



# "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*

## AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

The controversy over doctrines resultant from statements and positions taken by Dr. Desmond Ford, formerly head of the Department of Theology at Avondale College in Australia, and now a Professor of Religion on the staff of Pacific Union College, has generated quite an exchange of correspondence. While we would like to publish for you exact photo-copies of all correspondence which we will reproduce in this thought paper, we are unable to do, since we will be working for the most part from photo-reproductions ourselves, a number of which are too dull to reproduce on our press equipment. However, while our primary objective will be to give you these original source documents for your evaluation, we will make comments on these letters so that you can draw deductions as to intent of the words used and references given in these letters. You can rest assured that all documents used in this thought paper can be quoted without fear of contradiction as either the original, or a copy of the original will be held in the research files of the Foundation.

Following the reprint of a tract in The Layworker which had been circulating among Seventh-day Adventists in Australia, entitled - "Dr D. Ford Versus E. G. White on the Vital Subject of the Man of Sin" - Dr. Desmond Ford wrote to Dr. G. Harvey Rue, editor of The Layworker as follows:

May 11, 1979

Dear Dr. G. H. Rue,

Regarding the recent issue of The Lay Worker and its reference to myself---- I would like to point out that the authors of the anonymous document you quoted have been labelled by the Australasian Division as unethical and academically dishonest in their use of my thesis.

Dr Rue, I believe you to be an honorable man who loves the Lord and therefore seeks only truth. Therefore I offer you this opportunity of correcting the false impression you have unwittingly made in your publication.

I certainly believe that 2 Thess 2 had an initial application to the great apostasy of the middle ages -- my commentary on Daniel makes that very plain--but it is certainly not the complete fulfillment. See Ellen White's usages of this passage as in G. C. 624-625, 553, 561, 389, 390, 593. The papal application is only a subsidiary, in

the same sense that AD 70 was subsidiary in the fulfillment of Mt. 24 and John the Baptist of Mal 4:5,6.

The position I have taken is identical not only with the Spirit of Prophecy but also the SDA Bible Commentary.

I believe as an honest man you will not let this misrepresentation go uncorrected and I thank you. Wishing you His richest blessing,

yours,

Desmond Ford  
(Signed)

[We are trying to preserve both the punctuation and capitalization as nearly as possible to the original.]

You will observe that Dr. Ford uses the word, "subsidiary" in reference to certain prophecies - "the man of sin" as applying to the Papacy, and the fulfillment in A. D. 70 of the prophecy which Jesus gave in Matthew 24 concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines the word - subsidiary - as meaning "of secondary importance." At no time, to my knowledge, prior to the last two decades, has the historic fulfillment of these prophecies been considered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as of "secondary" importance, and some future event, primary. The emphasis given to 2 Thess 2:3-10, has been succinctly stated as follows:

The "man of sin," which is also styled the "mystery of iniquity," the "son of perdition," and "that wicked," represents the papacy, which, as foretold in prophecy, was to maintain its supremacy for 1260 years. (Great Controversy, p. 356)

The references from Great Controversy listed by Dr. Ford in his letter do not support his contention that "the man of sin" as fulfilled in the Papacy is an incomplete fulfillment of II Thess. 2. In the references cited (p. 390) the servant of the Lord does say that "the perfect fulfillment" of a certain prophecy "is yet future," but it is not the prophecy concerning "the man of sin"! Ford makes repeated reference to pages 624 and 625 of Great Controversy. It is on page 624 that this sentence is found - "As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ." On his defense tape dated June 10, 1979, from which we quoted in the last thought paper, Ford stated: "No one reading Great Controversy 624 and 625 could miss the fact that Ellen White is applying this passage of Scripture [II Thess 2] as she does in at least a half a dozen other places to the Satanic counterfeit of Christ's coming." But nowhere on these two pages is there a single reference to II Thess 2. Other references are quoted, but not a single reference to "the man of sin" being fulfilled in Satan's personation of Christ

To this letter, Dr. Rue replied as follows:

Dear Doctor Ford:

Thank you for your confidence in my "honesty." I trust that I would

correct any misinformation that I publish. I have done so on several occasions. I am sure you would not intend to flattery.

