coming from the mouth of the dragon. She said she had not a shadow of a doubt in regard to the truth they held as a people.

In Letter S-14-1883 to Bro. and Sr. Smith, from Healdsburg, California, 8 August 1883, she mentioned the "muttering of the dragon from Marion," but said she had expected worse because it was not the men who did it, but Satan who was behind them. She was confident in Christ that her work would not come to naught. She made other references to the false charges against her in "Our Present Position," RH, 28 August 1883, p. 545, and in RH, 16 October 1883, p. 642. Plainly she took the charges very seriously.

The leaders of the church prepared a careful reply to A. C. Long's charges, which appeared in a twenty-page Supplement to the Review and Herald, 14 August 1883. G. I. Butler himself wrote "A Brief History of the 'Marion' Movement," pp. 7-8, and "The Visions: How They Are Held among S. D. Adventists," pp. 11-12. In the "Brief History" he revealed that Professor Alexander McLearn, who had been president of Battle Creek College during the school year 1881-1882 and then was dismissed, had gone over to the Iowa critics. White's own response to Long, "An Explanation of Early Statements," MS 4, 1883 (ISM 59-73), did not appear in the Supplement, but several of its distinctive ideas were incorporated in J. H. Waggoner's articles, "Suppression" and "The Shut Door," pp. 1-3.

White replied to the charge that she had suppressed some of her early statements in four ways: (1) She had reprinted the 1851 edition of Christian Experience and Views thinking it contained all her earlier writings, which she had lost track of, not realizing there had been some editorial changes in that work. (2) Some writings appearing over her name were not actually her own, but were distortions produced by a Mr. Curtis. (3) Several of the so-called suppressions were editorial changes only and did not represent any change in their basic beliefs. (4) The critic misquoted her in one of his accusations. The remainder of the paper was an overall defense of her ministry.

according to White's belief Christ had entered the most holy place in 1944, and since "nearly finished" could not mean less than one half done, he argued that by White's statement Christ should have come by 1854.

White replied that she could no more be accused of falsehood because time had continued longer than her testimony seemed to indicate than could Christ and His disciples. They also, she maintained, had pictured time as being very short, quoting 1 Cor 7:29, 30; Rom 13:12; Rev 1:3; and Rev 22:5,7. The angels of God in their messages to men had always represented time as very short; thus it had always been represented to her. While the Lord had not appeared as soon as they hoped, she would never entertain the possibility that His word had failed. The questions which critical scholars were beginning to ask—whether Christ or the early church were wrong in their apocalyptic expectations—did not concern her.

Then she introduced the idea that the word of the Lord had not failed, for "the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional." The conditions she cited were that God's people

Experience and Views of Ellen G. White (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851), p. 46; and in Early Writings of Ellen G. White (1882 edition, p. 45; 1945 edition, p. 58). Long's quotation is slightly in error. White actually wrote, "time can last but a very little longer," rather than "Time cannot last but a very little longer."

1ISM 67. She used the same argument again in "Cast Not Away Your Confidence," RH, 31 July 1888, pp. 481-82.

2Surveyed by Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan, 1948). Neither did the premillennialists of the prophetic Bible conference movement consider such questions. All of them believed that the Bible is inspired and true. See pp. 42-45 supra.

3ISM 67.
must proclaim the third angel's message, the believers were to be
directed to Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary, the Sabbath
reform must be carried forward, and the people of God must "purify
their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand
without fault before Him at His coming."¹ Her reply, then, was that
the time of Christ's coming was conditioned by the state and mission
of the church, and the church had not yet met the conditions.

Here for the first time White was thinking unquestionably of
an actual postponement in the coming of Christ.² If Adventists,
after the disappointment in 1844 had accepted the message of the
third angel (she was referring to those who rejected the seventh-day
Sabbath emphasis) and helped to proclaim it to the world, the Lord
would have "wrought mightily" with them to finish the task, and
Christ would have come to take His people home. As it was, the
majority opposed the little group who received the Sabbath reform,
"the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness." If the
whole Adventist body had accepted the new message, their history
would have been different. The startling implication was that the
course of the entire world would have been different. The climax of
history was postponed by the failure of the Adventists who did not
accept the Sabbath.

¹ISM 67-68.

²ISM 68. The fact that White had never spoken before of the
failures of the early Adventists as delaying the coming of Christ
supports our statement that the Long criticism was what called her
attention to the delay and triggered this development in her
thought. A delay because of early Adventists' failure did not need
to wait until 1883 to become a delay.
White was never one to make statements about the past or the future without an application to the present, however. The early first-day-keeping Adventists may have delayed the parousia in the late 1840s, but White contemporized the idea by pointing to the 'unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife' among her own people as the reason why they were still in the world.¹ The sins of God's own people had forced a delay in His plan. "It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed," she wrote, no more than it was God's plan that His ancient people should wander forty years in the wilderness. The same sins that kept them out of the promised land had "delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan."²

We noted in chapter 2 that White always warned against setting future dates for the coming of Christ, and while others sometimes used her early statements to calculate the future,³ she never did so herself. She seemed to assume a time framework in which the Lord might come today or He might not come for ten or twenty years,⁴ but this seems to have been a stance she took in vis à vis the believer's obligations more than a chronological calculation.

What Long did was to take White's 1849 statement of nearness⁵ and use it to set the date 1854. Since Christ did not come at

¹ISM 68-69. ²Ibid.
³See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference for 18 July, remarks by J. M. Comer on p. 21A, and by R. D. Quinn on p. 52.
⁵He seems not to have known of later statements. See pp. 107-109 supra.
that time, he accused her of being a false prophet. He tied her words more closely to the calendar than she intended; she was consistent in decrying date setting, whether for the future or the past. Her reply severed her statements from the calendar by making the parousia both near and contingent. Nearness and contingency, however, are not in logical agreement. How can it be said that the Lord is coming soon on one hand and that His coming is delayed by the church on the other? While the roots of the paradox can be traced back to White's basis in the three angels' messages, we shall have occasion to examine it further later.

White's attitude was in basic agreement with that of the prophetic Bible conference which met five years earlier in New York City. Quoting 2 Pet 3:12, the common declaration of that conference said that by watching, praying, working, waiting, and preaching in all the world Christians could hasten the coming of the day of

1The time prophecies associated with the first angel indicated that the parousia was near, while the obligation to preach the messages seemed to introduce contingency: the Lord could not come until the task was done.

2As a matter of fact White was using imminence here only to defend herself against Long's charges. The major emphasis in the statement was on conditionality and delay. It should be noted that White used these ideas only to explain the apparent delay since 1844. She was not concerned about the centuries which had passed since New Testament times.

In Long's 16-page booklet, only pp. 14-16 dealt with the supposed failure of White's 1849 statement; the remainder had to do with her alleged suppression of early statements in later publications. White maintained the same proportion in her 15-page reply (ISM 59-73). Only pp. 67-69 were given to the failed-prediction charge. It appears that at the time she was more concerned about her own authority than about the delayed advent, but the latter took a much more prominent place in her thought as the years went by. See p. 202, n. 1 infra.
While White did not use 2 Pet 3:12 in just this way until 1898, she agreed that the parousia was contingent on the piety and witnessing of the church. Her position on delay simply took the next logical step by reasoning that if the church has a mission to perform before Christ can come and He has not come, then the church must be responsible for the delay.

There are two possible reasons the Bible conference and its successors did not go this far in their reasoning. One was that they did not have the Adventists' conviction of being a people with the last warning message for the world. They were not a unified group in any case, having come from a variety of denominations, and none of them believed they were fulfilling prophecy as the Adventists did. Another reason was that the Bible conference movement was gradually being taken over by Darbyite Dispensationalism, which emphasized the every-moment expectancy for the rapture so strongly that they could not speak of a delay. "Delay" presupposes some knowledge of time, but Dispensationalists held that the Lord had said nothing about the time of the rapture.

The logic of White's position, however, forced her to speak of delay as the years lengthened after 1844. We have noted that she wrote ambiguously about delay in her earliest years. In her early comments on Israel's rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea she confined herself to simple exposition of the biblical texts without making the

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1 Nathaniel West, comp., Second Coming of Christ, p. 3.
2 DA 633.
comparison to modern Israel's failure, but in 1883 she made the connection between the delays of ancient and modern Israel. And in so doing she said in effect that God's will had been thwarted by the sins of men.

How then does White's 1883 position on delay fit into the overall structure of her eschatology? We have noted in chapter 2 that her faith in the nearness of Christ's coming was based on time prophecies which came to a climax in 1844 and were summarized in the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12. Her 1883 manuscript indicates that her position on delay went back to the same root:

God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given. . . . The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice. . . . The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.

In the first thirty-nine years of her ministry she held that the three angels' messages predicted a revival and must be proclaimed because the Lord was coming soon. In the last thirty-two years she continued to emphasize the three angels for the same reason, but also said that the revival must come and the messages must be proclaimed so that the Lord could come. During the last half of her

1 4SG 21-27; 4SP 288-95. Even in PP 387-94 (1890) she did not make the comparison that she did in 1883.

2 Her comparison between ancient and modern Israel was well taken as an illustration of God's plans being hindered by the unbelief of His people. There is a clear tension between her emphasis on the sovereignty of God noted in chapter 2 and that on the responsibility of man which we see here.

3 1SM 67-68.

4 Thus the contingency side of her thought disagreed with the idea expressed by Oscar Cullmann, "Eschatology and Missions in the
ministry, therefore, she spoke of both nearness and delay, the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. The root of both was the prophecy of Rev 14.

The 1883 document provided the framework for much of her eschatological thought during those last thirty-two years. The idea that the Lord could have come if certain conditions had been met by the church was repeated many times. In addition, there is a statement which, although it does not say that the Lord could have come under certain conditions, does maintain that just as soon as the people of God were sealed in their foreheads and thus prepared for the shaking, then it would come. In four of these articles the condition to be met was development of character in Christ's image, but in the other thirteen the emphasis was on preaching the message—the message of the three angels—to the world. It was to be

New Testament, "The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, eds. W. D. Davies and David Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), pp. 410-13, that the coming of the kingdom does not depend on man's acceptance of the call. The proclamation of the gospel, he wrote, is a sign but not a condition of the end. We can work joyfully, not to hasten the kingdom, but because we know the kingdom comes from God.

1See: 4SP 291-92 (1884); GC 457-58 (1888); General Conference Bulletin, 28 February 1893, p. 419; "Whosoever Will, Let Him Come," RH, 6 October 1896, p. 629; DA 633-34 (1896); "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," RH, 31 October 1899, p. 697; 6T 450 (1900); COL 69 (1900); General Conference Bulletin, 30 March 1903 (Ev 694); "Carrying Forward the Lord's Work," RH, 24 December 1903, p. 4; Ed 271 (1903); 8T 22, 115-16 (1904); "The Day of the Lord Is Near, and Hasteth Greatly," RH, 24 November 1904, p. 16; 9T 29 (1909); AA 111 (1911); "The Blessed Hope," RH, 13 November 1913, pp. 1110-1111.

2MS 173, 1902 (4BC 1161); see also EW 38, TM 444-46; Letter 79, 1900 (TBC 967).

3COL 69; 3T 22; GCB, 20 March 1902 (Ev 694); MS 173, 1902.
proclaimed by the members of the church, who were compared to
soldiers who had not done their duty,¹ and to the ten virgins who
all should have proclaimed the truth, but because five were foolish
the work was not done.² They were also compared to plants which if
all were bearing fruit, they would quickly sow the world with the
seed of the gospel.³ They were urged to give of their money to send
the message to the world.⁴ Because they had not done their duty the
work was far behind what it should have been.⁵

White's expression in the majority of these statements was a
contrary-to-fact conditional sentence; that is, she told what would
have been if—but it did not happen. Twice, however, she used the
rhetoric of a true-to-fact condition, saying that if the church had
its youth as a well trained army, the Lord would come soon; and when
the members would do their work at home and abroad, the world would
soon be warned and the Lord would come.⁶ There was no practical
difference between the true and the contrary-to-fact expressions,
however; both were intended as exhortations to urge the believers to
faithful witnessing and dedicated holiness.

White's comparison between ancient and modern Israel in the
1883 document was repeated only in Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, and

¹GCB, 28 February 1893; 9T 29 (1909).
²RH, 31 October 1899, p. 697. ³COL 69; 9T 22.
⁴6T 450; RH, 24 December 1903, p. 8.
⁵GCB, 28 February 1893, p. 419; RH, 24 November 1904, p. 16;
⁶T 29.
⁷Ed 270; AA 111.
in *The Great Controversy.* It did not continue to play a prominent part in her eschatology. Neither her statement that the time has

143P 291-92; GC 457-58. Taylor Grant Bunch (1885-1969), who pastored some of the largest Adventist churches in the United States, served as president of three conferences, and chaired the departments of religion at Atlantic Union College and Loma Linda University, duplicated a series of vespers sermons (1937) entitled, "The Exodus and Advent Movements," in which he developed the idea that the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church was repeating the experiences of ancient Israel. He held that the 1888 General Conference, when A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner introduced their new emphasis on righteousness by faith and were opposed by many of the leaders (see pp. 53-54 supra) was the turning point when the church rejected God's leading and therefore was delayed from entering the heavenly Canaan. Bunch's purpose in the series was to steal the thunder of critics who pointed to sins in the church and called members to leave it to join their own supposedly more holy movements; to warn the members against rejecting the leadership of Ellen White; and to call them to accept the message of righteousness by faith. By collecting many of White's statements denouncing those who had opposed the 1888 messages, Bunch built up his thesis that the coming of Christ had been delayed and the church had turned back to the wilderness. In the process he gave the impression that righteousness by faith was a duty to perform more than a gift to rejoice in.

Depending heavily on GC 457-58, Bunch's point was weakened by the fact that the statement was first written in 1883. It was weakened even further by the fact that he included few White statements later than 1903 when, with the 1888 crisis behind her, she began to take a more optimistic view of the church. It is therefore doubtful that she would have supported his basic thesis.

