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Theological Seminary

# EARLY DAVIDIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY BETWEEN 1929-1955: A COMPARATIVE, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Limoni Manu

March 2006

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# DEDICATION

This page is dedicated to the following persons, colleagues and friends who over the course of many years have made a significant contribution to my ministry.

TO:

| | |
|---|---|
| My Loving Parents | Pita Manu O'uiha and Ilaisane Manu Opea I'vaha who now rest in Jesus |
| My Wife Sulueti L. Manu | For being the backbone of my success in Ministry |
| My Children Ilaisane Ruci, Limoni Jr, Sulueti Tupoutua Jr, and Samuel Lance Manu | For being good troopers in the academic pursuit |
| My Family and Friends | For moral support and encouragement |
| My Local SDA Church (Naqati) | For nurturing my early Christian experience |
| My Teachers | For being models worthy of emulation |
| My God | For glory and honor that belongs to Him |

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Finally, the ultimate tribute, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!" (Rev 5:13). I OWE IT ALL TO HIM. This pilgrimage from inception to fruition has been a great miracle! -L Manu-

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**Publications by Victor T. Houteff**

| | |
|---|---|
| *JL* | *Jezreel Letters* no. 1-9 |
| *SCode* | *Symbolic Code* |
| *SRod* | *Shepherd's Rod* - 2 vols |
| *TA* | *The Answers* no. 1-5 |
| *TG* | *Timely Greetings* - 2 vols |
| *TS* | *Tract Studies* no. 1-15 |

**Publications by Ellen G. White**

| | |
|---|---|
| *AA* | *Acts of the Apostles* |
| *COL* | *Christ Object's Lessons* |
| *DA* | *Desire of Ages* |
| *EW* | *Early Writings* |
| *GC* | *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* |
| *PP* | *Patriarchs and Prophets* |
| *PK* | *Prophets and Kings* |
| *SM* | *Selected Messages* |
| *1T* | *Testimonies for the Church (1T, etc.)* |
| *TM* | *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* |

**Other Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| AHC-AU | Adventist Heritage Center (Andrews University, Michigan, MI) |
| *AFT* | *Additional Fundamental Tenents of Faith In Common With SDAs* |
| *AR* | *Adventist Review* |
| *AUSS* | *Andrews University Seminary Studies* |
| BDSDA(s) | Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist(s) |
| *COE* | *Contemporary Option in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* |
| Com on Dlit, SR-Examined | Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Some teachings of the Shepherd's Rod Examined (March, 1956) |
| *CRI Statement* | *Christian Research Institute Statement DD025* |
| *DCA* | *Dictionary of Christianity in America* |
| DSDA(s) | Davidian Seventh-day Adventist(s) |
| *EAR* | *The Encyclopedia of American Religions* |
| *EDB* | *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* |
| *EDR* | *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* |
| *EDT* | *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* |
| EGWRC-AIIAS | Ellen G. White Research Center (AIIAS, Silang, Cavite, Philippines) |
| FB-DSDA | Fundamental Beliefs of Davidian Seventh-day Adventists |
| GC | General Conference |

| | |
|---|---|
| *GC Com-WAE* | *General Conference Committee, A Warning Against Error* |
| *GCO to All Ministers* | *Letter by the Defense Literature Committee*, 1934 |
| *HSDAT* | *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* |
| *HSR SDA defend* | *History of the Shepherd's Rod* |
| *HT On-line* | *Handbook of Texas Online* |
| *HTSR* | *History and Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod* |
| OEP | Olympic Exposition Park Church |
| *PUC Com REPLY* | *A Reply to the Shepherd's Rod* |
| Research Com Report | "Report of a Meeting Between a Group of 'Shepherd's Rod' Leaders and a Group of General Conference Ministers," 1959. |
| SDA(s) | Seventh-day Adventist(s) |
| *SDABC* | *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* |
| *SDABD* | *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* |
| *SDAE* | *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* |
| *SDASB* | *Seventh-day Adventist Student's Source Book* |
| SOP | Spirit of Prophecy (In this study referring to the writings of EGW) |
| *TWOT* | *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* |
| VTH | Victor Tasho Houteff |

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

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Title: EARLY DAVIDIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY BETWEEN 1929-1955: A COMPARATIVE, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Name of researcher: Limoni Manu

Name of degree of faculty adviser: Aecio Caïrus, Ph.D.

Date completed: March 2006

This dissertation is a comparative, historical, and theological evaluation of early Davidian Seventh-day Adventist (DSDA) apocalypticism. The DSDAs, commonly known as the Shepherd's Rod (SRod), splintered from the organized Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in 1929. The study explores the theological influences, methods of exegesis, and core eschatological doctrines of Victor T. Houteff (VTH), founder of the SRod. The research is in an area that is much needed in SDA scholarship and important for Adventist understanding.

The introductory chapter notes the lack of a comprehensive understanding of SRod apocalypticism. Thus the attempt of this investigation is to fill the information gap, and analyze the major eschatological views of VTH.

Chapter I begins with a biographical sketch of VTH followed by a brief historical survey of Davidianism. The millenarian influences on the SRod movement is discussed and background information lays the foundation within which the apocalypticism of VTH is evaluated.

Chapter II focuses on the foundational views of VTH. First, his theology, views of Scripture and EGW, and his hermeneutical approaches to inspired sources. Second, his ecclessiology and understanding of mission within Adventism. Third, his eschatology and understanding of the 144,000 and the sealing of the remnant (Rev 7:1-4; cf. Ezek 9), the latter rain (Joel 2:23,28-32), and the loud cry (Rev 18:1-4).

Three additional core views of VTH are analyzed in chapter III. First, the idea of a terrestrial kingdom based on VTH's understanding of selected OT prophecies, such as Isa 2:1-4; Jer 30:3; Ezek 34:22-24; Dan 2:44; Hos 3:4,5; Mic 4; Zech 14:4,5, and others. Second, the sealing and slaughter of Ezek 9:1-11; and third, the harvest in the parable of Matt 13:24-30,36-43.

Chapter IV concludes that while VTH had a high view of Scripture and EGW's work, his core views are not in harmony with SDA understanding and beliefs. Hence the SRod is a fringe organization and should not be supported by SDAs. Several major contributions to the understanding of DSDAs are underscored in this chapter including pointers for further SDA reflection.

# INTRODUCTION

Victor Tasho Houteff (1885-1955), a Bulgarian immigrant to America, founded the *Davidian Seventh-day Adventist* (DSDA) movement, better known as the *Shepherd's Rod* (SRod), in 1929.[1] Houteff's apocalypticism was espoused by early DSDAs and it fascinated many keen seekers for truth over the years.[2]

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[1]*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (SDAE)*, rev. ed., (1976), s.v. "Davidian SDA's-Shepherd's Rod." Henceforth, Victor Tasho Houteff, will be abbreviated as either Houteff or VTH. The organized Seventh-day Adventist Church will be referred to as SDA(s), Adventist Church, or Adventism. When referring to DSDA(s) as a historical system of belief, Davidianism or the Davidian tradition, will be used. The DSDAs were commonly known as the Shepherd's Rod movement after its first publication, *The Shepherd's Rod (SRod)*, 2 vols., 1930-32. In this study, DSDA(s), and SRod are used interchangeably to refer to the same movement. The official name, "General Association of Davidian Seventh-day Adventists," was adopted in 1942 in conjunction with the US government regulations during World War II. See Caleb Rosado, "Lessons from Waco," *Ministry*, July 1993, 9.

[2]See the following sources for a glimpse of the history and influence of VTH. Albert A. C. Waite, "From Seventh-day Adventism to David Koresh: The British Connection," *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 38 (2000): 107-26; Newsbreak, "Adventist Church Leaders Respond to the Waco Affair," *Adventist Review (AR)*, March 18, 1993, 7; *SDAE*, s.v. "Davidian SDA's-Shepherd's Rod." Cf. Lowell Tarling, *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism* (Australia: Galilee, 1981), 113-24.

A subsequent splinter group from the DSDA offshoot was the *Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists* (BDSDAs), a radical apocalyptic cult located in Waco, Texas. On April 19, 1993, millions of viewers around the world watched in horror as fire consumed the Waco Compound resulting in the death of 86 people, including 24 children, 17 of whom were under the age of 10.[1] The Waco tragedy was a cause for deep soul searching among many Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) who lost either relatives or friends and former church members in the raging inferno.[2]

[1]Raymond Cottrell, "History and Fatal Theology of the Branch Davidians," *Adventist Today*, (May/June 1993): 3; and Idem, "Adventists and the Waco Syndrome," *Adventist Today,* (March/April 1995): 17, describes the bizarre events of Waco as "weird irrational apocalypticism." The countdown to doomsday began on February 28, 1993. After a violent confrontation between David Koresh and his followers on one side, and members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms division on the other, four federal agents were killed and 16 others injured. This was followed by a 51-day standoff until the crisis of April 19, 1993. See Christian Research Institute Statement DD025, "The Branch Davidians," 1-5 [statement on-line]; available from http://www.equip.org/free/DD025.htm; Internet; accessed May 12, 2004 (cited hereafter *CRI Statement DD025*); Cf. Vance Ferrell, "The Shepherd's Rod & Davidians of Waco," 1-15 [article on-line]; available from http//www.sdadefend.com/davidians5.htm; Internet; accessed May 11, 2004.

[2]Waite, 107. He insists that "although the Adventist Church had no connection with the fanatical Branch Davidian cult, the inescapable reality is that most members of the group, including Koresh himself, came from an Adventist background." Ibid. Also see Rosado, 8; Caleb Rosado, "The Appeal of Cults: Why Are Some Adventists Vulnerable to Fatal Fanaticism? How Can We Prevent It?" *AR*, July 29, 1993, 16, notes that "as law enforcement

In retrospect, misconstrued apocalypticism can be lethal as evidenced in the catastrophe of Waco.[1] Hence the counsel by Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, to "take the cultic threat seriously" and to analyze it from a theological perspective is timely and relevant.[2] This study is a quest to understand the early DSDA apocalyptic sect. To achieve this goal, the historical and theological foundations of early DSDA apocalyptic eschatology cannot be ignored.[3] In addition there is a need to evaluate and test the validity of DSDA claims and doctrinal positions.

## Statement of the Problem

Since the early beginning of the SRod movement in the 1930s, Adventists have on several occasions responded to the teachings of Victor T. Houteff (VTH). However, between

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investigators shifted through the rubble of David Koresh's charred kingdom," Christians, particularly SDAs "began their own autopsy of the tragedy."

[1]Raymond Cottrell, "Commentary on the Waco Syndrome," *Adventist Today* (May/June 1993): 9.

[2]Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 9-13. The authors provide a helpful definition of cults in the areas of doctrine, sociology, and moral characteristics.

[3]Reference to the early DSDA apocalyptic eschatology may be interpreted in two ways: (1) to VTH's eschatology as purported in his original writings, and (2) it refers to his movement specifically his generation of DSDAs from 1929-55.

1930-60, SDA literature on the issue was sporadic, comprising basically a comparison of statements between the teachings of VTH and Ellen G. White (EGW).[1] From 1960-93, the study of early DSDAs was of little interest in SDA circles.[2] Not until the Waco catastrophe of 1993 was there a resurgence of SDA articles tracing the connection of the BDSDAs to VTH. The primary intention, though, of most post-1993 Adventist literature was to dissociate the SDAs from BDSDAs.[3] Other post-1993 literature focused on aspects of

[1]EGW (1827-1915) was a co-founder of the SDA Church who contributed immensely to the early establishment, growth and development of Adventism. She was a prolific writer and her works hold a certain degree of authority among SDAs. George E. Rice, "Spiritual Gifts," *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (HSDAT)*, gen. ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 12:610-50, discussed the significance of her role and function in the SDA Church. Consequently, a tendency to quote and to misinterpret her writings has always existed among SDAs and/or offshoots from the SDA Church. This weakness is predominant in the works of VTH and will be the focus of this dissertation.

[2]Tarling, 113-24, was perhaps the most substantial investigation of Houteff's views during the period preceding 1993. Cf. Kenneth G. C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206, n. 27.

[3]Newport, 205, insists that the SDA Church succeeded in distancing itself from the events of Waco and creating the "impression that the Church was simply descended upon by a wholly extraneous cult." But he also points to an inextricably intertwined connection between the movements, both historically and theologically. Ibid., 206. Cf. Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety: Patterns of Diversity within a Sect Reducing Tension with Society," *Journal for the Scientific*

psychology, anthropology, sociology, the cultic aspects of the DSDA tradition, and on events leading up to, and surrounding, Waco.[1] Except for some unpublished papers[2] (by

*Study of Religion* 34 (1995): 323-42. Also see Cari Hoyt Haus and Madlyn Lewis Hamblin, *In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists Among the Victims?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993). James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1995), 222, argue that the work of Haus and Hamblin is a negative portrayal of Koresh denying that he had any significant ties to Adventism.

[1]For example, Jayne Seminare Docherty, *Learning Lessons from Waco: When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Negotiation Table* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), develops a conceptual model of worldview conflict from a psychological and social perspective. Todd M. Kerstetter, "God's Country, Uncle Sam's Land: Religious Exceptionalism, the Myth of the West, and Federal Force" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, 1997), 1-339, from a historical perspective, examines the interaction of three powerful forces: religious exceptionalism, the myth of the West, and federal force. Michael Thomas Hudgens, "Theseus at Waco" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, 1998), 1-287, unravels the Waco scenario as a novel for American literature. Also see James D. Faubion, *The Shadows and Lights of Waco: Millennialism Today* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-189.

[2]Melvin Kenneth Eisele, "A Study of V. T. Houteff and The Shepherd's Rod Movement" (Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University (AHC-AU), Berrien Springs, MI, 1972); David Bryant, "Concerning the Shepherd's Rod: An Appeal to Our Sister" (AHC-AU, 1974); Philip Evans Payne, "The Historical and Theological Interpretations of the 144,000 in Adventism" (AHC-AU, 1974); Michael Garner Doucoumer, "Contradictions between the Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod and the Spirit of Prophecy" (AHC-AU, 1978); Hilton E. Garnett, "A Brief Historical Study of the Shepherd's Rod and Its Relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States of America between 1920 and 1960" (AHC-AU, 1981); Anthony Mazzella Jr., "The Shepherd's Rod: New Light

Melvin Kenneth Eisele, David Bryant, Philip Evans Payne, Michael Garner Doucoumer, Hilton E. Garnett, Anthony Mazzella, Jr., and Varner J. Johns), not much work has been done on VTH's apocalypticism.[1]

The core eschatological issues advocated by VTH were the primacy of the 144,000 (cf. Rev 7:4) as first fruits unto the Lamb;[2] the setting up of the Davidic kingdom on

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or New Apostasy?" (AHC-AU, 1983); and Varner J. Johns, "The Church and the Kingdom: With an Examination of the Errors of the Shepherd's Rod" (AHC-AU, n.d.).