I propose that I publish your letter and this my response in the next LAYWORKER letting the readers know that you have a voluminous file of testimonials which support your views, although there may be a difference of opinion on this point. If there is further concern for truth on the readers part, they may contact you. Why don't you submit your Ms [Doctoral Thesis] to one of our publishing houses for printing, so that the whole church may read?

Personally, the statements that are quoted from your thesis seem very clear, definite and emphatic: they should speak for themselves. I am not a theologian and am not prepared to enter into a theological discussion. All I can know is what the Scriptures speak and what the Spirit impresses on my mind.

Therefore, I ask, what did you mean when you stated:

*We have also noticed that many things can be said with certainty regarding what the Antichrist is not. He is not any past personage. He belongs to the future and not to history.*

*We have noticed that the lawless one appears only at the end of time.*

These are surely Jesuitical sentiments concocted at the Council of Trent. Can I believe Sr. White when she declares:

*The man of sin, which is also styled the mystery of iniquity, the son of perdition, that wicked one, represents the Papacy" GC 356*

*The Papacy - the beast. GC 442*

Can a man believe the Scriptures and inspiration speaking to his mind. How else may we judge truth?

Sincerely, your brother in the church,

Rue  
(Signed)

A further response was received from Dr. Ford. He wrote as follows:

May 25 79

Dear Dr Rue,

Thank you for your kind reply. I appreciate your openness.

In reply to your inquiry:

The Antichrist of 2 Thess 2 who comes with all power and signs and wonders,

counterfeiting the parousia and revelation of Christ, has not yet appeared. The prophecy meets absolute fulfillment only in Satan's final deception. See G. C. 624 etc. Like other prophecies such as Mt. 24; Mal 4:5,6; Joel 2:28 this passage has been fulfilled in prior time but only in a subsidiary minor manner. This took place in the Papacy, for example. As my thesis plainly states: Antichrist is not only the eschatological counterfeit of the true Christ but is also a genus. Scripture so affirms. See 1 Jn 2:18 "many antichrists."

Yes, you can certainly believe Sister White, but I suggest you believe ALL she says on this topic, not just isolated fragments. Note how the SDA Commentary on 2 Thess 2 has listed her applications of Antichrist to Satan himself.

Feel free to use this in any way you wish. God bless you richly,

sincerely,

Desmond Ford  
(Signed)

[All emphasis his. He personally with pen underscored "only."]

Observe again, Dr. Ford uses the word - subsidiary - and adds another word which strengthens just where he stands - "minor manner." Thus he is saying that the prophecy of "the man of sin" found only a "minor" fulfillment in the Papacy.

When Dr. Rue published these letters in The Layworker (Summer, 1979, p. 18), he added this comment:

Do yourself the favor of reading the "SDA Commentary on 2 Thess 2," the antichrist. How can a man leap-frog over so many statements on these two pages clinging to one which suits his purposes? We are witnessing terrible events. Let us be sure of "the power of God unto Salvation," dear friends!

On his defense tape, Dr. Ford suggested that those interested write to the Australasian Division, and to Elder Alfred S. Jorgensen in particular. We did not need to do so as we had received the material previously. The Division has come to the defense of Dr. Ford, and is seeking to justify his position on "the man of sin." It should be noted that Elder Jorgensen, the Field Secretary of the Division, and Chairman of the Biblical Research Institute for Australia, prepared a six page paper entitled - "Some comments and observations on-- Dr D. Ford Versus E. G. White on the Vital Subject of The Man of Sin." He requested "that circulation of [his] paper be restricted to the group named at the head of this letter for whose information it has been prepared." (Letter dated "15th November, 1978") The group named in the heading of this letter were "Division Officers, Union Conference and Union Mission Presidents, Local Conference Presidents, and Division Departmental Directors."

In this paper, Elder Jorgensen tells us:

Incidentally, I have written to Professor Bruce, requesting a statement from him as to his position, and I propose to share his reply with you, if and when he acknowledges my letter. (p. 2)

Dr. F. F. Bruce is Emeritus Professor at Manchester University in England, and was Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the time that Desmond Ford took his doctoral degree at the University. He wrote his thesis - The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology - under the supervision of Dr. Bruce. Dr. Bruce's letter to Elder Jorgensen is as follows:

University of Manchester  
Manchester M13 9PL, England  
November 25, 1978

Mr. Alfred S. Jorgensen  
148 Fox Valley Rd.  
Wahroonga, NSW 2076  
Australia

Dear Mr. Jorgensen,

Thank you for your letter of November 13, regarding Dr. Desmond Ford. I am glad to know you are a friend of his; so am I, and if any words from me can be of help to him in face of criticism, I shall be glad.