Another leader who agreed that 1888 was a pivotal year in the experience of Adventists was Leroy Edwin Froom (1890-1974), author, editor, teacher, secretary of the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists for twenty-four years, and professor of historical theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. In his *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), pp. 570-82, he also took most of his evidence from White's 1883 statement, which simply appeared too early to support his point. He believed that if the church as a whole had accepted Jones' and Waggoner's corrections of their faulty theology, it would have opened the door for Christ to come, but White does not support him.

Both Bunch and Froom cited the holiness emphasis in the 80s and 90s as evidence that the Holy Spirit was working also outside the Adventist Church to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. See Bunch, p. 108, and Froom, p. 320. This idea, however, ignores the historical development of the Holiness Movement, which extended back over the previous half century (see pp. 124-29 supra). It appears that 1888 was indeed a pivotal year in the history of the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the Adventist Church, but
always been represented to men as short nor the idea that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional were published in White's lifetime.\(^1\) The timelesslessness of the advent had always been latent in her thought but never before spelled out so clearly. She mentioned conditions attached to God's promises in a discussion

there is little evidence that White thought it a pivotal year for that reason in regard to the nearness or delay of the parousia.

She had been greatly concerned about the approach of the final events as early as 1882, and gave two chapters to it in 1885, before the crucial General Conference session in 1888. See ST 80-81, 207-16, 449-67. But at the conference itself she made only one passing reference to the nearness of Christ's coming: "Now brethren, we are almost home; we shall soon hear the voice of the Saviour richer than any music saying, Your warfare is accomplished." See "Advancing in Christian Experience," MS 8, 1888, sermon preached 20 October 1888, printed in A. V. Olson, Through Crisis to Victory (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1966), p. 268.

After the 1888 conference White referred to righteousness by faith once in connection with the final events: "The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." See "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days," RH, 22 November 1892; reprinted in LSM 363. The thrust of the article was that because the signs were multiplying, believers were to search the Scriptures, warn the people, and accept the gift of Christ's righteousness. As with many other statements, the emphasis was on the exhortation more than the time.

While we find this one statement tying the issues of righteousness by faith to the nearness of Christ's coming, we find several long articles dealing with the Sunday-law crisis both before and after 1888 (see pp. 99-102 supra), and we have found that none of her delay statements modeled on the 1883 article appearing before or after 1888 mentioned righteousness by faith. The evidence, therefore, does not point to 1888 as a pivotal year in White's thought on the nearness and delay of the parousia in connection with righteousness by faith. It was indeed the year of peak agitation over Sunday laws, but the tie to righteousness by faith is missing.


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about the promise of the Holy Spirit, but only in 1883 did she apply it to the promise of the second advent of Christ. This document crystallized latent ideas to meet the critic's challenge and at the same time provided a rationale for the delayed advent which she used repeatedly from that time on.

We have noted that the idea of hastening the advent first appeared in White's writings in 1898. She repeated it at least six times, usually in conjunction with the idea that Christ could have come if the believers had preached the message or had given their money to send out messengers. In one case she spoke of hastening the gospel. She pictured the immense suffering which sin has caused to God and wrote that "In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through cooperation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end," followed by a quotation of Matt 24:14. In this way she made the witnesses of the gospel the fulcrum of world history and left the way open for the negative implication that Christians are to blame for the continuance of suffering in the world. She herself, however, did not take the thought that far, confining herself to the positive idea.

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1 GW 284. 2 RS 4, 1883. 3 DA 633.

4 COL 69 (1900); RH, 14 July 1904 (CS 45); 8T 22 (1904); 9T 58 (1909); RH, 13 November 1913, p. 110; DA 263-64.

5 Ed 264. The idea of hastening the advent is contrary to modern eschatological thought, as represented by B. Klappert, "King," MIDNTT, 2:385, who wrote that the kingdom cannot be hastened by doing battle with God's enemies (as the Zealots hoped) nor forced in by scrupulous observance of the law (as the Pharisees hoped). White, however, agreed with conservative thought of her time, as seen in the common declaration of the prophetic Bible conference held in New York City in 1878. See pp. 43-44 supra.
that the witnesses can help end the suffering. Her concept of the hastening was in harmony with her conviction that the last days began in 1844; she applied 2 Pet 3:12 to her own readers, not recognizing that Peter must have meant it for his readers and for all Christians who would live thereafter. The biblical view was that all Christians can hasten the advent, but White applied all "last days" admonitions to her own time.

**The Message to Be Given**

The message to be given was the three angels' messages. White called it both a warning and a winning message, just as Noah's was. His warning of the flood was intended, in White's thought, to persuade men to escape the coming judgment by coming into the ark. For those who came it was a winning message, but for those who refused it was condemnation. None could plead that he never knew. In the same way, the Adventist message would be a "savor of life unto life to all who accept it, and of condemnation to all who reject it." There was no mistaking the sense of mission which drove White as she looked at her church in the light of the return of Christ. They had a message of hope for those who were "perishing in ignorance." Their work was analogous to that of a man who warns

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1 Many modern English translations, with the RSV, take the ἀγερτάοντας of 2 Pet 3:12 transitively. See the NEB, Berkeley, Moffatt, Weymouth, and the New American Bible. The JV retains the intransitive rendering. The RSV reverses the KJV in putting the transitive in the text and the intransitive in the margin. White quoted the intransitive reading, "hastening unto," in EW 108 and AA 536.

2 GW 470; see also MS 32, 1896 (CW 26-27 and 2SM 106): GC 435; EV 20; TBC 949, 962; BT 192.

3 TT 35-36

4 RH, 23 November 1905, p. 5.
his neighbor that his house is on fire. White was always more concerned to get the warning to the neighbor than to calculate when the roof would collapse.

White was not content that the world simply be warned, however, as though the modern witnesses could proclaim their message like Jonah and then go off to await the end. She often spoke of the response she expected. The message was seed which would produce the last harvest of precious grain. It was light shining in the darkness of earth, the light of the righteousness of Christ. It was the good tidings of His grace, the last message of mercy to the world. Its purpose was to lead men to repentance, and thus save souls. In short, it was to prepare a people who would be spiritually ready for the coming of Christ.

White believed that every truly converted person would be a messenger to take the message of Jesus' soon coming to the world. Everyone who had received the light would be zealous to share it with others. She believed that God could not display the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace except through human

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1COL 69; 8T 22. 2RH, 21 July 1896, p. 449; GW 470. 3MB 108-9. 49T 97. 5ST 485. 6RH, 18 June 1901, p. 387 7GC 464. 8Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 136: "The meaning of the present dispensation can only be fruitfully discussed in terms of its relation to mandate and exhortation." Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961), IV/3/1, pp. 331-32, says that Christ gives His people time to participate in the harvest not only as spectators but as co-workers.

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witnesses.\(^1\) He would not pour out His Spirit (in the latter rain which she believed would ripen the final harvest\(^2\)) while the largest portion of the church were not laborers together with Him.\(^3\) If every one of the church members were a living missionary, she wrote in an echo of the 1883 statement, the work would soon be done.\(^4\) In an early appeal for funds she pointed out that God could have sent money from heaven to accomplish His work, but His plan was that men should make some sacrifice to show how they prized the sacrifice made for them.\(^5\)

The field where the message was to be proclaimed was the entire world, often expressed in the language of the first angel's message: "to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people."\(^6\) White believed the apostles had accomplished their work and that God had raised up men in every age to "carry forward the gospel," and that advanced light had shown upon every succeeding generation, with the brightest light shining in her own time; it consisted of "more distinct views of Jesus that any have had before."\(^7\) Obviously she

\(^1\)"Witnesses for God," ST, 8 October 1902, p. 642.
\(^2\)see p. 94 supra.
\(^4\)"The Home Missionary Work," 6T 438.
\(^5\)174 (1861).
\(^6\)RH, 5 October 1886, p. 610; GW 470.
\(^7\)"The Work of God's People," ST, 14 October 1889, p. 610. Earlier in her life she had seen the message in more legal terms. She wrote that it was a proclamation of God's law so that 'every disloyal subject may return to their allegiance to his government and laws.' "An Extract from a Letter Written to a Distant Female Friend," RH, 16 September 1862, p. 126. See also "Noah's Time and Ours," ST, 3 January 1878, p. 1.
believed that a historical development of the church was necessary.

The world-wide extent of the work, however, was not seen clearly until 1874 when the first missionary was sent out.\(^1\) During her years in Australia (1891-1900) she urged the believers in America to think of foreign countries.\(^2\) She urged them not to localize their proclamation but give it in all cities and villages, in the highways and the byways.\(^3\) From Europe she spoke of nearness: "Our time to work is short, and there is a world to be warned,"\(^4\) but she felt that the work in Europe was going far more slowly than God would have it.\(^5\) She was appealing for workers from America who could labor in the various European languages. The extent of the task to be done and the fact that the workers were few showed clearly that the Lord could not come within a year or two. The nearness of His coming functioned only as a motive to be earnest in the work.

White admitted in 1906 that her view of the work to be done had enlarged through the years. She wrote that they had thought the work would have been accomplished before then, but "light came from the Lord regarding the extension of the work." After quoting Matt 28:18,19 she said, "Then we understood that there was a world to be warned." The message was to go to "every city in America," and in

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\(^1\) P. 53 supra. See RH, 31 October 1899, p. 697; COl 69; 6T 24; 7T 35-36; 8T 22.

\(^2\) 6T 18, 438; AA 111. \(^3\) 7T 35-36 (1874).

\(^4\) "The Self-Supporting Laymen in Foreign Fields," (1885-1886), p. 31, a leaflet in Special Testimonies Series B.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 32.
the "regions beyond." She continually called the church to "do more, never less" until the Lord's work should encircle the world. The only boundary must be the farthest horizon.

In White's thought the contingency of the parousia on the preaching to the world was based on her understanding of Matt

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1E. G. White to Bro. and Sister Burden at Loma Linda, California, Letter B-34-1906, 19 January 1906 (Loma Linda Messages [Payson, AR: Leaves of Autumn Books], pp. 154-58). Burden had led in the purchase of the first buildings of what is now Loma Linda University in 1905, and the sanitarium there had opened on 1 November. In this letter of encouragement White assured him that the Lord would be with them in 1906 "as He was with us in 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1844"—showing her constant orientation to the 1844 movement. She reminisced about the precious experiences they had had in searching for truth after the disappointment and of her own role in bringing unity.

She spoke of a "time of respite" at that time which seemed too short to open to the world the "great and wonderful things of God's law. The promises of God—how we laid hold upon them! ... What praises went up to God! 'Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.'" Here she saw a time granted so they could share the things of God with the world, but they were sure it would be very short. It was a "tarrying time," an apparent delay for them, but the Lord knew "the end from the beginning." In the next sentence she wrote, "It was no delay, and from year to year we worked and prayed and believed." See p. 157; cf. also "The apparent tarrying was not so in reality" in S-38-1888, MS Release #816.

The following paragraph, however, contained another echo of the 1883 statement: "Had the work been done that God designed should be done, the condition of things in our world would now be very different. But the professing followers of Christ are asleep." The letter thus shows that early Adventist views of the work to be done were very circumscribed (their horizon did not extend much beyond the northeastern United States), and that they only gradually learned to see the entire world as their field. The ideas that there was an apparent delay but no real delay, and yet the world would be far different if the work had been done as God designed, were all included. It is not possible to find complete harmony here. The common denominator was the mission of the church, based in the three angels' message, which was then being forwarded by the founding of Loma Linda Sanitarium. See also 6T 23-30, "Extension of the Work in Foreign Fields."

2TT 15, 35-36; see also 6T 14-22, 29, 440-67.
24:14. The appointed day for judging the world would be when the gospel had been preached to all nations. Another basis for the contingency of the parousia in her writings was Rev 7:1-4. She pictured the four angels holding the winds of the final trouble to give the believers time to warn the world.

So literally did White consider the contingency of the parousia after 1883 (which was the period of her greatest efforts evangelistically and institutionally) that she once wrote they might have to remain in the world many more years because of insubordination, but in that case they were not to blame God for the consequence of their own sins. In these statements White clearly saw

1"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

2"Whosoever Will, Let Him Come," RH, 6 October 1896, p. 629. See also MB 108-9; and "A Message for Today," RH, 18 June 1901, p. 387, where she wrote, "It will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples." She continued by saying that God's forbearance to the wicked was part of His merciful plan by which He is seeking the salvation of their souls. Differing from the Millerite example, however, she did not count missionaries, languages, or countries entered.

36T 14-15, 21; TT 220; TM 510.

4E. G. White to Prof. P. T. Magan, 7 December 1901, Letter 184, 1901, from South Lancaster, Massachusetts (MS Release #816). This was another letter written to encourage the struggling founder of a new institution. Magan had moved the old Battle Creek College to Berrien Springs, Michigan, in July and had been doing the work of several men in getting the school established in its new location. He faced opposition in the denomination, lack of money, a divided faculty, and had no college buildings. In addition, he had suffered an attack of typhoid fever in 1900 and a relapse in 1901 which left him with myocardial complications. See Merlin L. Neff, For God and C.M.E.: A Biography of Percy Tilson Magan Upon the Historical Background of the Educational and Medical Work of Seventh-day Adventists (Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964), pp. 77-73, 92.

White's charge of insubordination may have been aimed tongue-in-cheek at Magan himself, whom she was urging to take a much-needed rest, but it was certainly aimed at his opponents in the
the Lord waiting for the church to finish His work on earth. This
does not mean that she thought He had abdicated His sovereignty,
however. The work to be done was still the Lord's work; it was His
mercy which delayed the parousia so that more might be saved. He
had given the church a task, but He remained in charge of it. The
three messages of Rev 14 are the messages of angels, although given
by men.