[1]Newport, 197, n. 1, points to the lack of any academic work dealing with the theological perspectives of Davidianism. Cary R. W. Voss, "Students of the Seven Seals: An Organization History," (October 24, 1994) [article on-line]; available from http://www.angelo.edu/~cvoss /Davidian%20Webpage/public_html/History.html; Internet; accessed February 17, 2005, affirms the claim of Newport. He says the history of the Branch Davidians suffers two problems: "First, they are incomplete. No major work has been published which chronicles their entire history. Only selective accounts of the various periods are available. Second, most works which have been published are highly partisan. Some works seek to valorize the Davidians, while the majority of the works thus far are highly critical of both their theology and their actions." Ibid.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, *The Shepherd's Rod (Srod)* (Mountain Dale, NY: Universal, 1930), 1:102-04, passim, sees the 144,000 as remnants from the SDA Church. Cf. Idem, *The Shepherd's Rod* (Mountain Dale, NY: Universal, 1932), 2:107, 162, draws a close connection between the 144,000 and the sealing of Ezekiel 9.

earth;[1] Ezekiel 9 and judgment of the living;[2] and the SDA Church and the harvest.[3] SDA literature touching upon these issues has not provided a comprehensive understanding of (1) the undergirding factors that may have contributed to the formulation of VTH's ideas and the context of early DSDA apocalyptic eschatology;[4] (2) the early DSDA method of

[1]See Victor T. Houteff, "Truth Crushed to Earth Shall Rise Again," *Tract Studies* 9 (1942): 45, where he argues the Kingdom is to be set up before the close of probation. Cf. Idem, "Zion's Reward and God's Mighty Effort," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 42 (1947): 2-10; Idem, "Only Two Ways," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 2 (1946): 11; Idem, "Questions and Answers on Present Truth Topics," *The Answerer (TA)* 2 (1944): 75, 83, says God's converted people will re-inhabit Palestine. For early DSDAs, this was not a millennial kingdom. Rather, a kingdom (made up of the 144,000) set up in Palestine prior to the advent of Christ for the finishing of the gospel commission on this earth (Isa 2:2; cf. Dan 2:44). Idem, "A Trodden-down Kingdom Rising To Prominence and Peace," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 29 (1947): 7-8; Idem, "God's Certification to Resurrect, Purify, and Consolidate Judah and Israel," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 48 (1947): 28.

[2]The Shepherd's Rod purports, "If we were to make out the exact time of the beginning of this sealing, we would say it began sometime during 1929." *SRod*, 1:32; Cf. *SRod*, 2:161.

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "The Judgment and the Harvest," *Tract Studies (TS)* 3 (1934): 66.

[4]The following scholars concur that the historical context and worldviews influence some later theologians. Anthony Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutics," in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics,* ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 92, says, "Every interpreter already stands within a historical tradition, which provides him with certain presuppositions or prejudgments" which become the reality of his being. Idem, "Hermeneutics and Theology: The Legitimacy and Necessity of Hermeneutics," in *A Guide to*

biblical exegesis and theology; and (3) the implications of early DSDA apocalypticism in comparison with those of SDA eschatology.[1] Such an investigation is needed in Adventist studies. Thus this dissertation attempts to fill the gap in theological studies and to address the previously mentioned issues surrounding the works of VTH.

## Purpose of Research

Modern adherents of the Davidian tradition, like their "forebears," still believe "that the Shepherd's Rod Message is God's voice--His revelation today to the SDA Church Denomination."[2] For that reason, this dissertation

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*Contemporary Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 161, stresses that what is to be understood does not derive from a vacuum but rather from something that is already known. Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986), 16, affirms that everyone operates on the basis of some presupposition whether or not they are aware of it. Graham Stanton, "Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 64, says, "Interpretation without any presupposition is an unattainable goal."

[1]In this study, *apocalypticism* and *apocalyptic* (both derived from "apocalypse" meaning revelation) *eschatology* are used alternatively to refer to the unfolding of a set sequence of events as revealed in the prophetic texts of Scripture to indicate the imminent End of Time. Cf. Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 20-21.

[2]General Association of Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Official Website, "The Shepherd's Rod," [article

seeks to examine the views of DSDAs to see if they are consistent with the teachings of Scripture and with the writings of E. G. White as understood by SDAs.

Three basic questions are raised in this study: (1) To what extent and in what way was VTH influenced by the religious milieu and worldview that surrounded him? (2) What were the major theological forces that may have influenced the formulation of his apocalypticism? And, (3) Upon examination of his apocalypticism, is early DSDA theology compatible with SDA apocalypticism or is it a fringe eschatological sect of the SDA Church? These questions will be the focus of attention in this study.

## Significance of Research

A detailed research of early DSDA apocalyptic eschatology is significant for four reasons. First, since 1929, no full-fledged study has been undertaken to analyse the context and root ideology which undergirded the eschatology of VTH.[1] This research attempts to lay bare the

on-line]: available from http://www.shepherds-rod-message.org/about-us.html; Internet; accessed May 10, 2005.

[1]Some studies have attempted to trace the link between the BDSDAs, DSDAs, the SDA Church, and Premillennialism: Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium*; Brad[ley] Bailey and Bob Darden, *Mad Man in Waco: The Complete Story of the Davidian Cult, David Koresh, and the Waco Massacre* (Waco: WRS Publishing, 1993); and William L. Pitts Jr., "Davidians and Branch Davidians: 1929-1987," in

connection between context and theology of early DSDA apocalypticism.

Second, early DSDAs hold "certain fundamental beliefs" in common with SDAs.[1] Under the pretense of doctrinal affinity, early DSDAs worked at cross purposes with SDAs and capitalized on SDA congregations for the dissemination of literature,[2] recruiting of membership, and soliciting of tithes and offerings.[3] This study seeks to

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*Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict,* ed. Stuart Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 20-42. However, no serious investigation has been conducted to see how the divergent premillennial views of VTH's time affected his eschatology.

[1]See Victor T. Houteff, "Fundamental Beliefs of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists," *[FB of DSDAs]*, 21-31, in *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 21-31, see Appendix, no. 1. Cf. *Fundamental Beliefs and Directory of The Davidian Seventh-day Adventists* (Mountain Dale, NY: Universal, 1943).

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "The Twelve Tribes Which Are Scattered Abroad," *Symbolic Code (SCode)* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 3, claims that the Shepherd's Rod literature had by this time crossed the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans "as the appearance of a flash of lightning." Idem to Fellow Believer in the Third Angel's Message, n.d., *Jezreel Letter*, no. 1, reprint 1997, Mountain Dale, NY: Universal, boasts that the "Eleventh-Hour Publications," in "profuse quantities," were "circulated throughout Laodicea."

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "Hearing Is Fine but Seeing Is Better," *SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 8, notes the investment of the Lord's money into the tract of land at Mount Carmel and the building program as part of God's plan; Cf. *SCode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 2,5,8.

unmask the contrast between the two movements and presents them as two distinct and autonomous entities.

Third, early DSDAs believed that the prophetic gift in the SDA Church ceased with the death of E. G. White in 1915. They insisted that the prophetic office was resumed in 1930 with the ministry of VTH. The prophetic claim and the role early DSDAs play as the reformative agents of God to the SDA Church pose an important challenge to SDA eschatology.[1]

This study explores the background issues relating to the development and fruition of DSDA apocalypticism that have been previously neglected by SDAs. The information gathered here will be an essential historical and theological document on the SRod movement in its relation to the SDA faith and practice and will provide resource material for further investigation in this field of study.

[1]DSDAs claimed the prophetic role (Isa 52:1) of reforming the SDA Church which they call "Laodecia." In *FB of DSDAs*, a parallel is drawn between the SDA Church, the Laodicean church, and the parable of "the tares" among "the wheat" of Matt 24:14. Cf. *SRod*, vol. 1, Preface: "*It is the intention of this book to reveal the truth of the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7 but the chief object of this publication is to bring about a reformation among God's people*" (emphasis supplied). The work of reformation is preparatory to the "Loud Cry" of the three angels messages as recorded in Rev 18:1-8. The *Loud Cry*, in SDA understanding, refers to the message of the third angel of Rev 18 which is to be proclaimed in a vigorous manner during the enforcement of the Sunday laws of Rev 13:11-18.

## Definition of Terms

To assist the reader's understanding of this dissertation it is vital to give working definitions for certain essential terms. We first begin by defining the various schools of interpretation before proceeding to other relevant terms to this study.

### Schools of Interpretation

Definitions given in this section are general in nature. The reader may refer to the cited literature for more discussion on the various schools of interpretation and for relevant sources that may be consulted.

#### Millennialism

Millennialism is variously defined as Chiliasm, Millenarianism, or Adventism,[1] the differences between them being "extremely complex" and "unbelievably convoluted and intricate."[2] In Christian theology, millennialism means a system of teaching that focuses on or emphasizes the

[1]See Hugh Dunton, "Millennial Hopes and Fears: Great Britain, 1780-1960," *AUSS* 37 (1999): 179. Cf. *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 2d ed., (1987), s.v. "The Adventist Family."

[2]Norman H. Young, "Urgency and Finality: The Essence of Millennial Belief," *AUSS* 37 (1999): 269.

thousand-year reign.[1] It is not so much the belief in a millennium *per se*, but rather the conviction that the last days are at hand.[2] The time and nature of the "millennium" are disputed among millenarians.[3]

**Amillennialism**

Amillennialism denies the idea of a literal millennium.[4] In this view, the millennium is identified with the reign of the saints during the whole Christian

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[1]James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:746.

[2]Nancy J. Vyhmeister, "Re: The Millennium Issue," *AUSS* 37 (1999): 165.

[3]Three major millenarian groups have been identified, namely: Amillennialists, Premillennialists, and Postmillennialists. A. Morgan Derham, "Millenarianism," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 659. For a detailed explanation of millenarian groups, see N. H. Maring, "Millenarianism," *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion (EDR)*, ed. Thomas C. O'Brien, Consuelo Maria Aherne, and Paul Kevin Meagher (Washington, DC: Corpus, 1979), 2:2370-371; T. P. Weber, "Eschatology," *Dictionary of Christianity in America (DCA)*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 397-401; Duane F. Watson, "Millennium," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (EDB)*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 900-01; and Stanley J. Grenz, "The 1000-year Question: Timeless Truths behind the Debates over Christ's Return," *Christianity Today* 37 (March 8, 1993): 34-35.

[4]Anthony A. Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 155.

era.[1] It is not easy to distinguish between amillennialism and postmillennialism because of the features they hold in common.[2] Amillennialism is perhaps easier to define when it is contrasted with the views of premillennialists.

**Premillennialism**

There are two views of Premillennialism, the historical and dispensational. Both views teach that the second advent of Christ precedes the millennium.[3] The

[1]Ryrie, 448. Origen allegorically spiritualized the future kingdom to represent the Church age from Adam onwards. Ryrie identified Luther and Calvin as amillennialist. Luther believed he was living in the period of tribulation and taught the six ages of 1000 years followed by the seventh age of Sabbath rest. On the other hand, Calvin criticized chiliasm, describing its teachings as a "fiction," "insult," "dream," and "intolerable blasphemy," Ibid., 449. Cf. Young, 269, who notes that "most modern amillennialists understand it as a heavenly reign of the souls of the saints during the intermediate state." This teaching arose with Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Southampton, UK: Camelot Press, 1929, 1988), 648-49, passim. Another form of amillennialism "considers a future millennium reign as an unnecessary addendum to eschatology, a pointless interim between the glorious Advent and the climactic judgment." See Eric Claude Webster, "The Millennium," *HSDAT*, 12:935-36.

[2]See Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium (COE)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 73-74.

[3]Loren L. Johns, "Introduction," chap. in *Apocalypticism and Millennialism: Shaping a Believers Church Eschatology for the Twenty-First Century* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000), 10. Cf. Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 17-113, discusses both views with responses from dispensational, postmillennial, and

former teaches a heavenly millennial kingdom and is to be distinguished from the vast majority of literalist premillennialists who expect a literal millennial kingdom of Christ set up on earth.[1]

**Postmillennialism**

This view is not widely held at present but it had a significant influence within the Christian church during a long period of its history.[2] It is of two antithetical varieties, millennial and postmillennial.[3] The latter form

amillennial positions.

[1]*SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism." Premillennialists do not agree on the nature of the millennial kingdom. In general, they view the coming of the kingdom literally, but some scholars interpret it less so. In George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 64-69, 629-32, passim, the prophecies concerning Israel are spiritualized and the millennial kingdom is viewed more as an extension of the spiritual kingdom of God. For Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 359, Rev 20 is literal, but it is not "the Messianic Age foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament."

[2]Erickson, 55.

[3]*Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia (Wikipedia)*, [On-line edition], (2001), s.v. "Christian eschatology" notes the millennial type postmillennialism which foresaw a future golden age of 1,000 years. During this time Christians were to reign over all of the earth before the return of Christ and the end of the world. This variety was short lived among the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century and those led by Thomas Muntzer.

was the dominant theory of the entire nineteenth century.[1] It postulated a golden "one thousand" years of material prosperity on earth before the second coming of Christ, "through natural means, such as religious revival and social reform."[2]

**Literalist Premillennialism**

These terms, as used in this study, refer primarily to North American advocates of British literalism with minor variations on the original teachings. The term is used here to distinguish Millerite Adventists (who are also seen as literalists) from those among them who "expected Christ to set up on a partly renovated earth a millennial kingdom . . . where probation of most of the world would continue."[3]

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[1]See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 1207.

[2]Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 14. Cf. Idem, "Postmillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 117-41. Also see Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1206; Derham, 659; and Ryrie, 443.

[3]*SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism."

# Other Relevant Terms

## Worldview

A worldview is not something that is selected arbitrarily, but invariably reflects an underlying belief system.[1] It denotes a conceptual attempt to articulate the individual, collective, psychological, as well as the social components of human activities.[2]

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[1]Lloyd E. Kwast, "Understanding Culture," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movements: A Reader,* ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1992), C:3-8, presents the importance of worldviews from the perspective of anthropology; Cf. David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 197, stresses the value of worldviews from a missiological perspective. Ryrie, 16; Stanton, 64; Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutics," 92, and "Hermeneutics and Theology," 161, underscore the role of worldviews in theology and biblical studies.

[2]See Docherty, 49-68, who underscores the value of a conceptual understanding of worldviews in conflict resolution. Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 93-101, passim, highlights that the task to articulate the Christian confession must involve the biblical message, the theological heritage of the church and the thought forms of the historical-cultural context in which the contemporary people of God seek to speak, live and act.

**Apocalyptic Eschatology**

Apocalyptic[1] Eschatology[2] has come to designate a worldview which provides a conceptual framework within which the works of an apocalyptic genre are interpreted.[3] The complex of ideas to which the terms apply has interested

[1]"Apocalyptic" and "apocalypticism" are related concepts with eschatology and are often used together to refer to a common framework of presuppositions. The term "Apocalypse," comes from the Greek noun *apokalypsis* (revelation or disclosure), a term used to designate a literary work or genre. See Paul D. Hanson, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:279 and Pfandl, 20-21.

[2]The basic definition for *eschatology* is derived from two Greek words, *eschatos*, which means "the last thing(s)," and *logos* "teaching," or "word." K. E. Brown, "Eschatology," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 459, suggests that biblical eschatology, from the idea of *telos*, may be defined as "the direction and goal of God's active covenant faithfulness in and for his created order." For a synthesis of the various definitions for *eschatology*, see Pfandl, 21.