It would never have occurred to me to classify Dr. Ford as a futurist, either in his Ph. D thesis or in his commentary on Daniel. (As Dr. Ford himself remarks on p. 66 of his commentary, I am no partisan of J. N. Darby; I am in full agreement with Dr. Ford's criticism of futurism on that page. My own position, regarding the interpretation of both Daniel and the Revelation, is commonly designated "contemporary-historical".) But even if I were a futurist, I fail to see how this could reasonably be made a ground for censure: futurism is a perfectly reputable and orthodox option in the interpretation of Biblical prophecy, although it is not the option preferred by Dr. Ford or myself.

You have my best wishes for all success in your efforts on Dr. Ford's behalf.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed)  
F. F. Bruce,  
Emeritus Professor  
University of Manchester

P. S. I have re-read my preface to Dr. Ford's commentary on Daniel. No one who reads that preface with any care could equate my views with futurism.

Here is a vital letter, and one that needs to be carefully considered. Dr. Bruce refers to p. 66 in Ford's book - Daniel - for which Dr. Bruce wrote the foreword. On this page, Ford explains ---- the "futurism" -- Darby embraced of which Bruce

is no partisan. Ford wrote:

It was J. N. Darby, an earnest Christian lawyer, who had the most to do with the development of that type of futurism, commonly called dispensationalism, which dominates Protestant Fundamentalism today. In 1827 he entered that fellowship at Dublin which later flowered at Plymouth, England, and became known as the Brethren movement. . . Not all the Brethren followed Darby in the idea of a pretribulation secret rapture, but the group that did follow him became the most influential for the modern world scene. . . The most well-known of modern Brethren, F. F. Bruce, is no partisan of Darby's. (p. 66)

You will observe in his letter, Dr. Bruce describes himself as a "contemporary-historical," rather than calling himself a "futurist." But he indicates that "futurism" is "a perfectly reputable and orthodox option in the interpretation of Biblical prophecy." Ford in his commentary - Daniel - does not rule out "futurism," but declares its affirmations are correct! After listing and defining the various systems of prophetic interpretation - Preterism (p. 65); Futurism (pp. 65-68); Idealism (p. 68); and Historicism (p. 68); Ford writes:

Having now viewed the respective systems as wholes, what counsel can be given to one who comes to the task of exegesis with the sole intent of discovering truth regardless of whether it supports or wrecks systems?

It must be said that each of the systems is right in what it affirms and wrong in what it denies. (p. 68, emphasis his.)

Since "futurism" includes dispensationalism, and the secret rapture, many wish to disassociate themselves from these doctrines by inventing another category for themselves. But there is a distinguishing mark of Futurists spelled with a capital "F". Albertus Pieters in his Studies in the Revelation of St. John (Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans, 1950) states: "A distinguishing mark of the Futurist is that all believe in the coming of a personal Antichrist." (p. 54) (See SDA Bible Students' Source Book, p. 770) Ford cannot deny that he wrote in his doctoral thesis at Manchester University - "We have also noticed many things can be said with certainty regarding what the Antichrist is not. He is not any past personage. He belongs to the future and not to history." (p. 246)

However, to better understand what Dr. Bruce meant by the designation - "contemporary-historical," we wrote to Dr. Bruce as follows:

June 17, 1979

Dr. F. F. Bruce  
Emeritus Professor  
University of Manchester  
Manchester, England M13 9PL

Dear Dr. Bruce;

A letter which you sent to Mr. Alfred S. Jorgensen in Australia dated

November 25, 1978 has come to my desk. In this letter you indicate that you consider yourself a "contemporary-historical" interpreter of the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation.