An important instance of the relation between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, between nearness and
delay, is found in White's comments on the Sunday-law agitation in
the late 80s. We have noted that she saw those events as a sign of
the end, the fulfillment of the third angel's message which they had
been proclaiming for forty years. The final crisis appeared to be

church who, lacking the piety and zeal to carry out the Lord's
plans, had refused to cooperate with Magan's dedicated work. She
warned him that he could not expect to heal the hurt because the
church had neglected to lift up Christ's standard. He must make
haste slowly; the Lord would not be pleased if he took on many lines
of work and carried them until it broke his strength. She coun-
selled him:

"I can not tell you what you should do, but I can tell you
what not to do: do not worry, be not unbelieving, and do not think
that you can blossom into a perfect school in its very planting on
new soil."

The statement, "We may have to remain here in this world
because of insubordination many more years," was lifted from its
context when it was published in EV 696. Just preceding it is a
long section from MS 4, 1883, and just following is the statement
from DA 633 on hastening our Lord's return through giving the gospel
to the world. The original letter dealt with opposition to the
founding of Emmanuel Missionary College, not with the question of
preaching the gospel to the world. From also over-generalizes it
in his comments, Movement of Destiny, p. 584.

1 See pp. 99-101 supra. Ever since Joseph Bates in The
Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, from the Beginning, to the
Entering into the Gates of the Holy City, According to the Command-
ment, 2nd ed. (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1847; first ed.,
1845) made the connection between Sunday keeping and the mark of the
beast, Adventists had predicted that the final eschatological time
starting, but the church was not ready for it, either in their personal experience or in their work for the world. White therefore urged the members to pray earnestly that the crisis might be deferred, that the angels would hold the winds awhile longer, so they would have time to accomplish their neglected work. She said she did not believe that the time had fully come when their liberties were to be restricted; it might be that the Lord would grant them a respite so they could let their light shine. The immediate work they were to do was to educate the public on the principles of freedom of religion and separation of church and state, but it included the entire mission of the three angels. They were to send missionaries to all parts of the world and proclaim the warning against disobeying the law of Jehovah.

What convinced White that the time had not come when their liberties were to be restricted? They had been predicting this development since the beginning of their history, but now that it was starting she said it was coming too soon; they must seek for a respite, a delay. This fact seems to argue against the contingency she had expressed since 1883, that the end would not come until the
church had finished its work on the earth. The final events seemed to be starting even though the church had not done its work.

It appears that White's view of the nearness as based on the Sunday-law sign was modified by her view of the task to be done.¹

Since the three angels' messages had not been given to the world, she reasoned that it must be His will to delay the final crisis. Though it might be God's will to send Christ soon after 1888, it was more surely His will to warn the world first. Therefore the prayers she requested for a delay were in accord with His will. This is the reason she believed the time had not come for their liberties to be restricted. Both sides of the equation, the nearness apparent and the delay requested, grew out of her understanding of the three angels.²

As the Sunday issue faded during the 1890s, White wrote that the moment of respite had been granted.³ She did not lose her sense of the nearness, however, for even then she maintained that the signs were ominous, indeed; therefore she urged her readers that

¹While the church was well established in the United States with 25,378 members (see the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook of Statistics for 1889 [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1889], p. 67), barely a start had been made elsewhere. While the yearbook is not precise in its figures, the total membership outside of America was not more than two thousand (see pp. 73–75).

²Note the references to the third angel's message, 5T 714–15, the warning against disobeying the law of Jehovah, p. 718, and the exhortation to show the people where they were in prophetic history, p. 716.

³"Under Which Banner?" TM 364 (24 September 1895); reprinted in "The Time of the End," RH, 23 November 1905, p. 6. The thought that the Lord was holding back His judgments waiting for the message of warning/mercy to be sounded to all appears also in "A Present-Day Work," 9T 97 (written in connection with the San Francisco earthquake in 1906).
there must be no delay in sending the warning to all parts of the world. As a practical matter it is a long-term project to send missionaries to all parts of the world, but White constantly emphasized the shortness of time. There was always the pressure to do the work NOW!¹

**The People to Be Prepared**

White saw the preparation of a holy people as essential before Jesus could come. Repeatedly she described their character. In her earliest writings they were those who had gone through the 1844 disappointment;² the Lord waited for them to give up their errors and traditions and be purified and made white, but she soon came to believe that the Lord had more in mind than those pioneers. He would have a pure and true people, and He had not left the church wholly dependent on human leaders; if the shepherds were not true He would take charge of the flock Himself.³

These people were those who would receive the seal of God, but they must remedy the defects in their characters before they could receive it. No one, she wrote, would receive the seal while his character had one spot or stain upon it. The spots she had in

¹The tension between preaching the gospel because the Lord was returning soon and preaching it so that He could come soon remains clear. The evangelistic exhortations are constant, while the motives vary.

²SHG 148. See also EW 240-50, 13-20, and 48-52. Much of the early part of Early Writings, which is a reprint of her 1851 Experience and Views, naturally offered encouragement and exhortation to those who had gone through the disappointment.

³ST 30.
mind in one article were pride, passion, and slothfulness; in another they were envy, evil-surmising, and evil-speaking. In fact they included all her exhortations. Because of the challenge, she believed, they needed the special gift of God's grace and power in modern times no less than in apostolic days.

The responsibility for developing this holy people White pictured as both God's and man's. On one hand she wrote that heaven was active to make the people ready upon earth, but on the other that God called for men to prepare a people to stand in the day of the Lord. When she spoke of the servants of God being sealed, using the passive voice, and of the seal being placed only on those who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land, she referred to divine initiative, conditioned on man's meeting the

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1ST 214, 216. For discussion of her ideas of cleansing and perfection, see pp. 129-47 supra.

2RH, 6 October 1896, p. 629. She insisted that the work of overcoming sin must be done in this life. In "Testimony Concerning Brother Stockings," MS 5, 187 (MS release No. 676), she wrote: "Oh, that the people of God would take this to heart! That they would consider that not one wrong will be righted after Jesus comes! Not one error of character will be removed when Christ shall come. Now is our time of preparation. Now is our time of washing our robes of character in the blood of the Lamb. If we go on excusing our errors and trying to make ourselves believe we are about right we deceive our own souls and will find ourselves weighed in the balance and found wanting. Many profess the truth but are not sanctified through the truth."

3GC x. Much of the last section of The Great Controversy was written to show believers how to meet the challenges of the last days. See pp. 433-678.


6"The Seal of God," ST 212.
prerequisites. But when she wrote of the seal as a settling into the truth both intellectually and spiritually so they could not moved, she seemed to be speaking of human cooperation. The seal, it must be remembered, was the counterpart of the mark of the beast which the third angel's message warned against. White believed the four angels of Rev 7:1-4 were holding back the winds of trouble until the sealing was finished; there was therefore a definite note of contingency in her discussion of the seal. Christ could not come until there was a sealed people ready to meet Him. Even if the end were not near, she believed, it would be the duty of every Christian to give an example of simplicity and self-denial, and by so doing to rebuke the pride and selfishness of the ungodly. How much more, then, she argued, was it incumbent on this people to show unfailing zeal and consecration! Always the second advent, whether seen as near or delayed, was the motive for calls to holiness and witness. And all such calls stemmed from the three angels' messages.

Speaking of a people prepared to meet the Lord raises the question as to whether White thought of a set number which must be reached before Christ can return. She mentioned the idea once in connection with the work of the sanitariums: "Our sanitarium work is to help make up the number of God's people." Through that work infidels would be converted and many would be led to look to Christ as the healer of soul and body. White mentioned the number also in connection with the close of probation. Among the tasks finished by


2 RH, 2 May 1912, p. 4 (CH 248).
then she mentioned that every case would have been decided in the judgment, Christ would have finished the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins, and "the number of His subjects would be made up."¹

To these hints—they are little more—we may add her thoughts on the history of the church as the building of a temple.² It is a homily³ which gives another hint of a set goal to be reached before Christ can come. She compared the world to a quarry from which stones are cut out to be placed in the temple.⁴ Although the first builders were martyred, yet the church grew—it slowly ascended as stone after stone was added.⁵ The work has continued through the centuries, but it is not yet complete; we have our part to act in the construction also. We are to present the word of life and thus lead men and women into the way of holiness.⁶

This temple metaphor must be laid alongside White's harvest metaphor for balance.⁷ If the latter says that Christ will come

¹Cc 614. ²Aa 595-99.
³Based on Zech 6:12,15; Isa 60:10; 1 Pet 2:4,5; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Cor 3:10-15. Contrary to the rigid division between Israel and church held by Dispensationalists, White applied Zechariah's description of the building of the temple of the Lord and Isaiah's view of building the walls of Jerusalem, to the growth of the Christian church.
⁴Aa 596. ⁵Aa 597. ⁶Aa 598-99.
⁷Developed by M. L. Andreasen (see p. 130 supra) and popularized by Herbert Douglass in "Jesus Waits for a Quality People," Perfection, the Impossible Possibility, pp. 18-34, and numerous other publications, the "harvest principle" depends heavily on two paragraphs from Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69, by White:

"'When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.' Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When

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when His people perfectly reproduce His character, the former seems to say that He will come when His church is complete. The church is a corporate body—in all ages it is one temple. One could conclude that she thought of a set number of people who were required to make up the temple, but she does not use the metaphor to make this point. Nor does she make it with her earlier thoughts about the number of God’s people. If she had intended her readers to understand that all they had to do was to win $X$ number of souls and then the end would come, it would seem that she would have made it very clear, but her thoughts about the end never became that mathematical. What was clear was the believer’s constant duty to help build the people of God. Her comments about the number remained only a hint.¹

the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain." (White is here repeating several ideas which first appeared in MS 4, 1883—see pp. 193-207 supra).

Douglass believes that these paragraphs point out the main reason why Christ has not come yet. He infers from them that Christ is waiting for one generation of believers to reach a level of holiness which no generation has achieved before (if they had, Christ would have come). He seems to ignore the nearness stream in White’s thought (see chap. 2 supra), and the intended audience for this book (it was written for sale to the general public). He also leaves several important questions unanswered: i.e., since wheat and tares grow together until the harvest, what proportion of the crop must become wheat before the harvest can be reaped? What is his understanding of justification and sanctification in the life of the last-day Christian? And, if the parousia is this contingent, what assurance is there that it will actually occur at last?

¹Another area of White’s thought which could conceivably point to a pre-determined number of redeemed ones is seen in her comments on the 144,000 saints of Rev 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. In the account of her first vision (see EW 15,16,19; LS 65-66; LT 59-61,69; 2SG 32-34, 54-55) White pictures...
The Limit of God's Mercy

Any eschatology rooted in the three angels' messages would have to give a prominent place to the wrath of God, and so it was with Ellen White. The time would come when the wrath would be poured out on those who had the mark of the beast, while those who had the seal of God would be protected. She believed that God keeps an account of the sins of individuals, families, and nations, and that there is a limit beyond which He can no longer exercise mercy. When the accumulated figures in His records mark the sum of this group as those who would be translated at the parousia without dying. There is no discussion of the possible symbolism of the number; it appears to be taken literally. Nevertheless there is no special emphasis on it; the term seems to be used as a designation for the faithful ones who would survive the final time of trouble, more than as an announcement of just how many would be saved. The emphasis on their faithfulness was appropriate at that time, when the need was to encourage the survivors of the 1844 disappointment to retain their faith in God's leading.

In White's later references to the 144,000 she focused on their spiritual character, and the significance of the exact number faded even farther from view (GC 648-49, PK 691, ST 476). Finally she developed a present-day application and made direct appeals to put away iniquity and keep the commandments of God. She wrote that God has a people on earth who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and those who expect to follow Him in the courts above must follow Him here (see RH, 12 April 1898 and RH, 19 March 1889, both reproduced in TBC 978).

At no time did White use the 144,000 to calculate the possible date when Jesus would return.

Because the third angel's message includes this warning: "He . . . shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." Rev 14:10.

PP 165, commenting on the destruction of Sodom (see also pp. 159 and 162). White also found illustrations in other divine judgments of the past: the flood ("Satanic Delusions to Increase," ST, 4 June 1894, pp. 466-67); the destruction of the Amorites (ST 208-9); Nineveh, which was granted a reprieve in the days of Jonah (PK 276) and was destroyed in the days of Nahum (PK 276); and the final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (GC 16-38).
transgression complete,\(^1\) then "wrath will come, unmixed with mercy,
and then it will be seen what a tremendous thing it is to have worn
out the divine patience." She believed that the crisis would be
reached when the nations should unite to make void God's law—a
clear reference to the Sabbath-Sunday controversy current at the
time.\(^2\)

The concept that God has a prescribed limit for wickedness
implies a corporate view of the wicked world. The inhabitants of
earth have been filling their cup of iniquity for centuries, White
wrote, and all through history sinners have been treasuring up wrath
against the day of wrath.\(^3\) Each generation has been adding to the

\(^1\) White sometimes mentioned transgressions in general when
she wrote of men reaching the limit of God's mercy, but again she
often specified particular sins. An 1863 statement was inspired by
the southern rebellion and disloyalty in the northern armies (IT
363). In 1881 she referred to love of money in the world and the
church, which was producing all kinds of oppression and crime (AT
389). In her comments on Nineveh she cited modern sins: "Every day
brings fresh revelations of strife, bribery, and fraud; every day
brings its heart-sickening record of violence and lawlessness, of
indifference to human suffering, of brutal, fiendish destruction of
human life. Every day testifies to the increase of insanity,
murder, and suicide" (PK 275).

\(^2\) IT 524 (1889); GC 682-92 (1888); "Letter to Bro. S," 23
March 1893 (TM 62).

\(^3\) IT 363; 4T 489; 5T 524, applying Rom 2:5 in a historical
sense. Of the Sodomites she wrote that their sins the last night
were not worse than before, but that night they passed the limit of
divine forbearance (PP 159).