[3]This includes a genre of literature in biblical apocalyptic (Daniel, Revelation, Isa 24-27; Ezek 38-39; Zech 9-14; 1 Thess 4:13-5:2; Jude 9; Mark 13) and in Jewish apocalyptic literature (Books of Enoch, Baruch, I and II Esdras, Book of Jubilees, Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Assumption of Moses, etc.). See the following representative works: Hanson, 1:280; R. C. Briggs, "Apocalyptic," *Dictionary of Living Religions*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1981), 42; N. H. Maring, "Apocalypticism," *EDR*, 2:213; Stephen Motyer, "Apocalyptic," *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 28-30; and M. Rist, "Apocalypticism," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 157-61 (Supplementary Volume).

non-Christians, Jews, and Christians for centuries.[1] Joel N. Musvosvi, Dean of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies Theological Seminary, provides a helpful summary of the biblical nature of "apocalyptic" eschatology.[2]

> A. It may be used to qualify a particular book, type of literature, or genre of speech, whether oral or written. The books of Daniel and Revelation provide the best biblical examples of this usage.
> B. The word may be used to qualify the noun "prophecy," thus denoting a dramatic form of prophecy that uses symbolism to portray God's dramatic presence among His people, thus differentiating it from classical prophecy.
> C. It can be used to qualify a pattern of thought or a mind-set common to prophets and their faith communities in times of profound crisis and upheaval for the people of God.
> D. It may refer to a movement that sees itself as both cosmic and eschatological.

This study adopts this inclusive and broad definition of apocalyptic eschatology in the context of SDA and early DSDA teaching of the end of time.

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[1]Ralph E. Neall, "The Nearness and the Delay of the Parousia in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1982), 13.

[2]Joel N. Musvosvi, "The Issue of Genre and Apocalyptic Prophecy," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 5 (2002): 43. Cf. Pfandl, 21, who notes, "If eschatology describes a radical break in the course of history, apocalyptic or apocalyptic eschatology describes the end of history, the end of this world. It is the time when the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil will finally be finished, when the final judgment will take place and salvation will be consummated, and when this present age will be followed by eternity. Thus, the apocalyptic event is the final eschatological event."

## Delimitations

The following delimitations are recognized in this investigation.

1. The study is limited to the life and teachings of VTH. It strives to understand the undergirding factors that may have influenced VTH's apocalypticism.

2. This study focuses primarily on the early DSDA movement without any significant attention to other dissident groups that grew out of it. Hence reference to the BDSDAs will only be made as it relates to this study.

3. This study refrains from comparing the teachings of VTH with those of David Koresh and the Waco group. Furthermore, while focusing on early DSDAs it will only deal with the major eschatological themes of the teachings of VTH.

4. The primary sources of VTH constitute the basis for this investigation. Secondary sources will only be used as they relate to this investigation. Both categories of sources are essential for the contextual understanding of VTH's life and works.

## Methodology and Procedure

This dissertation may be categorized as a systematic and historical-theological study.[1] It is a documentary investigation based on research of published primary materials produced by VTH between 1929-1955. The complimentary use of relevant secondary material is also essential to this investigation. The synchronic approach of doing historical theology will be the basic method employed in this work.[2]

Following this introduction, chapter I provides an historical overview for the life and religious context of VTH and the history of Davidianism. It explores the historical milieu within which the apocalypticism of VTH was developed.

Chapter II considers the foundational principles of VTH's apocalypticism. Specific attention is given to VTH's theological foundation, his views on ecclesiology, and how

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[1]See Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1998), 5-16, passim, who discusses the close links between the two disciplines.

[2]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 25, notes two major ways in which historical theology maybe organized: First, the Synchronic Approach where the theologies of a given time or theologian, with respect to key theological areas, are being studied. Second, the Diachronic Approach, is where the history of thought regarding a given theology is traced through the periods of church history.

those views affected his apocalypticism and his understanding of the 144,000 which serves as his major eschatological teaching.

Chapter III expands upon the previous discussion, particularly focusing on three of VTH's major doctrines that grew out of his foundational principles: (1) the apocalyptic kingdom of David, (2) Ezekiel 9 and the judgment of the living, and (3) the concept of the harvest. Basically, the beliefs of SDAs during the time of VTH will form the basis of evaluation in this study. In a few cases, such as the view of the 144,000, the current SDA positions have also been noted. These were included because the main purpose of this work is to assess the compatibility of Davidianism with Adventism, and not to judge Houteff for the degree of his disagreements or deviations with respect to SDA positions then available. Additionally, while these chapters are an evaluation of past teaching, attempts will be made to show its relevance in the contemporary SDA situation.

Chapter IV constitutes an overall summary and the conclusions of the study.

# CHAPTER I

## HOUTEFF'S HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The statement by Abraham Heschel, "No religion is an island," fittingly applies to theologians.[1] No one is immune to the influences of their historical milieu.[2] Thus the study of Houteff's life and of DSDA history and suppositions may help us to understand his theological perspectives. Such an investigation is of pressing need as

[1]Cited from Jacques B. Doukhan, "Who Is the Blind One of the Two?" *Shabbat Shalom*, August 1995, 3.

[2]Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 1:19, speaks of historians of Christian thought. McGrath, 12, says, "It is virtually impossible to do theology as if it had never been done before. There is always an element of looking over one's shoulder, to see how things were done in the past, and what answers were then given." McGrath insisted that "part of the notion of *tradition* is a willingness to take seriously the theological heritage of the past" (emphasis supplied). Ibid. Cf. Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 9; Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 1:12, argued that unless we consider how systematic theology has done eschatology in the past, we cannot decide on how or whether it might be done in today's context.

Newport confirms in noting the lack of any "detailed examination" of VTH's works.[1]

## Life Sketch of Houteff

The data gathered here on the life of VTH is not exhaustive. A sketch of his life is presented to help bridge the gap in information for contemporary readers by providing the background information necessary for understanding his apocalypticism. The study begins by looking into the childhood and upbringing of VTH.

### Houteff's Childhood and Upbringing

VTH was small and dark with no outward appearance of someone who had a superior mentality.[2] He was born in

[1]Newport, 206.

[2]M. L. Andreasen to J. L. McElhany and W. H. Branson, December 25, 1942, Letter by General Conference (GC) Field Secretary, Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. Andreasen noted how a certain cunning was observed in the way in which VTH would respond to questions and to his clear-cut statements.

Raikovo,[1] Bulgaria, on March 2, 1885.[2] Houteff had "three brothers—Nick, Leo, and Theodore, and three sisters—Anna, Marie, and Fimea."[3] Little is known of VTH's early background apart from his brief personal testimony.[4] Allegedly, VTH along with some of his friends, were accused

[1]Raikovo is situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the Rhodope Mountains, Bulagaria. On the 18th of June, 1960, Raikovo and the neighboring villages of Smolyan and Ustovo merged into a town, which is named Smolyan. In the seventeenth century the inhabitants of this region strongly opposed Islam. As a result, more than 200 people were killed, many fled to the mountains, and others adopted Islam. See "Bulgaria," [article on-line]: available at http://www.bulgaria-property.com/bulgaria; Internet; accessed February 9, 2005.

[2]The following literature devotes some attention to the early years of VTH: Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *The History and Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod* (1955), 3 (Hereafter cited as *HTSR*); Tarling, 113; Cottrell, "History," 1; Newport, 200.

[3]A. Anthony Hibbert, *Before the Flames: Story of David Koresh and the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists* (New York: Seaburn, 1996), 33.

[4]Victor T. Houteff, "The Lord Our Righteousness," *Timely Greetings (TG)* 2, no. 35 (1948): 29, 30; Idem, "Life Is But What We Make It," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 50 (1947): 26. Cf. Don Adair, *A Davidian Testimony* (Tamassee, SC: 282 Davidian Way, 1997), 36-37, accused the SDA leadership of distorting the accounts of VTH in an attempt to prejudice the minds of the SDA lay members against VTH by the use of inflammatory words such as "violently expelled from the country of his birth," while describing his expulsion from Bulgaria. See, for example, *HTSR*, 3; Cottrell, "History," 1; Tarling, 113; Waite, 107.

of a conspiracy in Bulgaria.[1] Incited by the bishop of the Orthodox church of which Houteff was a member, a mob gathered around his home one morning before daybreak and stormed the windows of his shop with guns and stones.[2] Consequently, VTH decided to leave Bulgaria for America in 1907 at the age of twenty-one.[3] At first, sentiments of remorse, betrayal, and resentment convinced him that his flight to America was a terrible misfortune. Only later did he realize that his pilgrimage was providential to his Christian experience.[4]

## Houteff's Adventist Roots

Chicago became VTH's home for the first fifteen years of his life in America. As a well-to-do business person,[5] he became a hotel proprietor during which time he

[1]Bailey and Darden, 15, note that the problem began when VTH and his cousin opened a shop in Turkey, just across the border from the Bulgarian village where his family lived. His business prospered because he undercut the local market. This enraged the other dealers who threatened and eventually vandalized his business.

[2]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 29.

[3]Ibid., alleges Houteff was "driven" out of his homeland. Cf. Bailey and Darden, 15; Tabor and Gallagher, 34.

[4]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 29-30 saw a similarity in his own pilgrimage to that of Moses and Joseph. Idem, *TG* 1, no. 50 (1947): 26.

[5]Tarling, 113.

showed intense interest in the SDA message and through baptism joined the fellowship of the SDA Church in Rockford, Illinois, on May 10, 1919.[1] Shortly afterward, he sold his hotel business and bought into a grocery venture which he later disposed of at a loss.[2] Suffering from financial setbacks, VTH moved from Illinois to California in 1923 where he fell ill and was hospitalized at the Glendale Sanitarium Hospital.[3]

These were difficult times for Houteff. After paying off the bills for his prolonged hospitalization including several months of accumulated tithe and offering pledges, VTH was almost bankrupt with only $3.50 in his pocket.[4] To his wonderful surprise, he received a check from an old bank account for $350 and another $425 from some old stock investments which he had long thought worthless.

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[1]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 12; *HTSR*, 3; Waite, 107; Cottrell, "History," 1; Newport, 200.

[2]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 13.

[3]In Ibid., 13-15, Houteff expressed sentiments of dissatisfaction while he was hospitalized at the Glendale Sanitarium hospital. No doctor was provided to assist him until after a few days and the nurse on duty slept in the same room with him. These experiences triggered questions in his mind about the genuineness of the SDA Church. However, VTH resolved that the church was still God's even though the people that were running them were reactionaries, modern priests, scribes and Pharisees. Cf. Garnett, 6.

[4]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 16.

As an immigrant in the US, VTH was a survivor. With the money he received coupled with hard work selling washing machines for the Maytag Company in California, VTH was soon on the road to financial recovery.[1]

VTH was never a minister nor employee of the SDA Church. By transfer of membership in December of 1925, he joined the Olympic Exposition Park (OEP) Church in Los Angeles and became an active Sabbath School teacher in 1928 and 1929.[2] Philip Evans Payne, in his study of the historical and theological interpretation of the 144,000 in Adventism, suggests that VTH may have constructed his views from the Sabbath School lessons and study help of those years.[3] By that time VTH had become disillusioned with the SDA Church.[4] He was convinced that a faithful remnant of

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[1]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948):16-17, passim; Tarling, 114.

[2]*HTSR*, 3; Garnett, 6; Victor T. Houteff, "The Great Controversy Over The Shepherd's Rod," *Tract Studies* 7 (1954): 20. Henceforth the Olympic Expository Park Exposition Church will be abbreviated as OEP Church.

[3]Payne, 31, where he identified the imageries of the "little flock," the "great multitude," those "who mourn in Zion," the "Esau-Jacob" conflict and "Moses' Rod," as prominent themes in the Sabbath School lessons of 1928-29. Cf. M. L. Andreasen, *Isaiah, the Gospel Prophet: A Preacher of Righteousness* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1928) was a three-volume-series published study helps for the Sabbath School lessons.

[4]See Rolf J. Pöhler, "Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study of the Problem of Doctrinal Development" (D.Theol. diss., Andrews University, Berrien

144,000 would remain alive for the final proclamation of the gospel. In his study group he began to challenge SDA theology and printed his views in his theological manifesto, *The Shepherd's Rod*.[1] This led to a sharp confrontation with the elders of the OEP church[2] and sparked a series of board

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Springs, MI, 1995), 2:323-25, who asserts that the teachings of E. S. Ballenger, W. W. Fletcher, L. R. Conradi and M. L. Andreasen were occasioned by and focused on the teachings of the sanctuary and questions on the Spirit of Prophecy during the years of 1926-45.

[1]David G. Bromley and Edward D. Silver, "The Branch Davidians: A Social Profile and Organizational History," in *America's Alternative Religions*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 149; *Handbook of Texas Online (HT On-line)*, s.v. "Davidians and Branch Davidians" [Handbook on-line]; available at http:www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/DD/ird1.html; Internet; accessed January 24, 2005.

[2]*TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 23, described how they were forbidden to attend church activities and those who attended his studies removed from church membership. At one time, he claims police were called in to arrest him and at another time an attempt was even made to put him into an insane asylum but it failed. See, Pacific Union Conference, Large Houteff Committee, "Minutes of Meeting of Large Houteff Committee," (Glendale, CA: Pacific Union Conference Office, March 8, 1934), 2-3, records, "Elder Rogers requested them not to attend. When they persisted in attending, Elder Rogers spoke to a detective who was in the church at the time, to see that they did not stay. The detective and Elder Rogers asked the men to come to one of the back rooms of the church and when Houteff and his followers still refused to leave, Elder Rogers forcibly expelled them from the church. . . . Kemper Campbell, the attorney, also corroborated this, saying that any church congregation which owns its own church building has a perfect right to expel by physical force, if necessary, any trouble makers who come into the building to disturb the meeting."

and committee meetings to discuss his teachings.[1] After earnest attempts to bring about reconciliation, the OEP church voted the removal of his membership on November 20, 1930.[2] This was the womb out of which the DSDA movement was born. It marked the beginning of a subsequent cycle of DSDA offshoot trajectories from the SDA church.

## Brief History of Davidianism

The religious history of DSDAs may be traced back to VTH's Orthodox orientation. The subsequent SRod movement after it was officially organized in 1935 may be easily divided into three generations of adherents: the Houteff, Roden, and Koresh generations of DSDAs.

### Houteff's Orthodox Orientation

Houteff's first religious affiliation was with the Greek Orthodox Church.[3] The local Orthodox church in

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[1]*HTSR*, 4, records November 14, 1929, the OEP church board voted that VTH discontinue his meetings in church and the conference should be asked to examine his teachings. See pages 3-19, passim, for a detailed historical account of the various committees from the local church, conference, and General Conference levels which met to discuss the Shepherd's Rod issue.

[2]Ibid., 4-8, passim; Rosado, "Lessons from Waco," 9; Garnett, 6; Newport, 203.

