



# "Watchman, what of the night?"

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

## "The 'Times of the Gentiles'"

This is the title of the last article in a series of five appearing in the Review on the "Role of Israel in Bible Prophecy."<sup>1</sup> The authority to be attached to these articles must be understood in the light of the fact that they had "grown out of research being done at the request of the Biblical Research Institute, Washington D. C., directed by Gordon M. Hyde."<sup>2</sup> This Institute was established by an action of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This final article is given added authority since it was written by an Associate Editor of the Review.

The first point that Elder Don F. Neufeld seeks to make is that nowhere in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy does Sister White discuss "the times of the Gentiles". From this assertion he draws the conclusion that "it is hard to escape the suggestion that her silence means that, at least for us today, this sign is of lesser importance than the others she specifically relates to our day."<sup>3</sup>

Let us consider this argument briefly. In the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Series, one volume - 7A - brings together the combined Ellen G. White comments on the various texts of Scripture which appear in the seven volumes. Take, for example, the comments appearing under Isaiah 60:2 which is a quotation from her article in the Review & Herald, August 6, 1895. Nowhere in this article does she put in direct quotes - "darkness covereth the earth and gross darkness the people" - which is found in Isaiah 60:2. In fact, the whole article is setting forth the methods of Christ as a teacher when He came to reveal truth. And interestingly, she even quotes from the prophet Isaiah (chapter 53) and puts these references in direct quotes. But the Ellen G. White Estate in bringing these references together recognized that this quotation from the Review & Herald in 1895 did shed some light on the reference in Isaiah 60. In other words, a comment in the E. G. White writings can cast light upon a reference without directly quoting that specific verse.

Now the associate editor well knows that there is an Ellen G. White statement that does relate to Luke 21:24. He knew this was there when he wrote the article. He was (and still is) on the mailing list for the thought paper, "Watchman, What of the Night?", when this topic of the Times of the Gentiles was discussed, and the Spirit of Prophecy reference was used. Here is the reference:

In the twenty-first chapter of Luke Christ foretold what was to come upon Jerusalem, and with it He connected the scenes which were to take place in the history of this world just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.<sup>4</sup>

Note carefully what the servant of the Lord is saying, and what she is not saying. She did not state - In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 - but only - "In the twenty-first chapter of Luke. . ." And what only is different in Luke 21 from the other

parallel passages? - the prophecy concerning "the times of the Gentiles"! Further, what event was to "come upon Jerusalem" stated by Jesus in Luke 21 that could be connected with the scenes to take place in the history of the world "just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven" save the fact that Jerusalem would be freed from Gentile control?

Consider also the context of this reference from the pen of Ellen G. White.<sup>5</sup> After writing the above statement - she quoted Luke 21:34-36 in which is the warning that we should beware lest the day of Christ's return take us unaware. Now keep in mind that she attaches this warning to the fact of what was to come upon Jerusalem, and she comments on the warning in these words:

This is a warning to those who claim to be Christians. Those who have had light upon the important, testing truths for this time, and yet are not making ready for the coming of the Son of man, are not taking heed. . . There is no period of time when spiritual slothfulness is excusable.

Only by being clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness can we escape the judgments that are coming upon the earth. Let all remember that these words were among the last that Jesus gave to His disciples. . . In these sacred, solemn warnings the danger signal is lifted. It is this instruction that church members and the people of the world need; for it is present truth.<sup>5</sup>

Do not miss the point that this solemn warning quoted from our Lord is connected in the thoughts given to Sister White by the Spirit of God to what was to come upon Jerusalem in the last remnant of time. It was the sign to arouse us from our spiritual slothfulness and lethargy - a part of the instruction needed by the church and the world - verily a part of "present truth." Yet the associate editor would have us believe that it carries "lesser importance" than the other words of Jesus! How tragic and eternally dangerous is this attempt to lull the people of God into a fatal security.

In the article the associate editor admits that "the first part of Luke 21:24 clearly refers to the slaughter of the Jews at the time of the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in A. D. 70."<sup>6</sup> Yet in a few paragraphs, he is writing - "There is remarkably parallel language to Luke 21:24 in Revelation 11:2. Since both are prophetic passages the two ought to be compared." And from this comparison the conclusion is suggested that Revelation 11:2 and Luke 21:24 to refer to the same period of time, in other words to the 1260 years of papal persecution with 1798 being the date when the times of the Gentiles was fulfilled. But in so concluding, the basic rules of Scriptural interpretation are violated. There can be no question but that Revelation 11:2 is written in prophetic symbolism, while the first part of Luke 21:24 had a literal fulfillment as admitted by the associate editor himself. On what grounds can it be justified to change interpretations in the middle of the verse from literal to symbolic representation?