White thought of the wrath of God as both active and pas-
sive. In the instances cited in p. 221, n. 2 supra, she attributed full
responsibility to God for the judgments visited on the antediluvian
world, Sodom, Nineveh, and Jerusalem. But on the other hand she
also pictured the wrath of God upon Jerusalem in a passive sense.
When the end of the city came, God "removed His restraining power
from Satan and his angels and the nation was left to the control of
the leader she had chosen." The result was internecine fighting,
suspicion, envy, hatred, strife, and rebellion (GC 28). Thus He
left the sinners to reap what they had sown, and the tragedy of
Jerusalem was a testimony of the certain punishment which will fall

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total of sin in the divine records. This could lead to the idea that the final generation suffers for the sins of their fathers. White recognized this in her discussion of Jerusalem's fate and qualified it by saying that children are not condemned for their parents' sins, but when they know all the light given to their parents and reject the added light given to themselves, they become partakers of their parents' sins and fill up the measure of their iniquity.\(^1\) She therefore held both a corporate and an individual view of sin. She recognized that historical forces produce effects that accumulate from one generation to another, but she also held each person accountable for his own response to the gospel.

What significance do White's thoughts on the total of sins have on her view of the delay of the parousia? The evidence is mixed. On one hand, applying 2 Pet 3:9, she clearly held that God is waiting in mercy, not willing that any should perish.\(^2\) He delays so sinners can repent—He is keeping the records open as long as possible.\(^3\) In this sense we could conclude that the time of Christ's coming is contingent on the sins of the wicked.

But on the other hand, White used the same facts to point to the nearness of Christ's coming and urge the church to proclaim the warning. The "rapidly swelling figures" show that the time for

\(^{1}\)GC 28. \(^{2}\)TT 194; Letter 122, 1900 (TBC 946).
\(^{3}\)PP 159; COL 177; GT 95-96.
God's visitations has nearly come—therefore believers should labor diligently to save others.¹ The increasing wickedness was a sign of the times which urged men to heed and follow the Lord in self-denying service.² Once again we find her uniting nearness and delay to make her evangelistic appeals.

**Summary and Evaluation**

Ellen White's statements on a delayed advent can be seen in two sections, with the dividing point coming in 1883. Ambiguity marked her thoughts during the first period, but certainty appeared in the second.

Between 1858 and 1881 she thought of both delay and a fixed sequence of events. In 1858 she wrote that Christ could not have come in 1844 because the believers needed to be purified on earth, but she also described divine activities in heaven which impinged on the time of the parousia. Her comments on the Laodicean message as applied to the Adventist believers in 1857 and 1859 suggested that God allowed time for the believers to heed the call but did not indicate that He had postponed the return of Christ on that account.

In 1868 White inferred from the parables on watchfulness that there was a delay "before the morning finally dawns," but in the same exposition she stated that the period of watching was shorter than at first, indicating that she assumed a fixed time for the final day. Her 1881 study of the parable of the ten virgins

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demonstrated that she was more concerned with church members using their opportunity to perfect Christian character and win souls than she was with spelling out the times and seasons.

In 1876 White compared the one hundred twenty years granted to the antediluvians with the time allowed to the modern world for repentance. Her analogy suggested that while men may perceive the advent as delayed, it is not necessarily so. Later she quoted Hab 2:3 to say that while there has been an apparent delay ever since the days of Abraham, yet there is an appointed time for the final rewards. Men's perception of delay is due to their ignorance of God's timetable and thus to disappointed expectations.

On the other hand, White rebuked those whose love of the world showed that they wickedly desired a delay, as though they hoped the Lord would not come at all. She desired that men should keep the coming of the Lord near in their hearts, for belief in nearness led to righteous living while belief in delay led to sin. "Delay" in these statements meant a faithless life style rather than a postponement of the end.

If the note of contingency and delay was ambiguous in the first half of White's ministry, it became clear in the last half. This addition to her thought\(^1\) appeared in 1883 in response to criticism that she was a false prophet in writing of the soon coming of Christ so many years earlier. In reply she wrote for the first time that the New Testament also had predicted that Christ would come soon and that the angels had always represented it as soon--she

\(^1\) We cannot call it a shift, since she continued to write extensively in terms of the nearness of Christ's coming. See chap. 2.
defended herself by saying that her position was just the same as theirs. She did not regard it only as continually imminent, however, for she went on to say it had been delayed by the failure of many early Adventists to accept the third angel's message, just as Israel had been delayed for forty years in entering Canaan, and that it was then being delayed, contrary to God's will, by the same sins among her own Adventist people. Fifteen years later she added the idea that they could hasten the coming of Christ by holy living and diligent witnessing. The time of the end, therefore, was dependent on the life and work of Seventh-day Adventists. Their position as a people with a mission made them, in White's concept, a people of destiny, the fulcrum of history. They had it in their power by cooperating with God to help bring the history of sin and suffering to an end.

That this was no momentary thought is shown by the extensive use White made of these ideas in the following years. In four out of seventeen references to the conditions to be met she referred to character development among the church members; in the other thirteen she referred to the need to preach the message to the world. While the ideas that time has always been represented to men as short and that God's promises and threatenings are conditional were not published during her lifetime, and the comparison between ancient and modern Israel's delay appeared only in 1884 and 1888, the evangelistic appeal to holiness and witnessing in view of the delay appeared repeatedly.

Although White granted that there had been a historical development of the Christian church, she gave most of her attention
to the work to be done after 1844. The message was the gospel as summarized by the three angels, which in the language of the first was to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The contingency of the advent she based on Matt 24:14 as well as on Rev 14:6-12. She saw Matt 24:14 not as a sign but as a condition of the end. So deeply did she sense the duty to preach the message before the end that she asked the church to pray for a delay in what appeared to be the final crisis in 1888-1889, to give them time to do the work. Taking the message to the world took precedence over the final events.

The same gospel was called both a warning and a winning message. Considering it as a warning, White thought of the world's danger vis-à-vis the end; considering it as a winning message, she thought of the world's privileges if they would accept it. The Jonah model was not for her; she sought to prepare a dedicated people. Corresponding to the warning was the idea that God keeps account of the sins of individuals, families, nations, and the world. When the sum reaches a total which He has set, then judgment begins. In her day she saw the effort to enforce Sunday sacredness by law as the capstone of the history of sin. Corresponding to the winning message was the idea (merely hinted at) that God may have in mind a set number of people for His kingdom. Under this rubric the sum has been building all through the history of the church and will soon be complete.

The values of White's conception lie in the broad vision and sense of mission which she gave her church. Standing in the last days as Elijah and John the Baptist did in theirs, the Adventist
church had an essential part to play in the final drama.\footnote{In view of the tiny size of the early Sabbatarian Adventist group, one could say they had delusions of grandeur, until one remembers that Christ started with only twelve men.} By faithfulness in their mission they could save many and hasten the coming of Christ. By neglect of their duty they would allow many to be lost and would continue to delay the end. Their message was the everlasting gospel, the same that it always had been, but with emphasis on the return of Christ and final judgment. To the motives of love for God, gratitude for Christ's sacrifice, and love for men was now added the urgency of giving the last call and preparing men for the end. Seldom has anyone had stronger reasons for holy living and diligent witnessing. This conception of the mission of the Adventist people was Bible-based as White saw it, and a natural development from the line of prophetic exposition which she had inherited from the Millerites and the Puritans.

Several questions can be raised about White's delay eschatology on biblical grounds, however. The first is whether the Bible evidence is sufficient to support her conclusions. There are delay parables, to be sure, but they do not teach contingency. The bridegroom of Matt 25:1-3 was delayed, but his delay was not dependent on the state of the waiting virgins. The householder who left his property with his servants came back after a long time (Matt 25:14-30), but his return was not contingent on their faithfulness. The return of the high priest from the most holy place on the Day of Atonement was not dependent on the state of the people waiting outside (Lev 16:20).
It may be argued that White based her contingency on Matt 24:14; Rev 7:1-4; and 14:6-12 rather than on the parable mentioned. But even Matt 24:14 raises a question. Preaching the gospel to all the world is not a task that one can finish in the way one finishes reaping a hundred acres of wheat. This is true not only because of the unknown number of nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples which inhabit the earth, but also because it exists in time as well as space. The boundaries of the wheat field keep moving. The earth is not a static body like the city of Nineveh which could be reached in three days or a generation. The population is continually dying and being replaced. What then can it mean to preach the gospel to the entire world? Could it mean a frantic effort to reach every living person within a certain number of years, ignoring those who have slipped into their graves? White did not deal with this question. She did see a historical development in the giving of the gospel and also wrote that those who live in the last days have the possibility and responsibility of finishing the task so the Lord can return, but her greatest burden was the believers' obligation to be continually at it.

Another question arising out of White's eschatology concerns her concept of conditionality, implying that God has told us the factors which govern the time of Christ's coming. It may be asked, however, whether He has told us everything. How do we know that we know all the conditions? White was well aware of Acts 1:7,8,\(^1\) but

\(^1\)"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses." See "It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons," RH, 22, 29 March, and 5 April 1892.
it could be asked whether conditionality did not substitute for time setting in her mind. She believed that Christ would "not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples."\(^1\)

Knowing that the Bible forbids setting dates, it appears

\(^1\)There are biblical arguments both for and against conditionality. Desmond Ford, "The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1972) pp. 104-8, has summarized those in favor as follows: he cites Israel's delay in entering Canaan; the apparently unconditional preaching of Jonah to Nineveh; Eze 15:25-27, which sets forth conditions that will obtain if a righteous man turns from his righteousness or a wicked man from his wickedness; Jer 18:7-10, the corresponding description applied to nations; Isa 38:1, in which the Lord told Hezekiah he would surely die, but later gave him another fifteen years in answer to his prayer; Acts 21:10-14, in which Agabus' prediction of Paul's arrest was obviously intended to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem; and Acts 27:21-31, which tells of the angel's assurance to Paul that the Lord would save all on his ship, but Paul later warned the officers they would die if the sailors deserted the ship. Ford quotes J. Paterson to the effect that "Many things were foretold precisely that they might not come to pass" (p. 106). Another argument in favor of conditionality may be found in the covenant blessings and curses of Deut 28-30. The concept of conditionality in the prophecies supports the idea that prophecy was merely a specialized form of preaching, designed to evoke a response from the original hearers, and that it was not intended to give absolute information about the future (this point is weakened, however, by 1 Pet 1:12, in which the writer states that the prophets did not serve themselves but rather believers in the Christian era).

These arguments are cogent, but it may fairly be asked whether all prophecy is conditional. In particular, we must ask whether the two biblical apocalypses give evidence of conditionality. Daniel was indeed concerned that the sins of his people might prevent the predicted return from exile, but the time periods given to him in vision seem to point to unconditional fulfillments. The impression one gets from his prophecies is one of history moving inexorably forward to the great day of the Lord. In Revelation the author tells us that he is describing "what must soon take place" (Rev 1:1), and he, like Daniel, gives the impression of struggle and conflict indeed—but all within the limits set by the One on the throne. Here also, except for the merciful holding of the winds while the eschatological saints are sealed in Rev 7:1-4, the impression gained is one of certain triumph in God's own time. The time periods mentioned give every indication of being unconditional. It cannot be said that conditionality is prominent in the biblical apocalypses.

Another fact that militates against conditionality is that it makes all predictions doubtful and damages the sovereignty of
that she did the next best thing in presenting the parousia as conditioned on the preaching of the gospel. She did not raise the question as to whether God in His sovereignty might have other conditions which He has not shared with men. After all, the times and the seasons remain in His hand.

A third question which can be raised about White's delay concept arises from its contrast with her idea of the sovereignty of God. We have seen in chapter 2 that in her belief, God is able to work His will over the nations. In spite of opposition from the devil and evil powers under his control, God brought His people out of Egypt and later Babylon, on time. But He was not able to work His will with His own people, for they were delayed in entering Canaan. Of course the heathen, particularly in Egypt, were coerced

God. The predictions against foreign nations in Amos 1 and 2, Isa 13-23, and Jer 46-51 must have been intended as unconditional, for it is not likely that the nations involved ever heard the warnings.

Another fact which must balance White's conditionality is her statement in connection with the first advent of Christ that His purposes know no haste and no delay. There is a logical difficulty in making the first advent unconditional and the second conditional. Why should it be so? Aside from shepherds, the wise men, Simeon, and Anna, the world was not ready for His coming. He did not come when they were ready, but when they were unready and therefore needed Him the most.

Carried out to its logical conclusion, the idea of the parousia being contingent upon the achievements of the church would put the entire history of the church under the rubric of unfulfilled conditions. It is questionable whether those who take this position, as Ford does, have really considered the conditions which would have to have been met in order for Christ to return of A.D. 100. Could the gospel have been spread to all the heathen world by that time without a miracle of communications which would have been unique in all history?

A broader view of conditional prophecy may be found in William G. Johnsson, "Conditional Prophecy: Characteristics and Interpretation" (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Biblical Research Institute, 1981).
into letting the slaves go, while the Lord led His own people by persuasion. It appears that when Christ returns He will treat the rebellious as He did the Egyptians—they will be coerced into setting their captives free and acknowledging the sovereignty of God. But in White's picture, the time when the Lord will deal with the wicked is contingent on the state of His own people. This leads to the surprising conclusion that He cannot deal with the sins of the wicked because He is hindered by the sins of the saints. The question then is, did White intend to make the climax of history this contingent on the spiritual condition of Seventh-day Adventists?

Still another question arises from White's delay statements in relation to her ecclesiology. Did her concept of the unique mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognize the contribution of other churches, or did she confine the work of the Spirit to her own church? In her survey of church history she followed the current Protestant view which saw the Lord at work among the early Christians persecuted by the Roman empire and the papacy, then among the Waldenses, Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Calvin and their immediate successors, and in the Pilgrims who came to America.¹ But she believed that the Protestant churches of America and Europe failed to continue the Reformation; their religion degenerated into formalism, and before long there was almost as great need of reform in the Protestant churches as in the Roman Church of Luther's time.² The influence of the Spirit was narrowed down to a small remnant of faithful ones. In her own day, of course, she believed that God had certainly been at work among the Millerites

¹See The Great Controversy. ²Ed 297-98.
and the Seventh-day Adventists. Her experience in being disfellowshiped from the Methodist Church, Charles Fitch's sermon on "Come Out of Babylon," and the refusal of most of the churches to accept the seventh-day Sabbath, convinced her that while the non-Adventist churches might contain many of God's people, as churches they were Babylon, and God's people must be called out of them. The whole concept was faithful to her understanding of the three angel's messages.