[3]Waite, 107; *TG* 2, no. 35 (1948): 30. J. I. Packer defines Orthodox, from the Greek equivalent *orthodoxia* (from *orthos*, "right," and *doxa*, "opinion"), to mean right belief in contrast to heresy. J. I. Packer, "Orthodoxy,"

Bulgaria was *autocephalous*,[1] though its *head bishop*[2] gave the "primacy of honor" to the patriarch of Constantinople,[3] and maintained a common faith and liturgy with the other

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*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 875. According to P. D. Steeves, "Orthodox Tradition," *EDT*, 872, the Orthodox tradition claims to preserve the original and apostolic Christian faith taught by the fathers during the seven ecumenical councils from the fourth through to the eighth centuries.

The Greek Orthodox Church is now considered the traditional religion of Bulgaria of which more than eighty-eight percent of its population belong. See *World Mark Encyclopedia of the Nations* (1995), s.v. "Bulgaria." Cf. *SDAE*, s.v. "Greece," notes the constitutional monarchy bounded on the north by Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, where only 6 to 7 percent of the population are non-Orthodox. The Orthodox Church is one of the three main branches of world Christianity: (1) Eastern Orthodox, (2) Roman Catholicism, and (3) Protestantism. It is also sometimes called the Eastern church, or the Greek Orthodox or Orthodox Catholic Church. For the beginning and development of the SDA work in Bulgaria since the early 1890's, see *SDAE*, s.v. "Bulgaria."

[1]Being autonomous means the local churches have the right to select their own spiritual leader or bishop making them administratively independent. Barbara L. Faulkner, "Eastern Orthodox Church," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church,* ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 323.

[2]Also known as a patriarch, archbishop, or metropolitan. See John Meyendorff, "The Orthodox Church" [article on-line]; available at http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexa.html; Internet; accessed February 3, 2005.

[3]Faulkner, 323, explains the order of precedence among the various Orthodox churches were determined historically and not by numerical strength. The patriarch of Constantinople was given primacy because the city was the seat of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire and the center of Eastern Christendom.

Orthodox communities.[1] This had become state religion in 864, when King Khan Boris I accepted Christianity,[2] but at the end of the fourteenth century the Church lost their autonomy to the Turks.[3] However, the Bulgarians fought tirelessly for an independent church and political freedom. In 1870 the "Bulgarian Exarchate" of the Orthodox communion was restored by the Ottoman government,[4] and became a rallying point for patriotic activities, helping to define the ethnic limits of the community.

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[1]Meyendorff, notes minor differences in the languages that were used during worship and certain aspects of tradition from country to country.

[2]*Encyclopedia Britannica* (2002), s.v. "Bulgarian Orthodox Church," says the roots of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was imbedded in the flourishing Christian communities of the Balkan Peninsula set up in the first centuries of the Christian era. Cf. Official Web-Site of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, "History of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church," [article on-line]; available at http://bulch.tripod.com/boc/mainpage.htm; Internet; accessed February 3, 2005 notes that even though Christianity was hampered by the Arab conquests (sixth and seventh century), the Christian influence favored its successful penetration in different places. See González, 1:248-50, 263.

[3]Official Web-Site of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, "History of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church," notes the suppression and merciless exploitation and atrocities by the Turks. Many were converted to Islam by force or killed by their oppressors.

[4]Ibid. The "Bulgarian Exarchate" fought for the religious independence of the Bulgarian nation. This right-wing movement was declared schismatic by the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople and was not recognized until 1945. See *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2002), s.v. "Bulgarian Orthodox Church."

Houteff was no ordinary layperson of the Orthodox church. Growing up as a young man, he was keen to "know God and to be wealthy."[1] The yearning to "know God" became his consuming passion which changed his life forever.[2] Houteff spent much time in prayer and Bible study, and also had a "towering sense" of "justice" and zeal for "right and wrong."[3] With such a zeal for piety, it would have been impossible for VTH not to be influenced at all by Orthodox worldviews.

Though there is no evidence that as a young Orthodox layman he studied the theology of his church, some attitudes of churchmen in this tradition may have rubbed off on him. Churchmen in the Orthodox tradition cultivated "apophatic" theology during the middle ages up to the 1400s.[4] In this theology, God is seen as beyond any human understanding, so our knowledge of Him is limited to what God chooses to disclose.[5] As a consequence, though this knowledge

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[1]Hibbert, 33.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 35.

[4]W. Corduan, "Via Negativa," *EDT*, 1245.

[5]Steeves, 874; Edward G. Farrugia, "Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 308.

permeates the universe,[1] it can come only from an individualistic "inner vision" or "illumination" of Him, a "mystic's vision of divinity" elevating "spiritual experience" to an "equal role with rationality as an epistemological principle in theology."[2]

Apophaticism, does not seem to appear explicitly in the writings of VTH. On the other hand, VTH did claim a profound and privileged understanding of God's revelation for the SDA Church. He was "obsessed with the idea that he was infallible in thought and word. His imaginings about Scripture were thought by him as the *mind of God*."[3] Houteff said:

> We must conclude that the 'Rod' contains all truth, or there is no truth in it save the quotations of truth. Therefore, if we admit one truth revealed by the 'Rod,' then we must accept it all as truth. . . . Therefore we take the position that the message in the 'Rod' is free from error in so far as the idea put forth is concerned.[4]

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[1]Kallistos Ware, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," *The Oxford Companion To Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alister Mason and Hugh Pyper with Ingrid Lawrie and Cecily Bennett (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 186.

[2]Steeves, 874.

[3]Vance Ferrell, "History of the Shepherd's Rod" [article on-line]; available at http://www.sdadefend.com/Rods%201.htm; Internet; accessed May 17, 2005, 6. (Hereafter as *HSR SDA defend*) [Emphasis is mine].

[4]Victor T. Houteff, "A Letter To 'Ammi' and 'Ruhamah' in Behalf of 'Mother'," *SCode* 1, no. 8 (1935): 1.

The same claim was repeated in 1935 and in the late 1940's.[1] VTH insisted that "the interpretation of the Bible is true only when it is revealed through a channel of inspiration."[2] EGW herself, he argued, was not permitted to fully understand truth regarding the 144,000, until God's appointed time to reveal truth through him.[3] For that reason, the truth of the 144,000 "shines upon a large number of scriptures" of which we have had no previous understanding.[4] Such revelation of the legitimacy of interpretation is quite idiosyncratic in tone, as has been repeatedly noted. In 1934, the GC issued *A Warning Against Error,*[5] to counter the SRod in districts where their doctrines may have spread. It warned against erroneous teachers,[6] the negative influences of SRod who claimed

[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The End of Human Idols and Their Worshipers," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 18 (1947): 10.

[2]*SRod*, 2:13. "Inspiration" here refers to the writings of the SRod.

[3]*SRod*, 1:14.

[4]Ibid., 10.

[5]General Conference Committee, *A Warning Against Error* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1934), 1-32. (Hereafter cited *GC Com-WAE*).

[6]Ibid., 1, referred to teachers who brought in error to "draw away disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30), and "tear down and scatter that which God's servant have build up."

infallibility,[1] and why SDAs could not accept the teachings of the SRod.[2]

SDAs uphold the Bible in its entirety as the standard upon which all truth is tested (Isa 8:20). All other sources of theology must be put to the scrutiny of scripture. Houteff's idea of his personal revelations as an infallible source of understanding God is far removed from the teachings of Adventism,[3] and may resemble some attitudes in Orthodox churchmen (such as apophaticism) more than

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[1]*GC Com-WAE*, 3. The following issues were also discussed: (1) the harvest (pp. 4-8); (2) the slaughter of Ezek 9 (pp. 8-13); (3) the issue of whether or not the visible church will be pure and perfect before the latter rain (pp. 13-14); (4) the leopard beast of Revelation 13:1-10 (pp. 14-16); (5) a warning against the SRod teaching that the SDA Church is one of the fallen churches (pp. 16-18); (6) denunciation against ministers (pp. 18-19); (7) the sealing work and the 144,000 (pp. 19-25); and (8) spiritual reformation for the SDA Church (p. 25).

[2]*GC Com-WAE*, 26-32, gives additional reasons why the SRod should be rejected: (1) Their teachings contain unreliable statements; (2) they promote the contradictory teaching that the SDA Church is one of the "heads" of the "beast"; (3) their teachings are not in harmony with scripture; (4) they twist Bible texts; (5) they contradict the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy (*SOP*); (6) they misconstrue the writings of EGW; (7) they are an "accuser of the brethren;" and (8) they have rejected the counsel of the brethren pertinent to their spurious theories.

[3]Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, Eng: Apollos, 1996), 71-94, notes that although experience and reason are important sources for theology they should always be subservient to the authority of Scripture and not vise versa.

Adventism. VTH departs from EGW who never claimed herself, nor any human being, to be infallible.[1]

While VTH adopted literal premillennialism upon accepting the SDA faith, he maintained the conviction favoring the fulfillment of OT prophecies regarding the Davidic kingdom on earth.[2] This theory was popularized by dispensationalists who were a major influential force in America during the time of VTH.[3] His eschatology could well be compared to a mixture of SDA doctrines, and literalist dispensational optimism. This phenomena could be observed throughout the history of Davidianism.

## Houteff's Generation

The first generation DSDAs, under the flagship of VTH, was organized and nurtured theocratically between the years of 1929-55. VTH held the position of president, Mrs. Florence Houteff (his wife) served as the secretary, and Mrs. S. Hermanson (his mother-in-law), was treasurer on the

[1]Ellen G. White, "Lessons from the Vine," (February 7, 1890) In *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 2: 562.

[2]Houteff does not teach either that Jerusalem is to be rebuilt or not as the capital city of the Kingdom, but only that the Kingdom in its beginning is to be set up in the Promised Land (cf. Ezek 48). He argues that this unique set-up is premillennial. See *TA* 2 (1944): 83.

[3]White, "Lessons from the Vine," 2: 562.

executive council.[1] Moving to the Mt. Carmel Center in Waco, Texas, in 1935, VTH anticipated that within a year the 144,000 would make up the theocratic Kingdom of David in Palestine.[2] The failed transfer to Palestine increased the need for a more permanent Davidian headquarters.

Houteff maintained sole authority of the DSDA movement, until he died of heart failure at the Hillcrest Hospital, Waco, Texas, on February 5, 1955.[3] Under his leadership, the DSDAs engaged in a vigorous proselytizing program within Adventism between 1942-55. By 1955, about 125 members were residing at the Mt. Carmel Center,[4] another 10,000 members were in different countries, and the DSDAs had a mailing list of more than 100,000 SDA addresses

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[1]Pitts, 26.

[2]Bromley and Silver, 150. Victor T. Houteff, "In the Interest of the S.D.A. Denomination," *SCode* 1, no. 14 (1935): 5, referring to Mt. Carmel, says, "True we are establishing our headquarters on this mount that is found in prophecy, but our stay here shall be very, very short."

[3]*HSR SDA defend*, 2. Cf. "Shepherd's Rod: A Brief History" [article on-line]; available at http://www.shepherd's-rod-message.org/about_us.html; Internet; accessed June 7, 2005, 2.

[4]Kimberley Post, "Branch Davidians" [article on-line]: available at http://religiousmovements.lib .virginia.edu/nrms/bran.html; Internet; accessed June 7, 2005.

worldwide, sending out 48,000 tracts every two weeks.[1] His followers, believing that Houteff was the new Elijah, were astonished at his death because they "expected him to reign over the imminent establishment of the Kingdom of God."[2] With the predictions of VTH unfulfilled and his mission incomplete, the SRod organization began to crumble under the leadership of his wife Florence.[3]

On November 9 of 1955, after studying the writings of VTH on Revelation 11, Florence assumed the date marked the beginning of the prophetic period of 1,260 days (v. 3).[4] Simply adding three and a half literal years to November 9, 1955, Florence came to April 22, 1959, as the end of the 1,260 days prophecy and the commencement of the judgments of Ezekiel 9.[5] Subsequent announcements of this time setting were made to both DSDAs and SDAs.[6] A little time later, an official call was made to all faithful DSDAs to gather at

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[1]Tabor and Gallagher, 37; Bromley and Silver, 150; Adrian Prado to Limoni Manu, February 1, 2005, "E-mail Response from the Shepherd's Rod to your Inquiry."

[2]Bromley and Silver, 150.

[3]Post, 2.

[4]*CRI Statement DD025*, 1.

[5]Robert L. Odom, "The Shepherd's Rod Organization Disbands," *Review and Herald*, May 17, 1962, 6.

[6]Victor T. Houteff, "Special Edition," *Symbolic Code* 14, no. 6 (1959): 8, 9.

Mt. Carmel during the week of April 16, 1959, to witness the fulfillment of this prophecy on April 22.[1] They postulated that God would clear Palestine of Jews and Arabs,[2] ushering in the Davidic Kingdom of 144,000 saints,[3] and thus marking the commencement of the climactic events leading to the coming of Christ.[4]

In May of 1960, a 16-page *Report of a Meeting Between a Group of "Shepherd's Rod" Leaders and a Group of General Conference Ministers*, was published.[5] The study noted "a critical and embarrassing situation" facing the SRod "as a result of their prophetic interpretations that had resulted in time-setting."[6] It further laid the

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[1]Odom, 7.

[2]*Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 2d ed., (1987), s.v "Branch SDA's."

[3]Odom, 7.

[4]*HSR SDA defend*, 10.

[5]Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Report of a Meeting Between a Group of 'Shepherd's Rod' Leaders and a Group of General Conference Ministers" (Washington, DC: Takoma Park, July 27-August 7, 1959), 1-16 (Hereafter as *Research Com-REPORT*).

[6]Ibid., 3, 5-11, notes (1) the background of time-setting. And, (2) the setting of April 22, 1959, as the definite date for the end of the 1,260 days of Rev 11:3. Other related issues concerned the expected Davidic Kingdom set up in Palestine before the advent, the harvest and the tares, the 144,000, and Ezek 9.

background[1] for a meeting in Takoma Park, Maryland, from July 27 to August 7, 1959,[2] where the gulf between SDA and DSDA eschatological views became increasingly evident. In December 1961, Florence confessed that the teachings of the DSDAs concerning 1959 had been erroneous. What was more unusual, was that church leaders officially dissolved the Davidian Association in March of 1962.[3] By the late 1960s, VTH's original DSDA group had ceased to exist.[4] The end of the Houteff era marked the beginning of a new Davidian epoch.

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[1]Keen interest was sparked by a sermon preached by Elder A Olson on June 20, 1959, leading to a series of meetings where Mrs. Florence Houteff and the SRod party petitioned the GC to appoint a special committee to "freely discuss" their differences. See *Research Com-REPORT*, 9-10.

[2]Ibid., 10, 12-13, notes the GC special committee consisted of Elders W. E. Murray, A. V. Olson, H. W. Lowe, L. C. Evans, A. C. Fearing, D. E. Neufeld, and R. L. Odom. The SRod delegation was made up of Mrs. V. T. Houteff, T. O. Hermanson, H. G. Warden, N. W. Wolffe, J. D. Springer, Dudley Goff, and Harmon Springer. There the SRod party questioned the Spirit of Prophecy and eventually "reiterated their desire to eliminate the writings of Mrs. White from further discussion with them."

[3]*Illustrated Encyclopedia of Active New Religions, Sects, and Cults*, (1993), s.v. "Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Association."

[4]*CRI Statement DD025*, 2.