In the preface to the 1897 edition of Thoughts on the Prophecies of Daniel, Uriah Smith wrote concerning the Protestant interpretation of prophecy as contrasted to the spiritualizing system invented by Origen - "Every declaration is to be taken in its most obvious and literal sense, except where the context and the well-known laws of language show that the terms are figurative, and not literal; and what is figurative must be explained by other portions of the Bible which are literal."<sup>7</sup>

In 1974 a series of Bible Conferences were conducted in various parts of the United States with the emphasis on biblical hermeneutics - or, in other words, the interpretation of the Scriptures. Prior to this conference a group of research articles were brought together by Dr. Gordon M. Hyde of the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>8</sup> Keep in mind it is this same committee that has sponsored this special study on "The Role of Israel in Bible Prophecy." One of the authors in this edited book was none other than Elder Don F. Neufeld who wrote one "Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement." In this article he quotes the very reference from Uriah Smith to which we have referred in the above paragraph.<sup>9</sup> And then he sets forth in this article what he terms "General Hermeneutical Principles". Number six reads:

*The Bible must be interpreted according to the plain, obvious, and literal import unless a figure is employed.*<sup>10</sup>

He was not alone in emphasizing this principle. Another writer in the Symposium states:

The basic principle of biblical interpretation is to take words always in their literal sense unless there is unmistakable contextual indication to the contrary.<sup>11</sup>

But what has now happened to the research procedures of the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference? In order to avoid a conclusion unacceptable to the hierarchy of the Church are they willing to deny historic Seventh-day Adventist principles of Biblical interpretation? And then to palm off on the laity of the Church through the Review such interpretations of prophecy only compounds the tragedy! Let us face the facts of the Words of Jesus Himself. As the associate editor admitted, the first part of Luke 21:24 "clearly refers to the slaughter of the Jews at the time of the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in A. D. 70"<sup>6</sup> - so also the "Jerusalem" in the last part of Luke 21:24 is that very same literal city, that is, unless you wish to abandon the historical principles of Biblical Interpretation that have been the heritage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church up until this present article in the Review.

One of the final objections which Elder Neufeld raises to the fulfillment of Luke 21:24 in 1967 is that a "political or international event" is a precarious basis upon which to establish the fulfillment of prophecy. Here are his exact words:

It is always precarious to present some political or international event of recent occurrence as a fulfillment of prophecy. The reason is that a political or international scene can change quickly. As a result an event that when it occurred seemed bright with promise as a significant fulfillment of prophecy, may turn out to be a minor, ephemeral incident when viewed in the later perspective of history.<sup>12</sup>

Let us in our minds eye envision the community of Christians still living in Jerusalem in 66 A. D. Cestius had surrounded the city. What was to be the response of these followers of Jesus to this political event? Imagine one of the leaders of that church getting up and advising the Christians to hold on, since the scene might change quickly, and Cestius could possibly withdraw from the siege. You see Jesus had not said how long this compassing of Jerusalem with armies was to be; He had only given an event as a sign! And what if the Christians, when Cestius did quickly

withdraw, had concluded that such a short-lived event could not possibly be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus? The event that fulfilled the first part of the prophecy of Jesus concerning Jerusalem lasted but a few months, but now we have an event which fulfills the last part of the same prophecy remaining before our eyes for nearly a decade, and we still in stubborn rebellion seek to mitigate its force and refuse to ascertain its meaning and significance to us as a church. Can we not see Jesus weeping over us and saying:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that makest of none effect the writings of the prophets, and throwest "black balls" at them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate.<sup>13</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup>Don F. Neufeld, "The 'Times of the Gentiles'", Review, November 25, 1976, pp. 7-10
- <sup>2</sup>"This Week", Review, October 28, 1976, p. 3
- <sup>3</sup>Neufeld, op. cit., p. 7
- <sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 23-24
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 24 <sup>6</sup>Neufeld, op. cit., p. 8
- <sup>7</sup>Uriah Smith, Thoughts on the Prophecies of Daniel, p. 6
- <sup>8</sup>A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, Gordon M. Hyde, Editor, 273 pp.
- <sup>9</sup>Don F. Neufeld, "Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement", A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 114 <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 119 (Emphasis his.)
- <sup>11</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation", A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 176
- <sup>12</sup>Neufeld, Review, op. cit., p. 10
- <sup>13</sup>Paraphrase of Matthew 23:37-38 based on Selected Messages, bk., i, p. 48, and Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, p. 349, 353

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(The discussion concerning the series of articles on the Role of Israel in Bible Prophecy will be concluded in the March thought paper.)

"What Are the Characteristics of a 'Real' Seventh-day Adventist?"