Later in her ministry, after publishing The Great Controversy in 1888, she modified her negative view of the other churches somewhat by speaking of their ministers as "shepherds of the flock," "teachers of the gospel whose minds have not been called to the special truths for this time," and urging Adventist ministers to come close to them and pray for and with them. The fact that Christ's Object Lessons with its statement about hastening the coming of the Lord through holy living and witnessing was published for general sale outside the Adventist Church, is a hint that she recognized the work of other Christians also in preparing for the parousia. A further hint may be seen in the fact that of the seven hundred books in her library when she died in 1915 nearly five

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1See p. 38 supra. 2GC 381, 383.
36T 78. 4COL 230. 5RH, 11 November 1890 (Ev 563).
6COL 69; see also DA 633.
7Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, 3:3203-4.  See also Arthur W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, 3:132.

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hundred seventy were written by non-Adventist Christians.\(^1\) Recent research indicates that she made extensive use of these materials in preparing her own books.\(^2\) It seems likely that if she had commented on her contemporaries, Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), David Livingstone (1813-1873), George Miller (1805-1898), and Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911), her evaluation would have been positive.\(^3\) It cannot be, therefore, that her view of other churches was entirely negative.

There are two dangers inherent in the conviction that one's church is a fulfillment of prophecy, the bearer of God's final message of life and death to the world. On one hand lies the danger of pride because someone will always say, "I am holier than thou," and reason that his membership in the true church guarantees his salvation at the coming of Christ. The dynamic assurance that comes from faith in and walking with Christ is then replaced by the static guarantee that comes from belonging to the right church. This was the error of the Jewish leaders in the days of Christ, who reasoned that because they were children of Abraham they were sure of salvation.


\(^3\)Her two references to Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) simply warned Seventh-day Adventist ministers not to suppose they were great like him. See GW 459 and EV 134.
The opposite danger is guilt. If one believes that Christ is waiting for His people to finish His work (which with this approach is in danger of being shifted from His to theirs), and the Lord has not come, then the church must continually cry, "Mea culpa!" until He comes. It is a heavy burden, and it must be asked whether White really intended her people to bear it. Logically it would make the church singularly unattractive to prospective members. Why should they join a church which sadly (or proudly) admits that its failures are the reason why the Lord has not come yet?

Of the two dangers, it cannot be said that White was proud. The anti-triumphalism of the Laodicean message prevented it. She was too realistic a prophet of holiness to succumb to that error. She gave no guarantees that the Seventh-day Adventist Church as such was automatically sure of salvation.\(^1\) She saw the analogy between ancient and modern Israel clearly and was Arminian enough to believe that past election does not assure future faithfulness on the part of the elect.

Concerning the danger of guilt, there is no question but that this was one of White's motifs after 1883, and that when it is abstracted from her writings it can produce the negative effects

\(^1\) The closest she came to such guarantees was the statements she made on the future success of the church (see PK 176, 720, 725, 730-32; DA 822; TM 20; and Ev 707; see also pp. 92-94 supra). "Church" in these references, however, is not confined to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is noteworthy that she wrote, "the cause of present truth . . . is destined to triumph gloriously" (GCB, 29 May 1913, p. 515; 9T 135), but the cause of present truth is not necessarily identical with the Adventist Church.
outlined above. But abstraction is useful only for analysis, and after analysis there must be synthesis. White's thought that the Lord is waiting for the church to finish proclaiming the three angels' messages must be seen in union with her parallel thought that the church must proclaim the messages because the Lord is coming soon. Only in this way can her own balance be seen. On both sides of the equation the 1844 experience and the three angels remain fundamental.

1Guilt can easily become a convenient scourge in the hands of would-be reformers, and on the presupposition that the parousia in contingent on the state of the church there is no defense against it. Whatever attitude or act the reformer wishes to emphasize as the reason why the Lord has not returned, he can always argue that he must be right—simply because the Lord hasn't come!
CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Our study of the time element in the eschatology of Ellen G. White began with a look at its roots which extended back through William Miller to the Puritans of the seventeenth century. Her expectation that Christ was coming soon was not at all unique; many before her, basing their faith on the time prophecies of the Bible, had lived and died in the blessed hope.

The time prophecies which have been taken as pointers to the parousia, however, have produced disappointment as often as hope. The non-fulfillment of Miller's 1844 predictions destroyed faith in some of his followers and engendered fanaticism in others, while a tiny remnant continued to believe in Jesus' soon coming while admitting they did not know the date. As a member of this group, the young Ellen Harmon [White] retained her faith in Miller's calculations because of what she felt was the biblical cogency of his arguments and because of the spiritual revival she had enjoyed in that belief. She always looked back nostalgically to that glorious expectation and took the dedication of the believers of that time as a model for herself and her readers throughout her ministry.

To explain the great disappointment, Ellen Harmon accepted a new description of the judgment predicted by Miller which divided it
into two phases. The first, termed the investigative judgment, was believed to have begun in 1844; when Christ had finished this work He would return to earth to save His people and execute judgment on the wicked. White and her friends believed Miller's proclamation was a part of God's plan even though he did not understand his own message. They held that the movement itself fulfilled the prophecy of the first angel in Rev 14:6,7,\(^1\) and the opposition they experienced from the other churches fulfilled the second angel's message of Rev 14:8. When, a short time later, they incorporated the seventh-day Sabbath into their thinking and saw a future Sabbath-Sunday conflict as the fulfillment of the third angel's message in Rev 14:9-12, they had a dynamic system of beliefs which explained their past and gave them a crucial part to play in the closing events of salvation history. They believed that the prophecies of the three angels commissioned them to prepare a people to meet the Lord.

This system of beliefs, summarized in the three angels' messages, gathered out of the tattered and discouraged remnants of the Millerite movement a dynamic new group which in the 138 years since has far surpassed its parent in size and international extent. It has retained much of the energy produced by Miller's proclamation while avoiding his self-defeating prediction of a definite date. The doctrines suggested by the three angels became the foundation and conceptual framework of Ellen White's eschatology.

Our study has shown that Ellen White's belief in the nearness of the parousia in the future was based on time prophecies

\(^1\)Also Rev 10.
fulfilled in the past. Because they were past, the Lord's coming could not be far distant; but because there were none to follow, it could not be dated. For her the time prophecies located the beginning of the last days in 1798 but did not announce when they would end. Nevertheless they remained fundamental in her eschatology, occupying first place even ahead of the familiar signs of the times. She repeated the signs which had been proclaimed by the Millerites but always tied them to the history which she believed had been foretold in the prophecies. The signs took on the quality of signs because they occurred in the end-time.

The earlier sections of the time prophecies which pointed to the first advent of Christ and the return from Babylonian exile provided White with strong support for her confidence in the sovereignty of God. It was in applying these prophecies that she wrote, "God's purposes know no haste and no delay." If the first advent of Christ was dependent on the sovereignty of God, the second must be equally so.

In criticism of White's belief we can say that while she solved one major problem of modern eschatology she ignored another. Ever since Albert Schweitzer forced the world to see that Christ and John the Baptist saw themselves living already in the last days, the great problem has been the nineteen centuries since. How could the last days last so long? White avoided this question by shifting

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1DA 32.

any possible delay into the period after 1844; she no more thought of the nineteen centuries as a delay than did other premillennialists of her time. If her eschatology had found its point of entry in the Gospel of John and the Pauline epistles instead of Daniel, it might have developed differently. As it was, she solved the centuries-long delay problem by building on the "time of the end" predictions of the latter while overlooking the "last days" convictions of the former. The tension between the various biblical expectations she did not see.

One cannot look at the time element in her eschatology very long, however, without noticing that she seldom spoke of the nearness of Christ's coming as a mere point of information. She used it rather as a motive for holy living and diligent witnessing. Her apocalyptic expectations impelled her prophetic exhortations. The nearness of the parousia became more of an ethical than a chronological statement, as when she wrote that believers should always live in the spirit of Christ's soon return, and that some erred in not keeping it near enough. The real calendrical nearness seen in her early years tended to become a dateless imminence later.\(^1\) The effects of the two emphases were the same; in both she counseled her readers to "live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man."\(^2\) But the emphasis on imminence had the advantage that it could be maintained indefinitely. The calendrical nearness

\(^1\)By this we refer to her early expectations that she would live until the end as compared with the lack of such statements after 1888, although she continued to speak of the end being near.

\(^2\)EW 58.
partook of the enthusiasm of the 1844 revival—the hundred-yard dash. Imminence was the stance for the marathon.

White's program for the church seems to have been informed by the Holiness movement but motivated by the Millerite movement. As a matter of fact, many of her exhortations were identical with those of postmillennialists, who believed their efforts would set up the kingdom of God on earth. White never took such an optimistic view of the church or the world, but her concept of mission, growing out of the three angels' messages, included every true reform: health, education, temperance, family life, dress, recreation, and giving, and extended to include the whole world. She saw each program and institution of the church as helping prepare a people to meet Christ.

These activities, however, were not different from the constant duties of Christians in all ages. Every believer has always faced the obligation to show his faith by his works. The conviction of Christ's soon coming simply lent new urgency to familiar exhortations for White as it had for William Miller and the Puritans. She sought to maintain the dedication and drive of the dash throughout the marathon.

The race was long, however, and we may reasonably ask whether White suffered a crisis of delay. In the first half of her ministry she spoke several times of Christ's coming during the lifetime of people then alive—she took the nearness seriously. Did her faith falter as years lengthened into decades and the Lord did not appear?

The answer is both Yes and No. Yes, because in 1883 she
began to say that the Lord's return had indeed been delayed;\(^1\) No, because she believed she knew the reason for the delay and at the same time continued to speak in terms of nearness. It was during the last half of her ministry that the delay stream joined the nearness in her thought.

After acknowledging a delay in her 1883 statement, White explained it by making the parousia contingent on the state of the church. The Lord could not come because, first, the church was not yet ready for Him, and second, the gospel had not yet been preached to the world. In other words, the obligations which she urged upon the church because of the nearness were now seen as the reason for the delay. The constant factors in both were the twin duties of holy living and diligent witnessing, rooted in the three angels' messages.

As a holiness prophet White was deeply burdened over sins in the church. Her concept of Christ's work in the last days included a special work of cleansing among believers, but they were slow to accept it. We do not find evidence that she tied the parousia to the attainment of one perfect generation of Christians, for the cleansing continued throughout the last days, but the idea of contingency lent new urgency to her constant call to holiness.

The second reason White cited for the delay was the need to fulfill Matt 24:14.\(^2\) In the language of the first angel's message,

\(^1\) MS 4, 1883. For the occasion of this document, see pp. 194-95 supra.

\(^2\) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."
every nation, tribe, tongue, and people must hear the announcement of Jesus' coming before He could come. Where other expositors saw Matt 24:14 as a sign, White took it as a pre-condition of the end. Ten years before she died she admitted that she had expected Christ to come before then but explained that the vision of a world to be warned had come to her in later years.¹

In evaluating White's concept of the contingency of the advent, we can say that it served as a powerful reinforcement of her exhortations. It grew logically out of her conviction that the three angels' messages gave a unique prophetic mission to the Seventh-day Adventist Church: only when the church had developed the holiness and preached the message predicted in Rev 14:6-12 could Christ return. This was the basis of the appeals referred to in our Introduction.²

At the same time, it must be asked whether White's emphasis on contingency and delay was an accurate reflection of biblical emphases. Was Matt 24:14 intended as a pre-condition or a sign? Does the future indicative in this view imply an imperative sense with a purpose clause following: i.e., "Preach the gospel to the whole world so that the end may come"? Do the biblical apocalypses teach a contingent advent? On the contrary, Daniel and Revelation seem to emphasize the sovereignty of God, laying out a sequence of world history under God's control which unfolds in majestic cycles

²Pp. 2-4 supra.
climaxing at the coming of Christ. This, indeed, was the basis of White's conviction that the Lord's return was near. While there are some indications of delay in the New Testament,\textsuperscript{1} contingency is not a major theme of the Bible. If the return of Christ is conditional, we cannot assume that He has revealed all the conditions.

As we examine White's concept of delay, however, we find that here, as in her nearness thought, the question of time recedes behind her evangelistic appeals, which were consistent and open-ended. Because they were open-ended they gave no handle to would-be date-setters. No one can predict when the church might be holy enough or the gospel preached far enough so that the Lord could then return.

We find, then, both harmony and paradox in White's eschatology. There is harmony in the apocalyptic roots and the prophetic\textsuperscript{2} fruits of the two streams. Her belief that Christ was coming soon was based on the fulfillment of the three angels' messages beginning in 1844. Her later conviction of delay was based on the necessity to proclaim the same three messages to the world, while her many exhortations grew from the same biblical root. For her the three angels were a commission to service more than a prediction of the future.

On the other hand, we see a profound paradox in White's eschatology. Nearness and delay stand in tension with each other.

\textsuperscript{1}See 2 Pet 3:8,9; Matt 25:1-3, 14-30.

\textsuperscript{2}The word is used here to describe the work of a forth-teller rather than a fore-teller. It refers to White's calls to righteousness and holiness.
How can White speak of an appointed time for the return of Christ and yet say it is delayed by the failures of the church? How can she write of the first advent that "God's purposes know no haste nor delay," but of the second that "the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional"? 

The poles of the paradox can have wide-ranging effects in Christian faith and life. If the time of Christ's coming is in God's hand, the activities of men have no effect on it; if it depends on the deeds of men, it is not in God's hands. The first alternative can lead to passivity. Why should men be concerned if their actions have no effect on God's plans? But the second can lead to despair. If the generation of the apostles was not holy enough to meet the standard (for Christ did not come in their time), then what hope is there that any later generation will meet it?