## Roden's Generation

Benjamin Roden was born in Bearden, Oklahoma, on January 5, 1902.[1] He accepted the SDA message in 1940 and joined the DSDAs in 1946.[2] In 1953, Roden and his family moved to Waco near the Old Mt. Carmel and for a short time worked at the Center.[3] In 1958, the Rodens and their son George, left for Israel to establish the Davidic kingdom. Their mission to Israel did not succeed but Roden was able to establish a small vegetarian community known as "Amirim Village."[4] In 1959, the Rodens returned to America in time for the Davidian call to gather at Mt. Carmel.[5] Benjamin Roden was among the more than 1,000 believers who responded to the Davidian call.[6] April 22 came and went without the fulfillment of any dramatic event.

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[1]The Universal Publishing Association (UPA), "Primer of Names, Terms, and Agencies Used in This Report," *Report & Analysis*, February 28, 1993, 6.

[2]Ibid.

[3]The Universal Publishing Association, "History: Roden to Koresh," *Report & Analysis*, February 28, 1993, 17.

[4]UPA, "Primer of Names," 6.

[5]Watchman Fellowship, "History of the Branch Davidians," *The Watchman Expositor*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1994): 2.

[6]*HSR SDA defend*, 10.

Subsequent despondency settled over the group. Florence, plagued by remorse and assailed with doubt, eventually abandoned the DSDA group in 1962. The vacuum was immediately filled in by Roden who assumed control over the splintering groups. Roden claimed that his coming to Mt. Carmel on April 22, 1959, was not a coincidence but rather the "sign" which the DSDA group had been waiting for.[1] He declared himself to be the fourth angel of Rev 9:1,[2] the "new voice of inspiration" and their "legitimate leader."[3] He promised them "certainty instead of confusion" and "new light instead of familiar, oft-repeated teachings."[4]

VTH had taught that the "Kingdom of David" would be ruled by antitypical David, "the Branch," that is, "Christ himself,"[5] Consequently, Roden decided to call his faction, the "Branch Davidian SDA's (BDSDAs)."[6] He insisted that Davidians "get off a dead rod onto a living branch."[7] Roden

[1]*CRI Statement DD025*, 2.

[2]Post, 2.

[3]Waite, 110.

[4]Ibid., 111.

[5]Victor T. Houteff, "The Leviticus of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Miscellaneous Tracts* (1943): 4.

[6]Post, 2.

[7]The Universal Publishing Association, "Historic Division Between the 'Branch' and the Davidian Seventh-day

kept the seventh-day Sabbath, instituted among his followers the Jewish practice of OT feasts including Passover, the feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement.[1] He died on October 22, 1978, at Temple, Texas.[2] Soon after his death, his wife Lois took control of the Davidian group in place of her son George, who was heir to the presidency.[3]

Lois began to receive visions and asserted that God was both male and female, and that when Christ returns, He would assume a female form.[4] This drew interest among the feminist movements, resulting in her extensive traveling schedules and featuring in numerous magazine articles and television shows, only to the gradual deterioration of the Mt. Carmel facilities.[5] When Lois died in 1986, George Roden took over the Davidian leadership, seeing himself as a divinely appointed messenger of the apocalyptic seventh angel, the "messiah" and "son of Christ."[6] His headship was

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Adventists," *Report & Analysis*, February 28, 1993, 16.

[1]Watchman Fellowship, 2.

[2]UPA, "Primer of Names," 6.

[3]Bromley and Silver, 151.

[4]Waite, 112.

[5]Ibid.

[6]*CRI Statement DD025*, 2.

short-lived, giving way to another self-proclaimed "messiah" who became the most infamous of all Davidian leaders.

## Koresh's Generation

Vernon Wayne Howell, led the third generation of Davidians.[1] He was born in Houston, Texas, in 1959.[2] The child of an unmarried high-school dropout, Bonnie Haldeman, Howell had a disruptive childhood.[3] In 1977, at the age of 18, Howell moved to Tyler, Texas, where he joined the SDA Church.[4] Later, in 1981, after getting the pastor's daughter pregnant, he was disfellowshipped from the SDA Church, subsequently moving to Mt. Carmel where George Roden was then leader.[5]

In 1983, Howell began to claim possession of the gift of prophecy.[6] He declared in 1985 that God had called

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[1]See George W. Reid, "The Branch Davidians: Who Are They?" *AR*, April 1, 1993, 6-7.

[2]Cottrell, "History," 4.

[3]William Claiborne and Jim McGee, "The Making of David Koresh," *Spectrum* 23 (May 1993): 25.

[4]Cottrell, "History," 4.

[5]Marc Breault, "A Brief History of the Branch-Davidian Seventh-day Adventists," unpublished manuscript (May 27, 1991), 4.

[6]Ibid.

him to become antitypical "Cyrus."[1] Animosity between Howell and Roden erupted into a gun battle on Nov 3, 1987.[2] Shortly after this incident "George Roden was put in jail for burglary and then for murder" of which he was later acquitted.[3] Howell took over the Mt. Carmel Center on March 23, 1988, as commander in chief until the catastrophe of April 1993.[4]

Howell had some charisma and was quite a dynamic speaker. He, like his predecessors, considered "everything he said, did, and thought" to be "inspired by God."[5] He further claimed to be Christ reincarnated, the "Lamb" who had sole authority to "take the scroll and to open its seals" (Rev 5:9).[6] Deeply obsessed with apocalypticism, Howell thought "God had given him the task of interpreting

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[1]Marc Breault, "Some Background on the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement from 1955-1991," unpublished manuscript (May 27, 1991), 11. (Hereafter cited as "Background").

[2]Cottrell, "History," 3. Cf. Breault, "Background," 13-14, suggests several factors associated with the "test of prophethood" of the BDSDA movement including the challenge to resurrect a dead corpse to life.

[3]Breault, "Background," 14.

[4]Newport, 205.

[5]Breault, "Background," 10-11.

[6]Cottrell, "Adventists and the Waco Syndrome," 1.

the book of Revelation" for these last days.[1] In view of his prophetic role, Howell changed his name to David Koresh in 1990.

The name *Koresh* came from the Hebrew for "Cyrus," whom David Koresh presumably saw as a type of Christ.[2] However, Koresh argued that Christ was incapable of saving sinners because he lacked the experience of sin. Thus, there was the need for God to send Christ back to this world to experience sin. This time around, God sent Koresh as Jesus Christ incarnated as a "sinful messiah."[3]

Koresh exploited his powers for self-gratification and manipulated his followers into submission.[4] He urged his female followers to "help him as the sinful Christ [to] experience sin so that he could save sinful human beings."[5]

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[1]Kenneth G. C. Newport, "The Branch Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists," *Spectrum* (Win 2001): 43.

[2]Cottrell, "History," 3. Breault, "Background," 11, says Howell also used the name "Eliakim" taken from Isaiah 22 as a parallel name; however, his main title was "Cyrus."

[3]Breault, "Background," 18.

[4]Rosado, "Lessons from Waco," 9.

[5]Ibid., 9-10. According to William Claiborne and Jim McGee, 25, one of Howell's "new light" was "while his male followers would eventually find their perfect mates in heaven, their earthly wives and daughters were reserved exclusively for his sexual gratification and procreation." Breault, "Background," 15, notes he had a "sizable collection of wives."

Koresh's new light was extreme. His view of himself as an instrument of God in opening the seals and ushering in Armageddon and the end of the world, was evident in the fiery conclusion of his Waco compound in 1993. The Waco estate may have been destroyed by fire, but Davidianism lives on.

According to *Wikipedia*, survivor "Clive Doyle and supporter Ron Goins live at the Mt. Carmel Center and run a small visitor museum as well and hold weekly Bible studies on the Sabbath."[1] Another Davidian, Charles Pace, who was not at Mt. Carmel during the raid of 1993 also lives on the property and holds his own worship services. Others including David Koresh's mother, Bonnie Haldeman, his mother-in-law, Mary Bell Jones, Catherine Matteson, David Thibodeau, Sheila Martin, Ofelia Santoyo, Concepcion Santoyo, and many survivors who live in the area frequent worship services of both groups. This year, on April 19, 2005, seventy people attended the yearly memorial service conducted in sympathy for the victims of 1993.[2]

This brief survey of Davidian history shows an intrinsic connection between Koresh and Houteff, even beyond

[1] *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Branch Davidian."

[2] Ibid.

their SDA connections.[1] While most of those who were affiliated to DSDAs either claimed to be SDAs or were former members of the Church.[2] Some of their beliefs were not in harmony with SDAs. Two predominant features stand out as a radical departure from SDAs. (1) Houteff saw himself as "inspired" or "infallible."[3] This concept was displayed in an extended manner throughout the history of Davidianism and may reflect the ideas of apophatic theology. (2) VTH taught the notion of a terrestrial Kingdom to be set up in Palestine before the coming of Christ. The expectation of

[1]The following deal with the social and historical context of DSDAs: Robert S. Fogarty, "An Age of Wisdom, an Age of Foolishness: The Davidians, Some Forerunners, and Our Age," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3-19; David G. Bromley and Edward D. Silver, "The Davidian Tradition: From Patronal Clan to Prophetic Movement," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 43-72; Pitts, 20-42.

[2]Waite, 107-222, notes twenty-three individuals who died at Waco had previous connections with the SDA Church in Briton. Bromley and Silver, "The Branch Davidians," 149-58, says the Adventist roots may explain why DSDAs evangelized among SDAs almost exclusively. It estimates the surviving DSDAs to number several thousand in some twenty-five countries. But this estimate may be highly difficult to confirm.

[3]Waite, 125, asserts, (1) each leader from Houteff to Koresh claimed to be a divinely ordained messenger from God, and (2) each link targeted the SDA Church for its growth.

an earthly Kingdom became a Davidian obsession throughout its history.

## Comparison Among Millennial Groups

The early nineteenth century was permeated by millennial expectations.[1] How did this milieu influence VTH in the formulation of his eschatology? This section of the study makes a comparison between British, Continental (or European), and American premillennialism.

### The Doctrine of the Second Advent

The promise of Christ to return again (John 14:1-3) is the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) of the Christian Church. The Old and New Testaments thrill us with "well over 1,500 specific references to our Lord's return."[2] Both the early Christian Church and the Church Fathers expected the literal reappearance of Christ,[3] based on the fulfillment of

[1]David E. Smith, "Millenarian Scholarship in America," *American Quarterly* 17 (Fall 1965): 535-45, passim.

[2]Breaden Frank, *Instruction Manual for the New "Pictorial Aid,"* (Victoria, NSW: Signs Publishing, 1987), 75.

[3]Everett N. Dick, "The Millerite Movement 1830-1845," in *Adventism in America: A History,* ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 1. Norman Cohn reminds us that the oldest form of millenarianism was the messianic hope of the Jews based on Daniel 7. The millenarian manifesto foretold of how Israel would overthrow the Greek empire and therefore dominate the whole world. Similar fantasies in the militant apocalypses led to the Jewish

prophetic signposts given in such passages as Mark 13, Matt 24, Luke 21, 1 Thess 4:13-18, and preeminently the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. The Post-Nicene Fathers, however, interpreted many of the biblical prophecies allegorically.[1] This approach dominated Christian thinking until the Reformation. On the other

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uprisings against the Romans from 63 B.C. to A.D. 72. The Zealot wars of A.D. 66-72, and A.D. 131 obsessed with the fantasies of the imminent coming of a supernatural messiah. See Norman Cohn, "Medieval Millenarianism: Its Bearing on the Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements," in *Millennial Dreams in Action: Comparative Studies in Society and History: Supplement II*, ed. Sylvia L. Thrump (Hague: Mouton and Co-Publishers, 1962), 32.

[1]Everett Ferguson, "Millennial and Amillennial Expectations in Christian Eschatology: Ancient and Medieval Views," chap. in *Apocalypticism and Millennialism: Shaping a Believers Church Eschatology for the Twenty-First Century* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000), 136-37, passim, for the distinct premillennial interpretations of chiliast authors at the turn of the fourth century. Ryrie, 448, points to Augustine (354-430), as the most influential allegorist who taught that the "millennium" was identical to the saints reigning for 1000 years during the span of time "between Christ's first and second coming." He laid the foundation for the popularizing of the amillennialist and postmillennialist views. According to Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 5, the Augustinian view was supported at large by the established authorities.

hand, in different areas of the globe, scholars such as Joachim of Floris,[1] Daniel Whitby,[2] Timothy Dwight,[3] Johann

[1]R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1979), 25, notes that the prophetic day/year principle could be traced back to Joachim of Floris. Ryrie, 443, points to Joachim's postmillennialism as trinitarian. Stage one, the Father under the Law of the OT. Stage two, the Son or the period of the NT covering grace. And stage three is the period of the Holy Spirit beginning at about A.D. 1260 in which the world would be converted.

[2]Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), gave a new impetus to Augustine's allegorical approach by promoting his ideas of a "golden age" millennium (postmillennialism). In 1703 his thesis proposed a "spiritual coming," to be followed by 1000 years during which the world would be converted to Christ. At the end of the millennium, Christ would then come in a literal way. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-54), 3:265, likened postmillennialism to the sweeping of a "desolating flood over the Protestant churches, causing men to postpone the day of the Lord." Whitby also saw the 1,000 years as a time of prosperity where war ceased and righteousness and equity prevailed on earth. See "Battle of Centuries Over Millennium," *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-80), 7:104. The Whitbyan postmillennial ideas soon dominated both England and the American Colonies where Jonathan Edwards became its most significant exponent. See Dick, 2.

[3]Dwight (1752-1817), president of Yale and famous as a preacher, writer, and administrator subscribed to the Whitbyan concept of a spiritual advent. Schwarz, 25; Webster, 939.

Petri,[1] Hans Wood,[2] and Manuel Lacunza[3] argued for or against the imminence of the Second Advent on the basis of a biblical theology in which the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation had a crucial role.[4]

## British Premillennialism

Prophetic and millenarian themes were common place in early nineteenth century Britain.[5] Many British writers understood the end of the 2,300 days of Dan 8:14 as a reference to the end of the world in either 1843, 1844 or

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[1]Petri (ca. 1718-92) was the first to ascertain the close relationship between the messianic seventy-week prophecy, Dan 9, and the 2,300 days of Dan 8. Schwarz, 25.

[2]Wood (died 1803) reached similar conclusions where the 2,300 years ended in 1880, Schwarz, 25.

[3]Lacunza (1731-1801), a famous Spanish Jesuit of Chile and Italy, in the 1790s circulated a manuscript entitled, *La venida del Mesías en gloria y magestad* (The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty), under the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra a "Hebrew Christian." See Schwarz, 26. "Lacunza's was a solitary voice almost from the shadows of the Vatican, just before the early dawn of the nineteenth-century revival of the advent hope and the beginning of the great second advent world movement that has since gone on with increasing force and volume." Froom, 3:305, 307.

[4]Schwarz, 24-26. Froom, 3:266-68, passim, notes numerous books and records of sermons on premillennialism preached in England, Scotland, Ireland, and France.

[5]Michael J. St. Clair, *Millenarian Movements in Historical Context* (New York: Garland, 1992), 259.