In checking through the material available to me, I find the expression "continuous-historical" used to describe one school of prophetic interpretation, but according to Merrill C. Tenney in his book, Interpreting Revelation, p. 137, this is synonymous with the "historicist view." I have read carefully the foreword which you have written in Dr. Ford's Daniel, and I note that you commend the "historico-critical method" used by Dr. Ford. Is this approach what you mean when you designate your thinking as "contemporary-historical"?

For your information, this foundation is primarily a research foundation devoted to the research of the historical background of the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have produced two manuscripts in this vein; namely, An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and The Holy Flesh Movement, 1899-1901. Since the prophetic concepts of the Church are now being projected to the attention of the laity, in part through the teaching and writing of Dr. Ford, we are now turning our attention to this area.

Your answer in helping to clarify the meaning of the position indicated in the letter to Mr. Jorgensen will be much appreciated. Looking forward to your reply, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)  
Wm. H. Grotheer, Manager  
Publications and Research  
P. O. Box 178  
Lamar, AR 72846, USA

To our request, Dr. Bruce replied:

The Crossways  
2 Temple Road  
Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 9BA  
England

July 6, 1979

Mr. Wm. H. Grotheer  
Manager, Publication and Research  
P. O. Box 178  
Lamar, AR 72846 USA

Dear Mr. Grotheer:

Thank you for your letter of June 17.

I use the term 'contemporary-historical' in the sense given it by R. H.

Charles, Studies in the Apocalypse (Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 4 ff., to denote the view that 'the visions of the writer relate to contemporary events and to future events arising out of these' -- that is, they relate to such first-century events as the imperial persecution of Christians and the siege and fall of Jerusalem, and see the events of the end-time as the sequel to these. This is in contrast to the continuous-historical view which interprets the visions in terms of Christian history through the subsequent centuries.

I have attempted to expound Revelation along the lines I have indicated in A New Testament Commentary, ed. G. C. D. Howley (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), pp. 629-666)

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

F. F. Bruce

Dr. Bruce's designation of himself as a "contemporary-historical" interpreter of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation embodies both Preteristic and Futuristic concepts, both of which were developed by Jesuits. Dr. Ford has written concerning Preterism:

This system views the apocalyptic prophecies as having a contemporary or near contemporary fulfillment. . . Thus the vast majority of modern commentaries fall into this category. . .

Most commentators on the Book of Revelation who are preteristic believe that book to have been chiefly fulfilled in the first century of our era. (Daniel, p. 65)

Observe that Dr. Bruce in his letter to us, states that the "visions of the writer" relate "to such first century events as the imperial [not Papal] persecution of Christians and the fall of Jerusalem," in other words - "contemporary or near contemporary fulfillment" as defined by Dr. Ford. However, Dr. Bruce sees end-time events "as the sequel" to these first century events, and leaves a prophetic blank between these events and the end time fulfillment. He thus adopts in a modified form "the gap theory" of Futurism, which is involved in dispensationalism. By denying "the continuous-historical view," as Dr. Bruce has done, the objective of the Jesuit Ribera, who invented the scheme of Futurism, is fulfilled whether projected by a Catholic or a Protestant. The prophecies of the Antichrist, "the man of sin" are successfully removed from the Papacy.

Ford was caught between the Bruce position, and the historic and fundamental position of the Advent Movement. In his thesis for his doctoral degree, he writes the Bruce position - The man of sin is not any past personage - and in his letter to Dr. Rue (May 25, 1979) he indicates that the Papacy fulfilled the prophecies in "a subsidiary minor manner." But it must be apparent to anyone that Dr. Ford did not depart far from the position of Dr. Bruce in his writing of Daniel for Dr. Bruce to write the Foreword. It is true that Dr. Bruce in the "Foreword" recognized that "some aspects" of Ford's interpretation differed from his, (p. 6) but cites no major differentiation. He indicates that his "own sentiments towards



ecumenists, charismatics, and our beloved brethren of the Roman obedience are more positive than" Dr. Ford's appear to be.

No matter in what way one looks at this picture - the projection of Futurism - spelled with a capital "F" is an assault by the enemy of all righteousness upon the pillars of the Advent Movement. And Dr. Desmond Ford is involved in that assault. But he is not alone, and this is what has been overlooked by the concerned brethren in Australia, and what is avoided in the production of the Bangkok tapes by the Standish brothers. In fact, one would gather the impression from the tapes, that these men are seeking to "white-wash" the other aspect of this assault on the pillars of the Advent faith.