White's thought retains both poles. Is there any way of reconciling them? White suggested that the time of the end is certain from God's viewpoint but delayed from man's. While man has delayed the time, God still knows when the final date will be, just as He must have known the time when Israel would cross the Jordan and begin their conquest of Canaan. In 1883 White spoke of delay, but in 1888 she wrote that the seeming tarrying was not so in reality. Under this construction God retains His sovereignty in foreknowledge, but it is not completely satisfactory because the

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1DA 32.  
2ISM 67.  
3It is the old problem of determinism versus free will.  
4E. G. White to Dear Sister, 11 August 1888, S-38-1888, MS release #816.
biblical view of God's sovereignty extends beyond mere foreknowledge. It does not really reconcile the two poles of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

In this final synthesis we confess that we feel uncomfortable with the whole enterprise of harmonizing. If White herself did not really reconcile the two, why should we? Her writings were based on biblical, that is Hebrew, modes of thought. It may be that our desire for logical harmony is more akin to Athens than to Jerusalem. In asking for logical harmony from White we may be raising an illegitimate question. Like the Hebrew prophets she was an evangelist, not a theologian.  

White's writings, like those of all the premillennialists, partook of the nature of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, where

1Thorlief Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), pp. 196, 202, 204, shows the Greeks to be clear and logical, while the Hebrews' forte was psychological understanding. They were not systematizers or logicians; they could lay apparently contradictory statements alongside each other without discerning any problem. They had no problem, for instance, with the immanence and transcendence of God, which kept the Greek church in turmoil for three centuries.

2It is interesting to observe that the rabbis gave the same two broad answers to the question of the coming of the Messiah that White did. On one hand, the school of Rabbi Jehoshua set the date A.D. 240, and to the question, "What is delaying the Messiah?" they answered, "The fact that the date is not due yet." In assuming that the date was set by God, they gave due recognition to His sovereignty but differed from White in making the time accessible to men. On the other hand, the school of Eliezer taught that the Messiah would come only when all Israel repented (see b. Sanh. 97B; Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, The Primitive Conception of Time and History, rev. ed. [London: SCM Press, 1962], pp. 158-60; and excursus, "Worzeichen und Berechnung der Tage des Messias," H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash [München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922-28], viertter band, zweiter teil, pp. 977-1015). White's answers differed from those of the Talmud in being less speculative and more integrated into her exhortations.

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the peculiarities of Hebrew thought are particularly apparent. The combining of God's sovereignty with man's freedom was characteristic of them.\(^1\) All the premillennialists shared with the apocalyptists the theme of a cosmic controversy between good and evil.\(^2\) They saw the sufferings of history not as the clash of men but of principles and therefore of spiritual beings.\(^3\) White's thought on this subject appeared in her development of the third angel's message.\(^4\) All the apocalyptists believed that history is driving toward a single goal—the establishment of the kingdom of God, and they believed that in that event the purpose of God would be vindicated once and for all.\(^5\)

At the end, the apocalyptists believed, God would intervene directly and no longer through the medium of earthly powers. Daniel believed that God punished the Babylonians by bringing the Medes and Persians against them and then dealt with the Medes and Persians through the Greeks.\(^6\) Each historical power rose and fell under

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\(^1\)Rabbi Akiba was quoted as saying, "All is foreseen, and free-will is given" (Pirke 'Abot 3:19). H. H. Rowley observed that the apocalyptists were not governed by arid logic. "The paradox of grace is that the act which is wholly God's may yet be wrought through men" (The Relevance of Apocalyptic, A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation, 2nd ed. [London: Lutterworth Press, 1944], p. 183).


\(^3\)Rowley, p. 156.  

\(^4\)See pp. 71-74 supra.


\(^6\)See Dan 7:1; 8:20-21.
God's control, but the control was exercised through other nations.\(^1\) The apocalypticists saw that in order to avoid an infinite regression of upheavals there must come a time when God would intervene directly in the affairs of the world.\(^2\) When He was acting through secondary powers, His control of history seemed ambiguous, for it could always be viewed from the human side as man's activity. But at the end He must act in such a way that it will be seen as solely His own.\(^3\) The kingdom of God will be established BY GOD. With all this, however, the apocalypticists were optimists, for they believed the best was yet to be. Pessimistic they certainly were as they looked at the present world, but their faith in a brighter future was surely grounded because, in the words of Rowley, it was grounded in the heart of God Himself.\(^4\) It was more surely grounded than the wishful thinking which still hopes for perfect solutions in spite of imperfect men.

It was common among the apocalypticists to arrange history in cycles of numbered years. White and her premillennial predecessors based much of their thought on the predictions of Daniel, but parallel chronological predictions may be found also in I Enoch, Jubilees, The Assumption of Moses, II Esdras, and the Testaments of Levi and of Abraham.\(^5\) With this basis it is not surprising to find many

\(^1\) See White's philosophy of history in Ed 176-79.

\(^2\) See Dan 2:34.

\(^3\) Russell, Method and Message, p. 95; Rowley, Relevance, p. 155.

\(^4\) Rowley, Relevance, pp. 163, 167.

of the premillennialists calculating how near they were to the end by correlating fixed points in the prophetic scheme with known events in history. Such calculations usually showed they were living in the last days very near to the end.\footnote{1} White, with all the premillennialists, believed she was living in the last of the last days.\footnote{2}

\footnote{1}{Typical was II Bar 85:10--"For the youth of the world is past, and the strength of the creation already exhausted, and the advent of the times is very short, yea, they have passed by; and the pitcher is near to the cistern, and the ship to the port, and the course of the journey to the city, and life to consummation."

Daniel is an exception to the rule. Russell, p. 264, quotes Dan 8:17,19; 12:13 as evidence that he also believed he was living in the last days, but these verses seem to prove the contrary; the time of Daniel was not the time of the end, for he was told he would rest and stand in his allotted place in the [presumably later] time of the end. If it be granted that Dan 12:13 presupposed the final resurrection, then the time of the end could have been seen as much later than Daniel's time. Dan 12:4 says that his book was to be sealed until the time of the end.

In the New Testament apocalypse, however, the hinge of the ages was behind. The Messiah had come, made His great offering for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The Lamb had been slain, and now He was taking the scroll of destiny from the hand of Him who sat on the throne (Rev 5:9-14). Nevertheless, the book looked forward to another coming of the Lord; it stood between the two advents, which to Daniel were both future.

In Revelation we find the New Testament tension which White did not see. On one hand there are the statements, "Behold, I come quickly" (3:11; 22:7, 12,20; see also 1:3 and 22:10); but on the other there is a series of prophecies which according to the historicist school outlined events that would be fulfilled over many centuries. It is for this reason that many scholars have adopted the preterist view that John was describing events of his own time, and that he was simply wrong about the nearness of Christ's coming. It is for this reason also that historicists like Desmond Ford explain the non-appearance of Christ under the rubric of conditional prophecy (see pp. 230-31 supra), but this construction is unnecessary if we relinquish the idea that we must harmonize everything to the satisfaction of our twentieth century (western) logic. The apocalyptists were Jews and spoke out of their Hebrew background.

\footnote{2}{She differed from them, however, in seeing all time prophecies as past, and therefore the end was truly near but unlimited.}
The faith of the apocalyptists as well as of the modern premillennialists rested not only on time prophecies but also on a fairly standard list of signs: war, earthquakes, famines, destruction by fire, mysterious powers taking control of nature, and portents in the heaven, with increasing wickedness among men. All seemed to show that their expectations were about to be realized. Their message was directed to the contemporary situation.

Apocalyptic literature raises many questions in the twentieth century, however. The most basic is, is the apocalyptic expectation of an imminent end of human history still valid? In view of the fact that so many have said the Lord was coming soon and He has not come, does it still make sense to talk about His coming? The answers of Albert Schweitzer, C. H. Dodd, Rudolf Bultmann, and Oscar Cullmann are well known, but the question remains for

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1 According to Russell, p. 274, the chief passages relating to the signs were: Dan 12:1; I Enoch 80:2-7; 99:4,5,8; 100:1ff; Jub. 23:13-25; Sib. Or. III. 538ff; 633ff; 796ff; V. 512ff; Ass. of Moses 8:1; 10:5; Apoc. of Abraham 29ff; II Bar. 25-27; 32:1; 48:32ff; 70:2ff; II Esd. 5:1-12, 50-55; 6:21-24.

The apocalyptic expectation that at the end the sun and moon would alter their courses so they would not appear at their proper times (I Enoch 80:4-5, cf. Sib. Or. III. 801-3; II Esd. 5:4,5: I Enoch 80:6) was mentioned by White in her description of the scenes accompanying the parousia. See GC 636-38.

2 The advent of the atomic bomb underlines apocalyptic warnings today but offers no hope to match that of the advent of Christ.

3 Schweitzer characterized Jesus as a thoroughly apocalyptic Messiah. Basing his thought on the missionary instruction of Matt 10, Schweitzer held that Christ must have expected the coming of the kingdom at harvest time that same year. Jesus and John the Baptist did not simply announce the eschatological climax; rather they acted to create the eschatological facts, but they failed. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, Christ destroyed them. He was apocalyptic, but He was wrong. See Schweitzer's The Quest of the Historical Jesus, A Critical Study of Its Progress from
everyone who reads the Bible. How near is near? How soon is soon?

What does it mean to say that He is at the door? How long can apocalypticists go on crying, "Wolf! Wolf!" without destroying faith?

Nearly a century has passed since A. C. Long threw the question at Ellen White in 1883. Does her eschatology still speak so long after her death? Did she leave her readers with a viable stance

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Reimarus to Wrede (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 358, 360, 370-71. Schweitzer's contribution was to force all later scholars to take the apocalyptic materials in the New Testament seriously.

C. H. Dodd's realized eschatology emphasized the present aspect of the kingdom of heaven in the teachings of Jesus and regarded the sayings which point to the future kingdom, future harvest, and future parousia as later interpretations originating in the situation of the early church. Dodd held that in the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Christ the kingdom was not merely imminent, it was Here. The eschaton had moved from the future into the present, into realized experience. His eschatology was Platonic, with the contrast lying between events in time on one hand, and the "Timeless fact," "eternal order," or "the absolute" on the other. With the coming of Christ at His first advent, the Absolute entered into time and space. His contribution was to emphasize the present aspects of the kingdom. See his Parables of the Kingdom, rev. ed. (London: Collins Fontana Books, 1961 [1st ed., 1935], pp. 43, 44, 57, 61, 77, 81, 100, 103.

Rudolf Bultmann still later agreed with Dodd in emphasizing what has happened more than what will happen, but he interpreted the coming of Christ in existential terms. He believed that the description of Christ's second coming must be de-mythologized to find the literal truth, which is that Christ confronts every man in each moment of decision. He is continually calling men to better things. See his "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. H. W. Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbook, 1961), pp. 1-44.

Oscar Cullmann described the second coming with his illustration taken from the war. The cross was D-Day and the second coming will be V-Day. The decisive battle was fought at the cross and the Lord is now engaged in mopping-up operations, with the final victory expected momentarily. The issues have been settled, so the outcome is not in doubt. See his Christ and Time, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, SCM Cheap Edition, 1962), pp. 84, 140-42. On the question of why the mopping-up should take so long, he spoke of "clarifying corrections" called forth by new saving events, without the total salvation-historical view being altered. See his Salvation in History (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1967), pp. 158, 219.
toward the lengthening years of history, or has history overwhelmed apocalyptic?

To say that history has always overwhelmed apocalyptic would not recognize all the facts, however. It could be argued that the apocalyptists ceased their work and gave up hope with the nonappearance of Christ by the end of the first century, but the fact is that there was no crisis of delay in the New Testament. The Synoptists all recorded Jesus' saying, "This generation will not pass away till all these things take place," without a trace of embarrassment even though they must have written a generation or more after Christ's death and resurrection. The book of Revelation probably was written even later, and it too holds a near expectation without apology. 2 Pet 3:8,9 gave a resounding answer to the skeptics who denied the reality of the parousia altogether and at

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1 J. W. Bowman, "Eschatology of the NT," IDB, Vol. E-J, p. 139, observed, "There is no slightest evidence of the waning in the church of this eschatological hope of the coming again of her Lord; whatever dates be assigned to the writings of the New Testament, they are first and last full of the assurance that the Lord is just 'at hand.' ... Clearly, in the church's teaching the Lord is present by his Spirit in his church at all times; equally at all times his parousia is 'drawing nigh.' Similarly, the church is living in the 'last days'; yet the end has not yet come but is near at hand." See also the discussion by G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 65-95.

2 Matt 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32. Matthew and Mark also reported the warning that no one knows the day nor the hour, so they must have known that the generation statement could not be used to set a date.

3 It is plausibly dated to the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) on the grounds that it would have taken that long for the churches to reach the low spiritual ebb reflected in chaps. 2-3; the attitude toward the empire had changed from the earlier one seen in Mark 12:17; Rom 13:1; and 1 Pet 2:13-17; and there is evidence that John used other NT books in searching for materials for his own. See T. H. Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," IDB, 4:60-61.
the same time found a rationale in the mercy of God for the apparent delay, but it reflects nothing that could be called a crisis of delay.

Furthermore, the apparent failure of apocalyptic expectations has not discouraged many groups in history from repristinating the promises in their own time. We have noted the Puritans, Pietists, Millerites, and even the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century postmillennialists. We might have mentioned also the Montanists of the second century and many others cited by L. E. Froom in his *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. Many through the centuries have found the promise of Christ's near coming a blessed hope and have ordered their lives in accord with it even though they died without seeing their hopes realized. To say they were all wrong is too shallow an evaluation of their experience. Paul Althaus showed much greater insight when he wrote that all serious and living eschatology has held an imminent expectation of the end and seen the signs of the parousia in its own time.¹

Perhaps we can illustrate the dynamics of eschatological expectations with another analogy. A mountain climber often mistakes a lower peak for the top of the mountain simply because he cannot see beyond the lower peak, but he does not therefore give up the climb or deny the existence of the mountain. He knows that the top certainly lies ahead. In the same way, every date set for the return of Christ so far has passed, but the climber does not give up his faith, for he knows that while lower peaks may obscure the goal,

it is surely there. One who is not climbing has no hope of reaching the top. Only he who endures to the end will be saved.