1847, while others looked at 1866 or 1867.[1] With the French revolution, and the violent uprooting of the European political and social institutions, a new passion was sparked in England for the study of apocalyptic literature.[2]

Bible scholars who saw in this event the fulfillment of Dan 7 and Rev 13, revived the idea of the restoration and conversion of the Jewish nation,[3] and the notion of a literal millennial kingdom set up on earth where Jews would again be used by God as his chosen instrument to evangelize the world.[4] The almost universal postmillennialism of the

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[1]Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), 1:19.

[2]Clouse, 11. Sandeen, 5-7, passim, notes when the French troops under Berthier in 1798 marched on Rome and sent the pope into banishment, scholars who had difficulty agreeing on the dates for the rise and fall of the papal power, now became clear, after the fact, that the papacy had come to power in A.D. 538.

[3]Froom, 3:180-81. Lewis Way sent out missionaries into eastern Europe, Russia, and the Middle East and turned his own estate into a training College for the evangelizing of Jews. About 1825 Lewis Way broke away from the *London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews* (LSPCJ) because he was adamant from his study of Scripture that Christ would return before the beginning of the millennium. See Sandeen, 9-11, 12.

[4]*SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism." Alfred Bryant explains this view well: "But the Jews will then receive the Redeemer, and will look on him whom they have pierced and mourn; and there will be remnants of all the Gentile nations, and probably whole heathen nations, who will receive him, and who by the wonderful outpourings of the spirit of God, will be converted. These unglorified Jews

times was challenged in Britain by Edward Irving, an eloquent advent preacher, and others.[1]

Irving was profoundly influenced by the writings of Lacunza. Lacunza's prophetic interpretation was a mingling of futurism and historicism.[2] This was translated by Irving into the English language for the benefit of the Advent movement in England.[3] Prompted by a personal crisis (the loss of his infant son) Irving insisted on living the Christian life in hope of a union with the imminent Christ whose return might occur at any time.[4] In 1825 Irving

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and Gentiles in the flesh, entirely distinct from the raised and glorified, will build houses, plant vineyards, and do all other things appropriate to men in the flesh, and which their worldly circumstances may require; and over these, Christ and his saints will reign." Alfred Bryant, *Millennarian Views: With Reason for Receiving Them: To Which Is Added a Discourse on the Fact and Nature of the Resurrection* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1852), 125.

[1]Spalding, 1: 17, records the following significant persons in England, Joseph S. C., F. Frey and C. S. Hawtrey, who started a society to publish premillennialism. Others like J. Hatley Frere, Henry Drummond (a member of Parliament who gave financial support), and Joseph Wolff, gave themselves to the cause. Cf. Dick, 2.

[2]David P. Gullon, "Dissertation of Dispensational Premillennialism: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Eschatology of John F. Walvoord" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1992), 85.

[3]P. Toon, "Irving, Edward," in *Who's Who in Christian History*, ed. J. D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992), 345.

[4]St. Clair, 260.

integrated into his preaching the developing ideas of "Babylon" and predicting the end of the world.[1] Through him the teachings of Lacunza made an intense impact in shaping the premillennial outcome of the Albury Park Prophetic Conference of 1826 to 1828.[2]

Irving and the Albury Conference, were directly responsible for the flourishing of the literalist cause in Britain. They strongly opposed Whitbyan postmillennialism and proclaimed instead the advent near.[3]

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[1]D. D. Bundy, "Irving, Edward," The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 803.

[2]Sandeen, 18, maintains that the Albury Conference (which convened on the first week of January, 1826, 1827, and 1828), is perhaps the event more than any other which gave structure to the British millenarian revival, consolidating both the theology and the group of men who were to defend it. Dick, 2-3, notes that Honorable Henry Drummond, and his group reached six points of agreement at the Albury Park Conference: (1) the cataclysmic end to the age; (2) Jews would be restored to Palestine during the judgment; (3) Judgment would fall primarily on Christendom; (4) the millennium would occur after the judgment; (5) Christ would come before the millennium; and (6) the 1,260 years of Dan 7 and Rev 13 would be the period of time from Justin to the French Revolution, the vials of wrath (Rev 16) were to be poured out now, and the second advent was imminent. Cf. Sandeen, 21-22.

[3]Spalding, 17, 19. British premillennialism was also known as "Literalists," in contrast to the "spiritual" applications of Whitbyan postmillennialism, *SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism."

On the other hand, this foundation that was laid by British literalism also became the building blocks upon which modern dispensationalist views later developed in America.[1]

Postmillennialism and literalism in England stood as opposing millennial views. However, what was of greater importance at the time, was not the actual timing of the millennium *per se* but rather the spirit of millennialism itself. Millennialism was spreading like wildfire, soon to cross the Atlantic to the New World.

## Continental Premillennialism

Regarding the spread and popularization of continental premillennialism, Carter Lindberg notes,

> The Reformers of the sixteenth century were heirs to vivid eschatological currents that crested in apocalyptic and chiliastic waves of lyrics, dramatic poetry, Antichrist plays, visionary literature, woodcuts, and revolutionary social-political prophecies.[2]

Joachim of Floris (ca. 1130-1202), prophesied of a perfect future age and his millennialism had an enormous influence on subsequent religious reform movements in

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[1]Charles C. Ryrie, "Update on Dispensationalism," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 18.

[2]Carter Lindberg, "Eschatology and Fanaticism in the Reformation Era: Luther and the Anabaptists," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (October 2000): 260.

Europe.[1] This hope, heralded by Almarich of Bena, "remained alive among the Bogomili in Bulgaria and Serbia, and among the Cathari of the Latin countries."[2] The Hussites also preached the imminent future age and expected the old world to end in 1419 and the return of Christ in 1420.[3]

Millennialism was further fueled by the return of the "Marian exiles, the fathers of Puritanism, to Holland, then to France and Switzerland, and finally to Germany and Scandinavia."[4] These multifaceted Pietistic movements, penetrated Europe with a commitment to mass evangelization.[5] Its religious culture included "legalistic salvation

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[1]Raymond F. Bulman, "Paul Tillich and the Millennialist Heritage," *Theology Today* 53, no. 4 (January 1997): 470.

[2]Rudolf Rocker, "Nationalism and Culture" (1978) [article online]; available from http://www .anarchosyndicalism.net/rocker/nc-6.htm; Internet; accessed April 21, 2005.

[3]Lindberg, 261-62.

[4]Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "The Roots and Fruits of Pietism" (1998) [article on-line]; available from http://www.issuesetc.org; Internet; accessed September 26, 2005.

[5]Lawrence R. Rast Jr., "Pietism and Mission: Lutheran Millennialism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (October 2000): 298.

plans," ideas of dispensationalism, millennialism, and the conviction of themselves being the only "true" Christians.[1]

Through this missionary expansion the Pietistic movements of "Mennonites,"[2] "Anabaptists,"[3] and "Lutherans"[4] spread premillennialism across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries in Europe. In Russia, premillennialism was first introduced to the people there by the Mennonites.[5] Anabaptist preachers such as Hans Hut and Melchior Hofmann postulated the doctrine of an earthly millennium following Christ's second coming.[6] Lutheran pietists like Johann Wilhelm Peterson in 1692 pointed to the dawn of the gospel kingdom.[7] Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) is known for his edition of the Greek New Testament, and his *Gnomon Novi*

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[1]Delbert F. Plett, *Saints and Sinners, The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia, 1812 to 1875* (Steinbach, Man: Crossway, 1999), 93.

[2]Abe J. Dueck, "How Our Fathers Understood the Hope of Christ's Coming," *Direction Journal* 5, no. 2 (April 1976): 21.

[3]Hans Kasdorf, "Anabaptists and the Great Commission in the Reformation," *Direction Journal* 4, no. 2 (April 1975): 303-18, deals elaborately with the Anabaptist missionary expansion during the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation.

[4]Rast, 298-301.

[5]Dueck, 21.

[6]Ibid., 20.

[7]Rast, 299.

*Testamenti* (1742), a detailed exegetical Commentary of the Greek text.[1] But Bengel also authored *Ordo Temporum*, a chronology of Scripture in which he discusses apocalyptic overtones and which became popular in Germany and was translated into several languages.[2]

Subsequently, Bengel's followers in Germany and the neighboring nations continued to perpetuate his teachings and hope in the imminent return of Christ about 1836. This hope was reflected by several writers between 1820 and 1835 who "indicated by the prophecies, when the resurrection should occur and the millennium begin."[3] Froom notes that others in Bavaria and Austria expounded the prophecies where thousands of people flocked to hear about the near advent of Christ. Similar conclusions were also reached by H. Heintzpeter in Holland and Nicole (a lawyer near Nyon) in Switzerland that the world would end by 1846-47.[4]

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[1]H. W. House, "Bengel, Johann Albrecht," In *Who's Who in Christian History*, ed. J. D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992), 77.

[2]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Johann Albrecht Bengel."

[3]Froom, 3:297.

[4]Ibid., 3:297-300, passim.

## North-American Premillennialism

America, being the "land of unbridled freedom of religious expression," became a fertile ground for millennial preoccupation among the earliest settlers, who were mostly Protestants.[1] By the mid-1800s, post-millennialism was bolstered by the teachings of Whitby and Jonathan Edwards, and "was accepted by most American Evangelicals" giving rise to various religious and political reform movements.[2] However, the reign of postmillennialism

[1]Larry Nichols, "Sectarian Apocalypticism in Mainline Christianity," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (October 2000): 321.

[2]Weber, 399. For further insight on the social and religious context of this period, see P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 3-16; Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Clyde E. Hewitt, *Midnight and Morning: An Account of the Adventist Awakening and the Founding of the Advent Christian Denomination 1831-1860* (Charlotte, NC: Venture Books, 1983); George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993).

Schwarz, 13-23, passim, provides an insight to the historical milieu of this period. He notes the setting of the great advent awakening that coincided with the millennial appeal inherent in the reform movements of the time. "A host of reforms," he says, "from vegetarianism to the abolition of slavery, stirred the emotions of thousands. *There was an increased interest both in acquiring the comforts of this world and in preparing oneself and others for the next*. Religious ideas and organizations were being born and were dying at a rapid rate. *Interest in Bible prophecy and the establishment of Christ's kingdom of glory competed for attention in this turbulent milieu*." Schwarz, 22 (emphasis supplied).

was overshadowed by the grim aftermath of the American Civil War (1861-65), the social and economic crisis, pressures of immigration, urbanization and industrialization in nineteenth century America, and two World Wars (1914-18; 1939-45) which all eventually led to the virtual disappearance of this millennial optimism in contemporary Christianity.[1] At about the same time, two competing premillennial views began to blossom in America. This came by way of the fledgling Millerite and the dispensationalist movements.

**The Millerite Movement**

The fervor of British "literalism" which spread from England on the Continent also caught the enthusiasm of their "Millerite" counterparts in North-America.[2] William Miller (1782-1849) was the chief exponent of a movement of more than 100,000 followers.[3] Miller's conclusions, although

[1]Weber, 400; T. P. Weber, "Millenarian Movements," *DCA*, 738; John Jefferson Davis, *Christ's Victorious Kingdom: Postmillennialism Reconsidered* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) is an attempt to reconsider the teachings of postmillennialism with the anticipation of its possible revival prior to the return of Jesus.

[2]*SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism." David Mitchell, *Seventh-day Adventists: Faith in Action* (New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1958), 268, notes the "world-wide Advent awakening was particularly impressive in America."

[3]Bulman, 471. Sandeen, 50, refers to Miller as "the most famous millenarian in American history." James Edson

closely resembling those of the Albury Conference, did not favor the ideas of the restoration of the Jews.[1]

In 1836, Miller published his *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ*, in which he "declared that he had unraveled the mysteries of Daniel and Revelation and pinpointed 1843 as the sure year for the return of Christ."[2]

*Wikipedia* notes four assumptions upon which Miller based his calculations: (1) In prophetic time reckoning, a "day" always represents a year; (2) the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24 and the 2,300 days of Dan 8:14 began at the same time; (3) based on Bishop Ussher's chronology, the countdown started at 457 B.C.; and (4) Dan 8:14 speaks prophetically

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White, *The Coming King* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 171, calls him "the father of the Advent Movement of 1840-1844." Also see William Miller, *Apology and Defense* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1845); Joshua V. Himes, *A Brief History of William Miller the Great Pioneer in Adventist Faith*, 4th ed. (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1915); Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944); and Mitchell, 268-93.

[1]Ernest R. Sandeen, "Millennialism," in *The Rise of Adventism*: *Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth- Century America*, ed. Edwin Scott Gusted (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 110.

[2]Nichols, 321.

of Christ's return to earth, when it refers to the cleansing of the sanctuary.[1]

Having established 457 B.C. as the starting point of the 2,300 year prophecy, Miller's calculation extended to 1843. This date, later adjusted to October 22, 1844, marked the time for the end of the world and the return of Christ.[2] Miller was not alone in his discovery, but he differed radically from nearly all of his contemporaries about the concluding events of Dan 8:14.[3] As Knight summarizes,

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[1]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Millerites."

[2]Miller "was fully aware that his findings contradicted the then commonly held belief in Postmillennialism." George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 9. Cf. C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment: What Really Happened in 1844 and Its Meaning for Today* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 18. The Millerites were unanimous that Christ would return in 1843. Although some expected Christ to come within the regular Gregorian calender year (January 1 to December 31, 1843), Miller himself anticipated the event sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. See Damsteegt, 85.

[3]Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis: 1831-1844* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 8, outlines Miller's principle points of belief as follows: (1) At Christ's personal visible coming in glory in the clouds of heaven, the earth would be destroyed by fire (about 1843). (2) The righteous dead would be raised, changed from corruptible to incorruptible, and the living changed to immortality, all caught up together to reign with Christ forever in the new earth. (3) The saints would then be presented blameless to the Father. (4) The bodies of the wicked would then be destroyed and their spirits kept in prison until their resurrection and damnation. (5) The only millennium taught in the Bible is the thousand years following the first

> For him the cleansing of the sanctuary was the cleansing of the earth and the church by fire at the advent before the one thousand years of Revelation 20. After all the wicked and world burnt up by fire, Christ will descend and reign personally with the saints (on earth), followed by the final judgment of the wicked after the 1000 years are over.[1]

The Millerite presupposition was twofold. First, they rejected what they called literalist "Judaizing" and the influence of British literalism which required the millennial kingdom to fulfill all the OT prophecies to the Jews.[2] And second, they denounced the postmillenial optimism of a "temporal" millennial kingdom. For Miller, the advent of Christ would bring a fiery renovation of the earth and the transformation of the saints to immortality.[3]

Both the Millerite and British (or Literalist) premillennialist groups opposed the postmillennial optimism

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resurrection.

[1]Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 17.

[2]Miller, 6-7, passim, argued that the "popular views of the spiritual reign of Christ--a temporal millennium before the end of the world, and Jew's [sic] return--are not sustained by the word of God." The unifying factor between the British and American millenarian groups was the imminent return of Christ. Apart from this core unity there were basic differences. See *SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism." Millerism was an "interconfessional movement" which reached its climax in America around 1843-44. Damsteegt, 14-15.