While Dr Ford considers the Papacy as only "a subsidiary minor" fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Antichrist, the hierarchy of the Church through its legal staff has told a Federal Court in California that the Adventist position of the past was merely a part of the manifestation of "anti-popery" prevalent "among conservative protestant denominations" and has "now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned." (Reply Brief, March 3, 1975, submitted by attorneys for the Pacific Press Publishing Association, one of whom was Boardman Noland, who holds Missionary Credentials from the Church, p. 4) In the same Brief, we are told that it is "not good Seventh-day Adventism to express. . . an aversion to Roman Catholicism as such." (p. 30) [Note is does not say, "Roman Catholics" but "Roman Catholicism."] How can one believe that "the man of sin" represents the Papacy (GC 356) - he in whom all iniquity has fixed its abode (Thayer on II Thess 2:8) - and not have an "aversion to Roman Catholicism"? The answer: The whole of our understanding of the Antichrist has been thrown to the trash heap of history. Why then fault Dr. Ford, when he is merely trying to articulate a substitutionary view - a Futuristic "man of sin" - for what we have discarded - the historical Protestant interpretation of the Antichrist! Why should we be so alarmed when Dr Ford writes that the Antichrist "is not any past personage," when we are saying that our belief that he was, has now been dumped!

There is no question - Dr. Ford is a Futurist with modifications. But where does the hierarchy now stand on this same question since the filing of the Legal Briefs. We say stand by the pillars of our faith, and not condemn only the one who seeks to modify the faith, and white-wash the others. Let us judge righteous judgment.

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#### An Observation:

As one reads the Foreword to Dr. Ford's Daniel written by Dr. F. F. Bruce, the last sentence sinks deep into one's thinking. It reads: - "The gospel which he [Dr. Ford] proclaims is the gospel which I acknowledge: may it continue to speed on and triumph!" (p. 6) It is obvious that Dr. Bruce does not accept, teach, or acknowledge the "everlasting gospel" of Revelation 14. If the gospel which he does acknowledge is the gospel which Ford is preaching and teaching, then it is not the gospel committed to the trust of the Advent Movement. It is "another gospel" which Paul declared if any man preach - "Let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 8,9)

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OTHER VOICES - PAST AND PRESENT

[The late Arthur S. Maxwell after his return from Vatican II Council in Rome, gave his impressions of the Council in the Loma Linda University Church in a sermon entitled - "The Outstretched Hand." The following is extracted from the sermon report appearing in Present Truth, #3, 1968]

"Another aspect of this new friendliness was the pope's opening speech. I have it with me. I'm not going to read it because it took a long time, but it was a beautiful speech. This was at the opening of the final session. Do you know what his subject was? Love. . . .

"Then, of course there was all the elaborate ceremonial. There was one most interesting thing that happened there which signified a change. Right after the service of the mass, the pope was given an illuminated New Testament which he took and held in the air, and he walked all around the high altar, all down the nave of Saint Peter's and back again. . . They've done that every day throughout the council to indicate the new attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Bible. Right after the mass every day, somebody takes the New Testament like that all around the church. Most significant! Tremendously significant! . . .

"Well, I must close. I've kept you much too long, but I feel this very sincerely that we, as a people, must rethink our approach to these dear people. We must rethink our approach to our Roman Catholic friends. How can we reject an outstretched hand and be Christians? How can we say that they belong to antichrist when they reveal so many beautiful Christian attitudes?"

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[Dr. B. B. Beach, who by authorization of the Northern Europe-West Africa Division Committee presented a gold medallion to Pope Paul VI, spoke on Oct. 6, 1979 to an Adventist Forum Meeting in Worthington, Ohio. From a taped recording, we excerpt the following:]

"This pope [John Paul II], I tell you, brethren, if you want to be open-minded, read his messages, and see how much of his messages you can agree with, and I think you will find that you can probably agree with about 95%. He is one of the few voices in the world that actually speaks out strongly for morality."

Your Bible says: - "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." II Cor. 11:13-15

"Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only?" Great Controversy, p. 625

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