To those who asked when the Lord would come, Ellen White always answered that the end was near but the time unknown. In 1894 she wrote that she had no special light as to when probation would close, but then added that it was time to work while the day lasted.¹ Her emphasis was on the work, not the time. The believer must continually show by his life that he believes Christ’s coming is near.

To those who later asked why the Lord had not come, White replied in the last half of her ministry that He was hindered by the unbelief and disobedience of the church. Her answers to the "When?" and the "Why not yet?" both focused on the obligations of holy living and earnest witnessing. The near coming of Christ could be hastened or delayed by the lives and deeds of His people. While nearness and delay cannot be harmonized, the duty of the church as she waits for her Savior is clear.

In view of the fact that White spoke of both delay and nearness, it appears that both groups of Adventist leaders mentioned on pp. 2–5 supra can be criticized for their handling of the issues. Those who blame the church for the delayed advent find their roots in White’s thought but distort her eschatology by ignoring her major contributions on the nearness of the end. Thus they magnify the

¹ "Consequences of Adam’s Sin a Warning to Man," RH, 3 October 1894, pp. 625–26. White’s attitude agreed well with Jesus’ answer to the same question in Acts 1:7–8: “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.”
responsibility of man at the expense of the sovereignty of God.

On the other hand, the Adventist scholars who quote the Bible exclusively in writing on the imminence of Christ's coming and the need to be constantly ready for Him need not ignore White, for she wrote more about nearness than about delay. These men can be asked, however, whether they have given due weight to the factor of delay in Ellen White's writings and its relation to the unique mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Ellen White's eschatology is a notable representative of nineteenth century premillennial expectations in general. She retained William Miller's conviction of the nearness of Christ's coming by dividing his 1844 judgment into two phases. Her stance between the two inspired the "Adventist" portion of Seventh-day Adventist belief, enabling her to maintain the imminence of the parousia without setting a new date; it also gave the church its unique mission, summarized in the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12 and opened the possibility of a delay. Her exhortations were always urgent but never anxious. Because she saw the angels carrying one gospel to all men alike, she did not accept John Nelson Darby's division of the world into Israel, church, and Gentile sections, with its consequent splitting of the second coming into a secret rapture and a public parousia. Because she saw future events as constantly impending she avoided the irrelevance of merely giving information about them; she spoke of Tomorrow only to throw light on Today. The abiding value of her eschatology lies in its moral appeals to present dedication and service.
Suggestions for Further Study

As the life and work of Ellen G. White recede into history, it becomes increasingly necessary to do the historical studies on her which are done with any other influential figure of the past. Everyone acknowledges that in order to understand Paul, Luther, Wesley, or William Miller one has to know the setting of their times and the influences that shaped them, as well as their spiritual concerns. Without such studies their thoughts are like pearls from a broken necklace. Only after knowing the situations to which they were speaking can a sympathetic reader judge whether their words are applicable to the changed conditions of later years. Such studies should continue with Ellen G. White. Three generations after her death it can no longer be assumed that she is our contemporary.

My study has suggested similarities between White’s thought and that of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses.¹ Such similarities could be investigated further. It would be a fruitful topic to determine just how much White utilized the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. This could be in the context of a study of her attitude toward the entire canon. Did she have any grounds other than long-standing consensus for accepting the Protestant canon?

Questions of White’s hermeneutics inevitably arise in any study of her eschatology. To say that she was a biblicist may be

¹In addition to those noted in chapter 4, compare 2 Esdras 2:42-48 with EW 16-17; the Assumption of Moses with "The Death of Moses," PP 469-80; the Martyrdom of Isaiah with ST, 17 February 1898 (4BC 1137); and the hiding of the ark by Jeremiah in 2 Maccabees 2:4-8 with PK 453.
accurate but not helpful. Labels are not a substitute for careful study. An investigation should be made into her use of biblical prophecies. Which prophecies did she quote, and which did she ignore? What principles governed her choice? What attitude did she take toward unfulfilled prophecies? Did she exhibit any difference in attitude toward the classical and the apocalyptic prophets? Is Desmond Ford's category of "conditional prophecy" a sufficient explanation of her thought? What principles guided her in making literal or symbolic applications of the prophecies?¹

My research into White's eschatology found its entrance through the questions of nearness and delay. Other points of entry are possible. Her thought could be viewed, for instance, from the standpoint of a possible tension between consistent and realized eschatology, to use the modern terms. Another approach would be the more familiar (to Adventists) theme of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. I chose to emphasize the 1844 experience and the task because these seemed to be prior in the development of her thought, but the great controversy theme would surely repay careful study.

In White's exhortations I have emphasized those which clearly had apocalyptic motives, noting only in passing that she wrote much from non-apocalyptic motives. A broader study of such

¹By what principle, for instance, did she use the day-for-a-year rule for the 1260 and 2300 days of Dan 7 and 8, but not for the thousand years of Rev 20? What guided her in making a spiritual application of the water of life in DA 187 and 454 and a literal application of the river of life in GC 675? The same could be said of her figurative application of the tree of life in BT 288, MH 56, and elsewhere, and her literal understanding of it in the new earth, in GC 648 and elsewhere.
exhortations needs to be done, making careful comparison with the motives used by contemporary Holiness writers. Further study needs to be done in the apparent shifts in her thought from a sect to a church mentality, especially as reflected in her attitude toward other ministers and the building of institutions; and the shift from emphasis on personal holiness to organizational concerns.

Finally, my own study needs to be completed by a consideration of all White's unpublished manuscripts. No one can claim that any particular research in her writings is complete until those manuscripts are included. At present we can only hope for the day when the restricted sections will be made available to scholarly study.
APPENDIX A

WILLIAM MILLER'S RULES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

In studying the Bible, I have found the following rules to be of great service to myself, and now give them to the public by special request. Every rule should be well studied, in connection with the Scripture references, if the Bible student would be at all benefitted by them.

I. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by dili­gent application and study. 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.

II. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible. Matt. v. 18.

III. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound it to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom, is my rule, not the Bible. Ps. xix. 7-11; cxix. 97-105. Matt xxiii. 8-10. 1 Cor. ii.12-16. Eze xxxiv. 18, 19. Luke xi. 52. Mal. ii. 7, 8.

IV. To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures to­gether on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contra­diction, you cannot be in an error. Isa. xxviii. 7-29; xxxv. 3. Prov. xix. 27. Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45. Rom. xvi. 26. James v. 19. 2 Pet. i. 19, 20.

V. God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables; and in this way the same things are oftentimes revealed again, by different visions, or in different figures and parables. If you wish to understand them, you must combine them all in one. Ps. lxxviii. 19. Hos. xii. 10. Hab. ii. 2. Acts ii. 17. 1 Cor. x 6. Heb. ix. 9, 24. Ps lxxxviii. 2. Matt xiii. 13, 34. Gen. xii. 1-32. Dan. ii., vii., and viii. Acts x. 9-16.

VI. Visions are always mentioned as such. 2 Cor. xii. 1.

VII. How to know when a word is used figuratively. If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally; if not, figuratively. Rev. xii. 1, 2; xvii. 3-7.

VIII. Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used much in prophecy to represent future things, times, and events; such as mountains, meaning governments; beasts, meaning kingdoms. Waters, meaning people. Lamp, meaning Word of God. Day, meaning year.

IX. To learn the true meaning of figures, trace your figurative word through your Bible, and, where you find it explained, put it on your figure, and if it makes good sense, you need look no further; if not, look again.

X. Figures sometimes have two or more different significations; as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time.
1. Indefinite.
2. Definite, a day for a year.
3. Day for a thousand years.


XI. Parables are used as comparisons to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures, by the subject and Bible. Mark iv. 13.

XII. To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy. If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event. But if one word lacks a fulfilment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development. For God takes care that history and prophecy doth agree, so that the true, believing children of God may never be ashamed. Ps. xxi. 5. Isa xiv. 17-19. 1 Pet. ii. 6. Rev. xvii. 17. Acts iii. 18.

XIII. The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts, and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God's word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe, so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit his word. And we can have confidence that He that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of his own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in his word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.1

1867. Danger of Not Bringing the Lord's Coming as Near as One Should. I saw that for some time past, Sister J has had a rebellious spirit, has been self-willed; that will had not yet been broken; that will was her idol, and that idol would shut her out of heaven unless speedily sacrificed. I saw that she did not bring the coming of the Lord as near as she should, and that her mind, instead of being at Rochester, [New York], should be all swallowed up in the work of God, and she should be seeking opportunities to help her husband, to hold up his hands, and to labor wherever there was an opportunity.—MS 3, 1867, p. 1. (To a prominent worker and wife, circa 1867.)

1875. How Early Advent Believers Reacted to the Delay in Christ's Coming. The light is shining forth upon the fourth commandment; God is opening the understanding of many to see that they have been breaking the Lord's Sabbath. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament" (Revelation 11:19), calling, as it were, the attention of the people to the law of God covered by the mercy seat; and the angels are represented as all looking reverentially into that law. God has made us the repositories of His law. What a responsibility is ours to form characters in harmony with the law of God! We are drawing nearer and still nearer the solemn event of our Lord's appearing, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

There has been a spirit of freedom in the meetings: the testimonies borne seemed to be spirited and had the right ring. Precious gifts have been entrusted to men. We may improve or abuse them. If we will wisely improve them we may make those within the sphere of our influence better and we will be enriching ourselves with moral power to be a light to others who are in darkness.

... This is the scene of your father's [James White's] earlier labors. Quite a number refer to that time when they first heard the message of Christ's near coming from his lips. They were deeply interested, although they were but children. The impression has never left them for they were then convicted and their hearts imbued
by the Spirit of God which accompanied the message.

Now they are in middle age and understand more fully the doctrine and have a more firm and rich experience in present truth. They speak of their hopes and faith with animated countenance, looking forward and hastening unto the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The message of the third angel sounding in solemn warning calls their minds to the sacred truths which once affected their hearts so sensibly. The Lord is good. He is very precious to His people.—Letter 31, 1875, pp. 3, 4. (Written from Richmond, Maine, to W. C. White, September 3, 1875.)

1876. Coming Delayed to Allow a Larger Span for Repentance.
Who will say God will not do what He says He will do? "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). The Lord is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those sinners who know not God and obey not His gospel. And because, in His infinite mercy, He delays His coming to give the world a larger span for repentance, sinners flatter themselves [that] He will never come.

In the public press, in the haunts of sin, as well as in the schools of science so-called, there is one sentiment: They curl the lips with scorn and jest and ridicule at the warnings given them, and look upon the thousands who will not believe. Jests are uttered, witty paragraphs published at the expense of those who wait and look for His appearing and with fear, like Noah, prepare for the event. This is not new, but as old as sin. It is as false as the father of lies.

When ministers, farmers, merchants, lawyers, great men and professedly good men shall cry, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh. Luke reports the words of Christ, that the day of God comes as a snare—the figure of an animal prowling in the woods for prey and lo, suddenly he is entrapped in the concealed snare of the fowler.—MS 5, 1876, p. 5. ("The Days of Noah," cir. 1876.)

1886. Delay of Christ's Coming Will Seem Short in Eternity.
Dear brethren and sisters, Christ is soon to come. Will He find you ready and waiting? The bridal lamps must be kept trimmed and burning. His chariot wheels have been delayed because of His long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and have eternal life. When we shall stand with the redeemed upon the sea of glass, with harps of God and crowns of glory, and before us the unmeasured eternity, we shall then see how short was the waiting period of probation. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." (Luke 12:37).—Letter 21, 1886, p. 5 (To Brethren and Sisters in Healdsburg, July 9, 1886.)

1886. Investigative Judgment for the Living Soon to Begin.
I address you who shall have this epistle brought before you, who are leaders, who may be termed princes among the people: "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11). Humble your souls before God. Jesus is in the sanctuary. We are in the great day of atonement, and if the investigative judgment has not already commenced for the living, it will soon begin and to how many are the words of the true witness applicable: "I know thy works, that thou
hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee" (Revelation 3:1-3).

The cases of all will be brought up in the judgment and if their sins are not confessed their names will then be blotted from the book of life, and their lot will be with the adulterers and the fornicators, and deceivers, and those who love and make a lie.

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels" (verses 4,5).--Letter 51, 1886, p. 11. (To G. I. Butler, September 6, 1886.)

1886. Thou Anxious for Heaven, Ellen White Not in a Hurry.
I am much blessed of the Lord, although very much burdened, and I love Jesus with my whole affections. I think our warfare must be nearly ended. I think we are nearing home. I am rejoiced to think the rest will soon come, but even here in this hope I am not in a hurry.

I want to do all my work with patience and fidelity day by day. There are many souls to be saved, and we will be glad that the coming of the Lord is delayed to give them a little more opportunity to get ready. But once saved in the kingdom of God--only think of it--once beyond the temptations and warfare of this life, once in the heaven of rest, in the presence of our adorable Redeemer--what will it be!

These light afflictions, Paul says, which are but for a moment, work "for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:17, 18). God help us to look at the brightness of our Saviour's countenance and clouds will be dispelled. We must have more faith.--Letter 84, 1886, pp. 12, 13. (To G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, September 14, 1886.)

1888. 1844 Date Not Revealed in Vision Before the Disappointment.
It was this oft-repeated charge of suppression that led us to determine to gather up all my earliest publications and republish in the book called Early Writings by Mrs. E. G. White. We printed this little book to be scattered everywhere that all might, if they chose, become acquainted with facts. But this did not--only for a time--quiet their reports. They came again just as fresh as though that book had never been printed.

I was a firm believer in definite time in 1844, but this prophetic time was not shown me in vision, for it was some months after the passing of this period of time before the first vision was given me. There were many proclaiming a new time after this, but I was shown that we should not have another definite time to proclaim to the people. All who are acquainted with me and my
work will testify that I have borne but one testimony in regard to the setting of the time.