This question was asked and answered by an associate editor of the Review in the first issue for 1977. He suggested in answer to this question six "norms by which to identify a genuine Seventh-day Adventist." The editor also invited "concerned readers to express their thinking on this subject." We are expressing our thinking on Norm #5 which Raymond F. Cottrell stated in these words:

Another essential characteristic of a genuine Seventh-day Adventist is loyalty, in spirit and in conduct, to the church and its leaders, as it and they speak and act for Christ. The church is a team, and every member of the team will play *with* the team and its leaders, not against them. The church and its

earthly leaders are human; sometimes they make mistakes. This they themselves would be first to acknowledge. But as a member of the team the genuine Seventh-day Adventist will, *even under such circumstances*, continue to work in a positive way with the team and cooperate with its leaders. (Review, January 6, 1977, p. 13, col. 2)

One's first reaction after reading this paragraph would be to say that the associate editor had been watching the football games that dominate the American scene this time of the year, and had been caught up in the "sports" syndrome that has taken possession of the world. But this idea that the church is a team and you either play ball with the team or else you are marked as not being a genuine Seventh-day Adventist is too real to be passed by so lightly.

One night from the past (circa, 1960) will never be forgotten by this writer. Following an evening service at the Camp Meeting on the campus of Indiana Academy all the workers were asked to meet on the rostrum. The Conference President, T. E. Unruh, stated that he was tired of the controversy on the campground over the book, Questions on Doctrine, and that the workers could either line up and play ball with the team or they could get off. He then announced that all workers were to go to the old chapel in the administration building immediately after being dismissed. That night two other workers and I withstood R. Allan Anderson to the face till one o'clock the next morning over certain heresies to be found in the book. This was the beginning of my being "benched" which in turn has led to the work which I am doing as Manager of Research and Publications for the Adventist Laymen's Foundation.

While still working in Indiana, I began research on the Holy Flesh Movement which engulfed that conference at the turn of the Century. One of the confessions of a conference worker involved in that Movement is vital in the light of what the associate editor termed a "norm" for a genuine Seventh-day Adventist. Elder F. M. Roberts confessed to the delegates assembled at the 1901 General Conference Session that "while [he] did not belong to the Conference Committee, [he] stood with the committee, and believed what they were teaching was the truth." (1901 General Conference Bulletin, p. 358) This man Roberts was no novice. In the same confession he testified - "I am a firm believer in the Testimonies. I have studied them for years." Yet he got involved in a deadly heresy of which Sister White declared that there was "not a thread of truth in the whole fabric." (Document File #190, E. G. White Estate, G. A. Roberts) Why did Elder F. M. Roberts make this mistake - because in the judgment of the associate editor of the Review, he was following one of the "norms" of what makes a genuine Seventh-day Adventist. In other words, Roberts was playing ball on the team right or wrong!

This spirit of blind loyalty was a problem which the servant of the Lord had to meet as she dealt with problems which arose in the Church at the turn of the Century. She called it a "false experience." Here are her words:

This message is spoken to our churches in every place. In the *false experience* that has been coming in, a decided influence is at work to exalt human agencies, and to lead some to depend on human judgment, and to follow the control of human minds. This influence is diverting the mind from God. God forbid that any such experience should deepen and grow in our ranks as Seventh-day Adventists. Our petitions are to reach higher than erring man - to God. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 484)

Here at the beginning of 1977, we are being told by one of the editors of the Review that this false experience is to be a "norm" by which a genuine Seventh-day Adventist is to be recognized. Even non-Adventist writers recognize this spirit which is permeating the masses, and call it by its right name. One such writer has analyzed the call for "loyalty" thus:

As totalitarianism increases - in a school, or a country, or a church - the use of the word, loyalty, increases. A strange and frightening word. The mob's word. The gang's word. A word people shout in unison - while honor and responsibility and integrity are words an individual can speak and act out.

How does one measure the quality of man's relationship with a large entity such as a church or school or government? It is an interesting fact, and one many of us have observed all our lives, that people demand loyalty of us only when they are doing something to us (or somebody else) of which we don't approve and cannot wholeheartedly participate in, and which weakens our love and admiration. Let's admit it: *loyalty* is a verbal switch-blade used by little and big bosses to force us quickly to accept a questionable situation which our intelligence and conscience should reject. (Lillian Smith, The Journey, pp. 223, 224.)

May I suggest to the readers of this thought paper that they take another careful look at Chapter VI, "Lessons and Sidelights" in the manuscript, The Holy Flesh Movement, and then think carefully what it means to be a truly genuine Seventh-day Adventist, and not be misled by the "false experience" which the associate editor is offering to the laity of the church.

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Note - If you do not have a copy of the manuscript - The Holy Flesh Movement - 1899-1901, you may obtain a copy for \$2.50 by writing to the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, P. O. Box 178, Lamar, Ark., 72846.

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The Adventist Laymen's Foundation may be reached by telephone. The number is (501) 292-3721. If no answer you may try, 292-3718, or 292-3288. All of these numbers are on an eight party line, and at times difficult to reach without operator's assistance.

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Direct all correspondence to the Foundation or to Elder Wm. H. Grotheer at P. O. Box 178, Lamar, Ark., 72846. Make all checks payable to the Foundation, and not to any individual, please.

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Watch for the special offer regarding - Individuality in Religion by A. T. Jones to be announced in the next thought paper.