[3]"Second Advent, the Millennium, and the Eternal State," *SDABC*, 7:129-30.

for an earthly utopia.[1] At first, the Millerites labeled the postmillennialist optimism as "Judaism," and only later was this term applied to Literalist premillennialists.[2] The unifying factor between the Millerites and the Literalists was the belief in Christ's personal presence and reign during the millennium.[3] Apart from this core belief, a gulf of theological differences separated the two groups. After the disappointment of 1844, Millerite Adventists were in utter confusion.[4] As frustration and discouragement settled over the Millerite camp, Adventists began to fragment and to gel into three main groups.

1. The majority of Millerites gave up all faith in the 1844 fulfillment of the 2,300 days. They concluded that there was an indeterminate future fulfillment of the prophecies, hence they were open to further time-settings.[5] Two main denominations grew out of this majority group, the

[1]Julia Neuffer, "The Gathering of Israel," Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, MD: Old Columbia Pike, 1983), 2.

[2]Ibid., 3.

[3]*SDAE*, s.v. "Millennium," notes they disagreed on the nature and location of Christ's reign during the millennium.

[4]Knight, *Anticipating the Advent*, 22.

[5]Neuffer, 5-6.

Evangelical Adventists (now defunct) and the Advent Christian Church.[1]

2. The second Adventist group retained their faith in the realized 2,300 days but insisted that Christ's advent was an invisible spiritual coming "in his saints."[2] This group known as "spiritualizers" or "spiritualists" promoted "spiritual wifery" and exemption from work during "Christ's great thousand-year Sabbath."[3] This group never became a coherent organization. Many of them eventually joined the Shakers movement in 1846, while others molded back into other Adventist groups.[4]

3. The third group, like the second group, clung to the fulfillment of the 2,300 days on October 22, 1844.[5] This group officially adopted the name SDA in Battle Creek in 1860. SDAs affirmed the conviction of Christ's soon

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[1]"Adventist Bodies," *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies*, 1936, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 3-6, quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book (SDASB)*, ed. Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 9:14-18.

[2]Neuffer, 6.

[3]Schwarz, 56, notes the idea of "spiritual" unions devoid of sexual relationships with new partners.

[4]*SDAE*, s.v. "Spiritualism."

[5]See Maxwell, 74-75, for an elaborate explanation.

return "in view of the fulfillment of the 2,300 days,"[1] but more so, the doctrine of the pre-advent judgment in heaven.[2] The pre-advent judgment idea was supported by Bible students prior to October 22, 1844, and was confirmed by Ellen White.[3]

**SDA Premillennialism**

Millerism was the "immediate background" and "matrix" from which the SDA Church was formed.[4] Miller had built the prophetic platform for the development of the distinctive SDA doctrinal framework between 1844-48.[5] The events of 1844 signaled for SDAs the time to proclaim the three angel's messages of Revelation 14.[6] In 1850, James

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[1]Ibid., 90. The first step towards refining the sanctuary doctrine took place on October 23, 1844. Hiram Edson, a Methodist farmer, had a "vision" which led him to study the prophecies and eventually arriving at the conclusion that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth or the church, but rather the sanctuary in heaven. Cf. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent*, 22.

[2]Maxwell, 90. The view of Christ's intercessory work in heaven beginning on October 22, 1844, preceding the return of Christ for his people, was first suggested by Joseph Marsh and developed by O. R. L. Crosier. Dick, *William Miller*, 159, correctly observes that this view, with some variations, is held by SDAs.

[3]Maxwell, 80-81.

[4]Spalding, 23.

[5]Knight, *Anticipating the Advent*, 55.

[6]Maxwell, 95.

White published his views regarding the three angels. He equated the first angel (Rev 14:6,7) with the Millerite preaching of the advent, the second angel (14:8) with the fall of "Babylon,"[1] and the third angel (14:9-12) with God's final call of mercy to the world (14:15-20; cf. Rev 13, 14).[2] The third angel, pointed to the significance of the seventh-day Sabbath which was to become the great issue in the final showdown between Christ and Satan (Rev 13).

The disappointment of 1844 was then for SDAs the clearest prophetic signpost of Christ's soon return.[3] Newspaper articles of the time, both secular and religious, non-Millerite and Adventist, recorded the occurrence of strange phenomena.[4] These records were significant in view of the past fulfillment of the great "nature" signs of Matt 24, predominantly in Europe and North America "where people

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[1]A Strobel, "βαβυλών," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:189, refers to "Babylon" as considerably significant in apocalyptic literature. It symbolizes "the eschatological power in opposition to God, the overthrow of which is the object of hope." Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 647, sees Babylon made up of three divisions, namely: (1) paganism, (2) the great papal system, and (3) the two-horned beast.

[2]Knight, *Anticipating the Advent*, 35-36.

[3]Maxwell, 91.

[4]Dick, *William Miller*, 105.

were studying the Bible and pondering the prophecies."[1] These signposts, supported by the understanding of the 1,260-day prophecy (Dan 7:25; 12:4-7; Rev 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5), signaled the beginning of the "time of the end" for SDAs. Hence, their unquestionable conviction that Christ was near at hand.

Adventists in America developed a new wave of British literalism. This came in the form of the *age-to-come* movement. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* points out that the exponents of this movement were distinct but unorganized and were led by Joseph Marsh, O. R. L. Crosier, and George Storrs. However, though, the first individuals from early SDAs who had, among other concepts, embraced the age-to-come theory were H. S. Case and C. P. Russell.[2] This party was first denounced by the Millerites as "Judaism." They taught that literal Jews would welcome Christ in Palestine, thus fulfilling the OT prophecies of Jerusalem becoming its capital during the millennium.[3]

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[1]Maxwell, 92, 93, notes the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the dark day and bloody moon of May 19, 1780, and the "falling of the stars" of November 13, 1833.

[2]*SDAE*, s.v. "Messenger Party."

[3]Neuffer, 9.

Some of the adherents of this movement later developed into a separate denomination known as the Church of God. One branch (non-Sabbatarian) was the Church of God of Abrahamic Faith (Oregon, Illinois), and another (Sabbatarian), became the Church of God, including what is known as the Worldwide Church of God.[1] The views of the age-to-come were publicized by Joseph Marsh in *The Advent Harbinger* (1850s), and two others, J. B. Cook of New England (a Sabbatarian who later abandoned it), and Henry Grew of Philadephia (whose tract had introduced Storrs to the doctrine of conditional immortality), who published literalist views in 1846 and 1848.[2]

In contrast, Millerite premillennialism survived predominantly among the Advent Christians and SDAs.[3] The

[1]Ibid. Cf. *SDAE*, s.v. "Messenger Party." For the Worldwide Church of God, the OT prophecies concerning Israel and Judah were not to be fulfilled by literal Israel but by Britain and/or the U.S. This belief was known as British Israelitism.

[2]Neuffer, 10. Both these men, and Storrs, contributed frequently on the subject in Marsh's paper in 1850 and 1851.

[3]The Advent Christian Church was formed in 1852 by Jonathan Cummings, F. H. Berick, and several others who began to teach that Christ was coming in the autumn of 1853 or the spring of 1854. The membership figure of 1959 was 30,586. See "Advent Christian Church," *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies*, 1936, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 15, 16, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:12-14; "Adventist Bodies," quoted in *SDASB*, 9:18.

latter placed the saints in heaven during the millennium, with the renewal of the earth coming at the end of 1,000 years.[1] James White and E. R. Pinney (a Millerite minister) were prime movers towards this shift to the SDA position in 1845.[2] On the other hand, the majority of present-day premillennialists (mostly futurists), inherited and developed the Literalists' view into an elaborate system.[3] Both Advent Christians and SDAs opposed spiritual amillennialism, the postmillennial optimism for a human utopia prior to the advent of Jesus, and rejected the age-to-come and the dispensationalist aspiration for a restored Jewish state.[4] While SDAs agreed with both Millerites and literalists that the Advent would precede the millennium, they denied the idea of a probationary period during the millennium.

**The Dispensationalist Movement**

By the nineteenth century the historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy espoused by premillennialists was

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[1]William Miller, "The Albany Conference," *The Advent Herald,* 9 (June 4, 1845), 130, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:19; "Early 19th-Century Premillennialism," *SDABC*, 7:130.

[2]*SDAE*, s.v. "Millennium."

[3]Miller, "The Albany Conference," 130, in *SDASB*, 9:19.

[4]*SDAE*, s.v. "Messenger Party."

challenged and gradually rejected in favor of futuristic interpretation.[1] This came about by the influence of John Nelson Darby (1800-82), a British evangelist and leader of the Plymouth Brethren who is considered by some theologians the "father of modern dispensationalism."[2]

From Britain the movement became popularized in America by Bible Conferences, starting with the Niagara Bible Conference in the 1870s,[3] and the contributions of men like Dwight L. Moody (1837-99), Reuben A. Torrey (1856-1928), James M. Gray (1851-25), William J. Eerdman (1833-1923), A. C. Dixon (1854-1925), A. J. Gordon (1836-95), Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921) and his popular annotated study Reference Bible (1909).[4] A further boost came through the establishment of Dallas Theological

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[1]Gullon, 75.

[2]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "John Nelson Darby."

[3]Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1995), 11.

[4]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Dispensationalism." The Scofield Reference Bible was a major driving force among Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in America since 1909. See William E. Cox, *An Examination of Dispensationalism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963), 13-16, for a brief examination of Scofield's impact on dispensational theology.

Seminary in 1924 by Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952), who was also strongly influenced by Scofield.[1]

Darby divided redemptive history into distinct segments of time during which God deals with the human race differently in each successive dispensation.[2] He originated the theory of the "secret rapture" which became an essential doctrine of dispensationalism.[3] The teaching began with the theory of pretribulation, only latter spawning the midtribulationist concept of the millennium.[4] The pretribulationist view terminates the Church age, which began at Pentecost up to the rapture of the church at

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[1]Mathison, 10-13, gives us a concise history and notes the valuable role of Dallas Theological Seminary to the growth of dispensationalism.

[2]F. L. Arrington, "Dispensationalism," The *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 585. Cf. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Puzzle: Five Predictions that Failed!* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 16, notes the most systematic and entire range of interpretation on dispensational eschatology is given by Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948).

[3]Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: It's Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 38, 39. Cf. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "John Nelson Darby."

[4]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Christian Theology." Charles C. Ryrie, "Update on Dispensationalism," 15, points to the present theological scene where an aberrations exist in what used to be considered normative dispensational teaching.

Christ's coming "in the air" (1 Thess 4:17), as an event to precede the "official" second coming after seven years of tribulation.[1]

The interim period of seven years between the two comings of Christ is assigned to the Jewish dispensation when the OT prophecies are believed to be fulfilled.[2] During this time, a Jewish remnant of 144,000 will gather in Palestine, and proclaim the Kingdom of God throughout the world in final anticipation of the return of Jesus.[3] The prevalent and vigorous dispensational influence of VTH's milieu came "to dominate the American Evangelical scene especially among non-denominational Bible churches, many Baptists, and most Pentecostal and Charismatic groups."[4]

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[1]Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 710-12.

[2]George E. Ladd, "Summary from L. S. Chafer," *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 50-52. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Christian Theology" explains the beliefs of midtribulationists whereby "Christians will not be removed until 3-1/2 years of the final seven years of this age have elapsed. They place the Rapture when the Temple sacrifices have been halted and the Antichrist has enshrined himself in the Temple, calling himself God."

[3]Ladd, 50-52. Cf. Berkhof, 710-712

[4]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Dispensationalism." Erickson, *COE*, 109, notes that it rose roughly in parallel to the fundamentalist movement and has become the official theology of fundamentalism.

Houteff did not acknowledge any outside influence on his teachings apart from Scripture and the writings of EGW. Inadvertently, though, his writings frequently allude to dispensational terms and ideas. Specific reference to the term *dispensation*(*s*) appears more than fifty times in his entire works.[1] He referred to "Jewish or Hebrew," "old and new," "gospel" or "Christian," and the "sealing" dispensations.[2] This in itself may not constitute enough evidence to suggest dispensationalist influence on VTH.

Charles Ryrie has correctly stated that "a man can believe in dispensations, and even see them in relation to progressive revelation without being a dispensationalist."[3] His point is evident in the writings of EGW who used the term quite frequently and who may have been the source from which VTH borrowed.[4] However, in view of the widespread

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[1]According to my count VTH used the terms fifty-three times in his writings.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "The Shepherd's Rod: What Is It?" *Shepherd's Rod Tract* 1 (1945): 41, 58. Cf. Idem, "The Judgment and the Harvest," *Tract Studies (TS)* 3 (1934): 57; Idem, "The Latest News for Mother by Hosea," *TS* 4 (1943): 13,15,20; Idem, "Faith and Work Bring Rest," *SCode* 11, no. 6 (1956): 9; Idem, "Questions and Answers on Present Truth Topics," *The Answerer* 4 (1944): 96.

[3]Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 44.

[4]See for example Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation (GC)* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press,

influence of dispensationalism during the time of VTH, it is highly unlikely that he was ignorant of its basic teachings. Three reasons may be given to support this assumption.

1. In his address of April 22, 1950, VTH attempted to address the general misunderstanding regarding the doctrine of miracles and speaking in tongues. He says,

> Never before was the doctrine of miracles, especially of tongues and of healing, so variously agitated, urged, and practiced as it is throughout Christendom today. Yet never was there greater doubt as to the genuineness of the manifestations. And when confronted by the agitators of these miracles, those who do not believe in or accept them, nor possess their power, resort to saying just about anything and everything they can think of in their effort to counter the phenomena and to comfort themselves with their limited spiritual attainments.[1]

He notes that although the subject is highly controversial, the skeptical ones were those devoid of spiritual power, while trying to excuse their limitations. Thus, he proceeded to reveal "Inspiration's purpose" in miracles and speaking in tongues.[2] For VTH, miracles and

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1939), 324; Idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (TM)* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1962), 511; Idem, *Acts of the Apostles: In the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (AA)* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 81, 95.

[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Gift of Miracles Especially Healing and Speaking in Tongues-When, How, Who?" *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 46 (1950): 43.

[2]Ibid.

speaking in tongues were a phenomenon that marked the end-time remnant people who are to finish the gospel work.[1]

2. The dispensationalist method of interpreting prophecy is indicative of "consistent literalism," including OT prophecies relating to the future of Israel.[2] VTH's commitment to literalism closely resembles the eschatology of dispensationalism which insists on the literal fulfillment of OT prophecies regarding Palestine.[3] This emphasis was more dispensational than that espoused by SDAs.[4]

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[1]Ibid., 32.

[2]John H. Gerstner, *A Primer on Dispensationalism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), 3; Erickson, *COE*, 115.

[3]Contemporaries of VTH also expressed optimism for Israel in their works: Ledwig Lewisohn, *Israel* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), 158, sees the recovery of Israel as "salvation" and failure to restore it is the failure of the world; George T. B. Davis, *Rebuilding Palestine According to Prophecy* (Philadelphia: The Million Testaments Campaigns, 1935) saw the rebuilding of Palestine as a direct fulfillment of prophecy; David Henry Popper, *The Puzzle of Palestine* (New York: Stratford Press, 1938); Julia E. Johnsen, ed. *Palestine: Jewish Homeland? The Reference Shelf*, vol. 18, no. 6 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1946). See the subsequent comparative tables in this chapter.