I have been shown that our disappointment in 1844 was not because of failure in the reckoning of prophetic periods, but in the events to take place. The earth was believed to be the sanctuary. But the sanctuary which was to be cleansed at the end of the prophetic periods was the heavenly sanctuary and not the earth as all supposed. The Saviour did enter the most holy place in 1844 to cleanse the sanctuary and the investigative judgment had commenced for the dead. I have been repeatedly urged to accept the different periods of time proclaimed for the Lord to come.

I have ever had one testimony to bear: The Lord will not come at that period, and you are weakening the faith of even Adventists, and fastening the world in their unbelief. There have been plainly set before me events of great and thrilling interest, which must transpire before Christ will come. Satan will move mightily from beneath, and will delude the world, while the Lord God Omnipotent will move from above and prepare a people to stand in the great day of His wrath.

The time-setters have pronounced the curse of the Lord upon me as an unbeliever who said, My Lord delayeth His coming. But I have told them that the books of heaven would not make my record thus, for the Lord knows that I loved and longed for the appearing of Christ. But their oft-repeated message of definite time was exactly what the enemy wanted, and it served his purpose well to unsettle the faith in the first proclamation of time, which was of heavenly origin.

The world placed all time-proclamation on the same level and called it a delusion, fanaticism and heresy. Ever since 1844 I have borne my testimony that we were now in a period of time in which we are to take heed to ourselves lest our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares. Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord's coming. We do not know the day nor the hour, or when the definite time is, and yet the prophet's reckoning shows us that Christ is at the door.

We have not cast away our confidence, neither have we a message dependent upon definite time, but we are waiting and watching unto prayer, looking for and loving the appearing of our Saviour, and doing all in our power for the preparation of our fellow-men for that great event. We are not impatient. If the vision tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry. Although disappointed, our faith has not failed, and we have not drawn back to perdition. The apparent tarrying is not so in reality, for at the appointed time our Lord will come, and we will, if faithful, exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).

I have also been pronounced a deceiver because I have said, "The Lord will soon come; get ready, get ready that we may be found waiting, watching and loving His appearing." But in the Revelation I read this statement, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation
22:12). "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the
sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7). "Behold,
I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take
thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). Was the One who bore this testi-
mony a deceiver, because the "quickly" has been protracted longer
than our finite minds could anticipate? It is the faithful and true
witness that speaks. His words are verity and truth.

If I have failed to make this matter plain which you wish to
understand, write me again and I will endeavor to make every point
plain and clear. But I must plead not guilty to the charge of seeing
in vision that the Lord would come at a definite day and hour, which
has since passed by.--Letter 38, 1888, pp. 3-5. (To Dear Sister,
August 11, 1888.)

1890. Reason for Establishment of SDA Colleges. What is the
object of establishing colleges among Seventh-day Adventists? It
is to provide for our youth, so far as possible, the very best instruc-
tion—that which is free from error and in every respect pure from
corrupting influences. There are in our land schools in abundance
where education in the sciences may be carried to a high point,
but they fail to reach the Bible standard of education. The fear
of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Lord must preside in
our institutions of learning, or the object for which they were
brought into existence, with great outlay of means, will fail of
being accomplished. We profess to believe important truth, that the
Lord is soon coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great
glory to take the faithful to the higher school in the mansions He
has gone to prepare for them. We should meet a standard very much
higher than do those who do not believe these solemn truths.--Letter
25s, 1890, pp. 4,5. (To Brother Graham, July 14, 1890.)

1891. We Are to be Ever Ready for Christ's Coming. We want
to understand our proper relation to God: we want to know how we
stand in the presence of God. I want you to see that it is not in
the providence of God that any finite man shall, by any device or
reckoning that he may make of figures, or of symbols, or of types,
know with any definiteness in regard to the very period of the Lord's
coming. What shall we know? We are to study the signs which show
that He is at the door. You may say, "I have expected it, and I
have waited a long time, and the Master has not come yet; and this
long time of waiting makes me think that He is not coming." Just
so those foolish virgins began to think. They did not have any
supply of grace to enable them to stand the test or trial.

Yes, it takes time, and God knew it: and He takes time to
test us and to prove us, to see who has the real, genuine righteous-
ness of Christ, and He will test us to see if we can bear with
patience, waiting and watching, and working as well. We may be
waiting, but not in idle expectancy, saying, "I will not plant that
tree because the Lord is coming. I will not do this work in building
a meetinghouse for the people to assemble to worship God, because
the Lord is coming." No: if the Lord is coming, we want to work with
the more diligence to uphold and to gather the Lord's sheep and to
bring them into the fold. We want our colleges. Why?—because we
want to bring the students out of the world that they may leave its
practices, its customs, its superstitions and its policy: and that they may be educated as to what truth is.

It means something to bring practical religion into the life. There are so many who profess godliness, and yet you cannot distinguish by their dress, by their appearance, by their conversation, by their deportment, or by any of their actions, that there is any difference between them and the world.

We are to represent Jesus Christ. We are to look at His character, at His life of self-denial, patience, kindness, and forbearance. He ate with publicans and sinners, not that He might partake of their luxuries, or their amusements, or of their feasting, but that He might diffuse the precious gems of truth, and scatter these gems as He was sitting at their table. And those precious jewels of truth which fell from His lips would remain in their hearts. And although they might not yield at once to the influence of the Spirit of God, they would be affected by them and finally yield to them. Why?—because He is drawing them all the time.--MS 9, 1891, pp. 7, 8. ("Make Proper Use of Talents," sermon preached at Battle Creek, Michigan, August 22, 1891.)

1895. Spending Too Much Time Getting Educated in the United States. I would counsel you not to advise Pomare [a Maori student from New Zealand sent to Battle Creek to gain a training for work among his people] to remain in Battle Creek longer. Let him go to his field of labor, to use the knowledge that he has already gained, and in yoking up with Jesus Christ he will become a laborer together with God. The loading down of one man with degree after degree of study will not take the place of learning in the school of Christ His meekness and His lowliness of heart. "Learn of Me," said the greatest Teacher the world ever knew, "for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

I was urged to send Sister Houlder to Battle Creek. My purse paid her expenses, for his soul was in peril. Then I have paid, I do not know just how much, for Brother Lacey to go through his studies. Sister Caro has carried Brother Pomare, which has consumed large sums of money. I promised her I would help her bear the burden of expense, not expecting that he was to be kept years in gaining an education to work among his own people. Willie, now in New Zealand, states that he has sent for drafts from London and Battle Creek, for sixty pounds to be paid to Sister Caro to relieve her of embarrassment.

Money has been sent to support Brother Lyndon in school. He had a very good education before he went to America, and should have been in his field of labor long since, and at work. In this country it means much to transfer the means so essential to advance the work in fields that have not been entered, and consume this means, of which there is a dearth, in sending students to be educated in any lines to help us in the work here. And then time is passing and money expended, and the work moving so slowly because of the need of energetic workmen to enter the new fields, and practice in the service of Christ in giving to perishing souls the light of truth, present, testing truth.

We feel the need of more help, but the conference has not money to pay the expenses of laborers to return to this country or
to transport laborers. We know not what to do. I am distressed over the situation. I am now paying these workers $19 per week, and they support their families and give their services. I could do more of this work if I had the money to do it with. This sum was increased until I paid five pounds per week.--Letter 46, 1895, pp. 2, 3. (To J. H. Kellogg, April 15, 1895.)

1897. Sunday Laws in Australia. We are having interesting times for all in Australia. The pressure of the Sunday law has come and is coming. It has been ordered that all stores shall be closed on Sunday, and this is being rigidly enforced. The government is trying to have God acknowledged in the constitution. Our people are making just as vigorous a stand as possible that it shall not be. They have been securing names to a petition to this effect. We can see that that which we have been talking about for the last thirty-five years--this law causing the Sunday to be exalted and making human inventions take the place of God's holy days--is now being fulfilled. There is much excitement now in regard to these matters.

The second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians should be read in connection with these things. The same work of oppression and persecution which was suffered by the saints of God in Paul's day is soon to come to all who believe in this age.--Letter 28, 1897, pp. 1, 2. (To brother and Sister Belden, July 29, 1897.)

1898. Advent Delayed Because Work Not Done for the Wicked. As in the days that were before the flood, the impenitent see no cause for alarm. They eat, they drink, they marry and are given in marriage. The event has been long foretold, but time has passed on, and many distinctly say, "My Lord delayeth His coming." It is because the work has not been done for the wicked that time delays.

God's long forbearance is wonderful. The Master is treated with disrespect, He receives but little thanksgiving for His bestowment of blessings. The world is mad. They do not consider that His long forbearance toward the wicked is a part of His great plan, that judgments will surely come. But the long-suffering God will do His work. He will discriminate with justice and accuracy.--MS 151, 1898, p. 6. (Notes of the Queensland Camp Meeting, copied November 2, 1898.)

1901. May Have to Remain Here Many More Years. Your letter from Chicago received yesterday. I am very sorry that circumstances have taken the shape that they have, but why are you so faithless? Thank the Lord that you have few students, because you are not prepared for a large number. Brother Sutherland and yourself have done bravely and well, and why will you worry yourself out of the arms of your precious Saviour? Has the bank of heaven failed? Have you overdrawn the resources? Is Christ, the Light of the world, in Joseph's new tomb? Do we not read, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25)? Now look away from every discouraging presentation, because we have a living Christ to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. The bank of heaven has not failed: you have not overdrawn. . . .
Now in regard to the school, you seem to think that the plant is to put forth full bloom, lilies, roses, and pinks before the root is fully set deep to do this grand work. You must begin small, and not think that you can show all strength in establishing a school after an advanced order, taking in higher studies, and do not worry about leading teachers or under teachers before you have sufficient students to warrant the steps you take. Let not human pride hurt your record. Do not you suppose the Lord sees and is acquainted with the favorable and unfavorable presentations? Has not the Lord an oversight over His own work? You may suppose, my brethren, that you have to do all the devising, all the strengthening, and all the organizing, and I ask you, Is it not best to show that you have confidence in God? Is it not best to consider that our God is manager—that He is director? You must not be anxious to develop too fast. The hand of providence is holding the machinery. When that hand starts the wheel then all things will begin to move.

How can finite man carry the burdens of responsibility for this time? His people have been far behind. Human agencies under the divine planning may recover something of what is lost because the people who had great light did not have corresponding piety, sanctification, and zeal in working out God's specified plans. They have lost to their own disadvantage what they might have gained to the advancement of the truth if they had carried out the plans and will of God. Man cannot possibly stretch over that gulf that has been made by the workers who have not been following the divine Leader.

We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel, but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action. Now, have men who claim to believe the Word of God learned their lesson that obedience is better than sacrifice? "He hath showed thee (this rebellious people), O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

Now the Lord will not be pleased with those men whom He hath appointed to do a certain work, to take on many lines of work and carry them until they become so wearisome that it breaks their strength. You, nor any other agency, cannot heal the hurt that has come to God's people by neglect to lift up His standard and occupy new territory. The churches should now be acting in their strength, with capabilities, talents, and means, carrying the work, reaching higher and broader in capacity to stand before the world in the power of invincible truth.

But if all now would only see and confess and repent of their own course of action in departing from the truth of God, and following human devising, then the Lord would pardon. Warnings have been coming, but they have been unheeded. But a few who may now seek to bridge the gulf that stands so offensively before God must make haste slowly, else the standard bearers will fail, and who will take their place?

Now, my brother, I am deeply sorry for you and your family. I reproach thee not for thy zeal, for if others had shared thy burdens as they should have done, the work would have been far advanced.
But now, just now, you must come apart and rest awhile. Be not concerned in regard to your wages. God will not leave you without some help and comfort for yourself, your wife, and little ones. Be of good courage in the Lord. Trust Him fully. Let the Lord carry the burden of the school. You are not to become loaded down with burdens that will accomplish only the work that finite man can do. When you put your trust wholly in God, then you will see in every passage of your experience One going before you preparing the way.

I cannot tell you what you should do, but I can tell you what not to do: Do not worry, be not unbelieving, and do not think that you can blossom into a perfect school at its very planting on new soil. You must remember that it takes time to plant, and to perfect that plant. You just hold fast every inch you have.--Letter 184, 1901, pp. 1-6. (To Prof. P. T. Magan during the early months of his endeavor to establish the college at Berrien Springs, Mich. Written at South Lancaster, Mass., December 7, 1901.)

1902. Filled with the Spirit of Christ's Second Advent.
We are looking for the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are not only to believe that the end of all things is at hand. We are to be filled with the spirit of Christ's advent, that when the Lord comes, He may find us ready to meet Him, whether we are working in the field, or building a house, or preaching the Word; ready to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isaiah 25:9). [Released at a different time, this paragraph carries release number 899.]

Our work is to prepare a people for the soon coming of the Lord. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. Let us consider the work before us. Never forget, we are laborers together with God. We are to prepare the way of the Lord. Let us bind ourselves to His sacred work. We have no time to lose in inaction. We must provide facilities for the accomplishment of the missionary work that the Lord has said must be done. We must teach old and young, men and women, to lay up treasure beside the throne of God.--Letter 25, 1902, p. 5. (To Those in Positions of Responsibility in the Southern Field, Feb. 5, 1902.)

1903. How E. G. White Faced the Future and Christ's Coming.
The Lord is soon to come, and I must be prepared to meet Him in peace. I am sure that the world is ripening for the last great conflict. I am determined to do all in my power to impart light to those around me. I am not to be sad, but cheerful, and I am to keep the Lord Jesus ever before me. He is coming soon, and we must be ready and waiting for His appearing. O how glorious it will be to see Him and be saved through His merits. Long we have waited, but our faith is not to become weak. It is to grow stronger as we see the signs of the times fulfilling. The end is near and we are to put all our energies into the work of preparing to move from this lower school to the school above.--Letter 94, 1903, p. 1. (To Lucinda Hall, May 21, 1903.)
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