[4]Weber, "Millenarian Movements," 738-39, notes many American settlers from England with Puritan origins had millennial expectations of God establishing a "thoroughly Christian society" on earth. Others postulated that during the 1,000 years of peace on earth, "the Jews will be converted. Finally there will be an apostasy, a terrible conflict, and Christ will intervene to destroy the world after having raised and judged the dead," See Maring,

3. As will be discussed in the next chapter, VTH places a lot of emphasis on typology. His use of this method of interpretation is identical to its use in dispensationalism. Accordingly, Millard J. Erickson notes that "types are found in such profusion and given such esoteric meanings that the dispensationalist goes far beyond the literal meaning of the events recited."[1] This does not mean that typology was unique to the works of VTH or dispensationalism as SDAs also use typology in their interpretation. Rather it refers to the excessive designation of types in their writings that are not identified in the context of the passages that were used. Such use of typology by VTH will be illustrated in the next chapter.

**Outline of Houteff's Eschatology**

This section is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to provide a brief outline of the distinctive features of VTH's eschatology against a Christian backdrop. These ideas will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

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"Millenarianism," 2:2371; S. H. Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 144.

[1]See Erickson, *COE*, 115.

Houteff believed that 144,000 saints, sealed (Ezek 9:4) from within the SDA Church (cf. Rev 7:1-4), will be used by God as instruments for a second harvest of the great multitude (cf. Rev 7:9) during the loud cry of the third angel (Rev 18:2-5). The Davidic Kingdom, a theocratic government, will be established in Palestine shortly before the second advent and there the prophecies of the OT about Israel will be fulfilled (Ezek 36:28; 37:21,25; Isa 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-5).[1] The Kingdom will become the headquarters for the 144,000 who, paradoxically, launch out in global evangelism during the loud cry.[2] VTH does not clearly explain the logistics and nature of this theocratic government. For him the 144,000 were those who survived the sifting within Adventism as symbolized in the parable of the wheat and the harvest (Matt 13). The apocalyptic views of VTH are important when placed within the larger context of millennialism. The theological thread between Houteff and the literalist-dispensationalist method could be observed in the following comparative tables.

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[1]See *TG* 1, no. 48 (1947): 31; Victor T. Houteff, "Children Born To Lewd Mother Bring Peace and Happiness in the Home," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 21 (1948): 7.

[2]Houteff taught the concept of a terrestrial kingdom in Palestine long before the establishment of the Jordanian and State of Israel in 1948. Cf. *SRod*, 1:173-181 on VTH's reference to the "Kingdom" in his discussion of Mic 3.

## Comparison of Selected Eschatological Views

The following tables include comparisons between the eschatological views of selected millennial groups plus a few additional items of information. Each table is followed by brief explanatory remarks.

### The Millennium

TABLE 1

CONCEPT OF THE MILLENNIUM AMONG THE MAIN MILLENNIAL GROUPS

| | **Amillennial**[1] | **Postmillennial** | **European Premillennial**[2] | **North American Premillennial**[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Advent era** | Millennium | Millennium | Time of the end | Time of the end |
| **Nature of Advent** | Literal after millennium | Literal after millennium | Literal before millennium | Literal before millennium |

[1]While the name *Amillennialism* literally means "no millennium," they in fact believe that the millennium is a spiritual or heavenly millennium which precedes the Second coming of Christ. See Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942), 35-37, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:643.

[2]*SDAE*, s.v. "Millennium."

[3]See the following for more information on Miller's views of the millennium: G. F. Cox, *Letters on the Second Coming of Christ*, (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 37-43, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:512. Cf. A[lexander] C[ampbell], "The Coming of the Lord," in *The Millennial Harbinger*, 5 (January, 1841), 8, 9, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:655; William Miller, *Apology and Defense*, 7-9, 11; [Josiah Litch], "The Rise and Progress of Adventism," in *The Advent Shield and Review*, 1 (May, 1844), 47, 48, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:531.

Table 1 *Continued*

| | **Amillennial** | **Postmillennial** | **European Premillennial** | **North American Premillennial** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nature of Millennium** | Spiritual or heavenly | Time non literal covering the period of church history | Christ reigns over Jews who teach the "nations" | Righteous reign with Christ on renovated Earth |
| **Post-Millennial era** | Advent and Final Judgment of wicked | Advent and Final Judgment of wicked | Final Judgment of wicked | Final Judgment of wicked |

Table 1 summarizes amillennial, postmillennial, European and North American premillennialism. The North American premillennial view includes both the Millerite and Literalist Adventists but not the SDA and DSDA views. The table shows a close relationship between the amillennial and postmillennial views.[1] All millennial groups agree on the nature (literal) but not the timing of the advent.[2] The return of Christ is immediately followed by the final resurrection of both righteous and wicked and the execution of the final judgment.[3]

While European and North American premillennialists agree on pre- and postmillennial events, and on the nature

[1]Sometimes it is difficult to draw the distinction between the two. Both movements may be traced back to Augustine. See Erickson, *COE*, 76.

[2]For postmillennialists the concept of Christ's personal, bodily return to the earth is not different to other millennial views except chronologically in relation to the millennium. Ibid., 57-58.

[3]Ibid., 58.

of the advent, they differ on what actually takes place during the millennium. In contrast, while premillennial groups placed the bodily reign of Christ on earth during the millennium, postmillennialists saw the kingdom of God on earth during that time with Christ returning bodily only at the end of the millennium.[1]

## The Advent

TABLE 2

CONCEPT OF THE ADVENT AMONG SELECTED PREMILLENNIAL GROUPS

| | **Literalist**[2] | **Dispensationalist**[3] | **Miller** | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Advent era** | Time of the end | Rapture of church (phase 1) | Close of probation | Close of probation | Close of probation |
| **Nature of Advent** | Literal | Literal[4] after Jewish probation and tribulation (phase 2) | Literal | Literal | Literal |

[1]Erickson, *COE*, 91-92.

[2]See Hamilton, 38-40, 42-44, in *SDASB*, 9:652 for more on Literalism.

[3]Tim Lahaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Are We Living in the End Times?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999), 305; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1217-20.

[4]In dispensation theology, the second coming of Jesus takes place after the Jewish dispensation, a period of 7 years of probationary time after the rapture of the saints which terminates the church dispensation. See John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 97-97.

Table 2 compares the understanding of the advent of Christ among selected premillennial groups. All five groups in this table subscribe to some form of literalism. The dispensationalist group is the only group that is distinct in supporting the notion of a rapture to take place before the advent of Jesus.[1] The common denominator among all of the five premillennial groups in this table is the belief in the literal return of Christ to this earth despite the various tribulationist views among dispensationalists.[2]

[1]Mathison, 115, notes the rapture as the "best-known feature of dispensational eschatology."

[2]Ibid., 123 rightly observes that "while all dispensationalists are premillennialists, not all premillennialists are dispensationalists. . . . The disagreement between them centers not on the time of Christ's coming but on the nature of the millennial kingdom that Christ comes to establish."

TABLE 3

CONCEPT OF THE 144,000 AMONG SELECTED PREMILLENNIALIST GROUPS

| | **Literalist**[1] | **Dispensationalist**[2] | **Miller** | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Concept of the 144,000** | Jewish Remnants | Jewish Evangelists | Resurrected Infants[3] | Remnants of Spiritual Israel | Remnant of SDA Church |
| **Time for Sealing** | Before close of Probation | Before rapture and tribulation | Before close of the Jewish dispensation[4] | Before probation ends and 7 plagues | Before Loud Cry of the 3d angel |
| **Nature of Number** | Literal | Literal | Symbolic | Symbolic (most interpreters) | Literal |
| **Purpose for 144,000** | To welcome advent of Jesus | To gather multitudes of Gentiles | To show "that all those who die in infancy are saved"[5] | To bear "the signet of heaven"[6] | To gather the Great multitudes during the L/Cry |

[1]Neuffer, 8-9; Hamilton, 38-40, 42-44, in *SDASB*, 9:652.

[2]Lahaye and Jenkins, 305.

[3]William Miller, "Lecture on the Harvest of the World," in Joshua V. Himes, *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller with a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Moses A. Dow, 1841). The Great Multitude are the second crop of the harvest. Ibid.

[4]William Miller, "Lecture XII," in *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1843; Exhibited in A Course of Lectures* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842).

[5]Miller, "Lecture on the Harvest of the World."

[6]"Signet of Heaven" (Rev 14:9-12), *SDABC*, 7:978.

Table 3 is a comparison of various views of the 144,000 among selected premillennial groups. A lack of unity is quite obvious on the topic of the 144,000. There is evidence of an overlapping of ideas between literalists, dispensationalists and DSDAs on the 144,000 both in number and purpose for which they are set aside.[1] While it is true that VTH used the writings of EGW to support his views of the 144,000, the similarities of certain aspects between DSDA teaching with literalists and dispensationalists is not unnoticed.

## The Davidic Kingdom

TABLE 4

CONCEPT OF THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM AMONG SELECTED PREMILLENNIAL GROUPS

| | **Literalist** | **Dispensation-alist**[2] | **Miller** | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Concept of Kingdom** | Theocratic Jewish kingdom | Church and Jewish Dispensations | Eternal Kingdom | Eternal Kingdom | Theocratic DSDA Kingdom |
| **Time of Kingdom** | Millennium | Rapture | Advent | Advent | Begins before L/Cry |

[1]Bass, 42, notes the remnant of Israel (144,000) survive the tribulation period and become the kingdom to which Christ returns after the seven years of tribulation.

[2]See Walvoord, 97-98.

Table 4 *Continued*

| | **Literalist** | **Dispensation-alist** | **Miller** | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Location of the Kingdom** | Jerusalem[1] in Palestine | Church in heaven Kingdom on earth | Renovated Earth | Heaven and New earth | Jerusalem in Palestine |
| **Rulers of the Kingdom** | Literal Jews[2] | Jewish dispensation on earth before advent | Christ and saints | Christ and saints | VTH and Christ[3] |

Table 4 depicts the various views of the Davidic Kingdom among selected premillennial groups. The Millerites and SDAs are the only groups among the rest that hold in common most views on the Davidic Kingdom. The basic difference between them relates to the location of the Kingdom. While the Millerites foresaw a millennial Kingdom located on the renovated earth, SDAs placed emphasis on an eternal and heavenly Kingdom. In contrast, while DSDAs use SDA sources to support their teaching of the Kingdom, their conceptual framework resembles more closely the teachings of the literalists and the dispensationalists.[4] This is

[1]Hamilton, 38-40, 42-44, in *SDASB*, 9:652.

[2]Ibid. Also see Philip Mauro, *Of Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933), 580, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:637.

[3]See Victor T. Houteff, "Mount Zion At 'The Eleventh Hour,'" *Tract Studies* 8 (1941): 45.

[4]See William E. Cox, 30-37 for an examination of the dispensationalist position of Israel and the Kingdom of God.

especially true of the optimism these two groups have concerning the literal fulfillment of OT prophecies regarding the restoration of the Jewish nation.

## The Sealing and Slaughter in Ezekiel 9

TABLE 5

CONCEPT OF THE SEALING AND SLAUGHTER IN EZEKIEL 9 IN SDA AND DSDA VIEWS

| | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|
| **Nature of Event** | Historical typology | Literal judgment for the living |
| **Purpose** | Final sealing work on earth | Sealing of 144,000 within the SDA Church |
| **Fulfillment** | Close of human probation | Before close of Probation for SDAs |
| **Slaughtering in Ezekiel 9** | Symbol of the judgments on wicked at the end of the age. | Literal slaying of unfaithful SDA leaders and members before L/Cry[1] |

Table 5 is a comparison between SDA and DSDA views of Ezek 9 and the judgment for the living. While both movements claim to be authentic in their interpretation of Scripture and the writings of EGW, clear inconsistencies exist between them regarding the sealing and judgment. SDAs see Ezekiel 9 as forecasting the sealing work which continues until the close of human probation, whereupon the

[1]See *SRod*, 1:26, where he seems to use the term "slaying" loosely as a synonymous event to the sifting or separation within Adventism.

wicked receive their recompense at the end of the age. DSDAs apply the same prophecy literally to SDAs. Those who fail to receive the seal within Adventism became the recipients of judgment prior to the Loud Cry. DSDAs conceptualized the fulfillment of Ezek 9 in the SDA Church.

## The Harvest

TABLE 6

CONCEPT OF THE HARVEST IN SDA AND DSDA VIEWS

| | **SDA** | **DSDA** |
|---|---|---|
| **Time for separation** | After the gospel work is complete | At the beginning of Loud Cry |
| **Wheat** | Symbol of the righteous who are gathered into the kingdom | Symbol of the 144,000 remnants from the SDA Church |
| **Tares** | Symbol of the wicked who are to be destroyed | Symbolize "sinners" in the SDA Church, slaughtered by the angel of Ezekiel 9 |
| **Harvest** | End of world | Loud Cry of 3d Angel |

Table 6 portrays the different eschatological views of SDAs and DSDAs on the harvest and the end of the world. While SDAs interpret this parable as an event to take place at the end of the world, DSDAs insist on it being fulfilled within the SDA Church prior to the Loud Cry of the 3d angel. DSDAs have basically interpreted the harvest parable to fit their teaching on the 144,000. The wheat symbolizes the 144,000 while the tares are "sinners" within the SDA Church

that eventually fall under the slaughter weapons of the angel of Ezek 9.

**Summary**

A few significant points may be drawn from this historical overview. First, few have had the courage like VTH to stand by their convictions against the tide of fear, abuse, and ostracism.[1] His life sketch indicates that his was a journey of trial and hardship being dismissed from both the Orthodox and SDA Churches. Although this background is significant, there is no clear evidence to suggest a direct link between VTH's eschatology and his Orthodox orientation. His foundational principles of eschatology are, undoubtedly, SDA (particularly in view of his heavy reliance on the Spirit of Prophecy) even though personal attitudes may reflect Orthodox theological stances.

Second, the aspiration and apocalypticism of VTH was displayed in a more elaborate way in the subsequent history of Davidianism. A traceable link has been established both historically and theologically between the Houteff generation, the Roden generation, and the Koresh generation of DSDAs.

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[1]Hibbert, 36.

Third, VTH grew up in an environment in which amillennialism and postmillennialism predominated, both of which are hostile to premillennialism. Although they have some distinct features of their own, they both promoted a common belief that the kingdom or millennium is the current age. While amillennialism spiritualized the millennium as the entire Christian era, postmillennialism sees a literal 1,000 year period preceding the second advent of Christ.[1]

Houteff's apocalyptic eschatology was a modified concept of SDA premillennialism. His theory resembled the aspirations of Literalism and Dispensationalism for a renewed earthly Kingdom in Palestine. In contrast, though, VTH postulated the gathering of the 144,000 in Palestine prior to the second advent of Jesus with Jerusalem as the headquarters for the Kingdom of David. His interpretation of OT prophecies was applied directly to the SDA Church. The following chapter will consider VTH's theological, ecclesiological and eschatological foundations.

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[1]Cf. Boettner, "Postmillennialism," 117-41; and Hoekema, "Amillennialism," 155-56, on the millennium.

# CHAPTER II

# HOUTEFF'S FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

This chapter has three primary objectives: (1) To analyze the theological, ecclesiological and eschatological foundations of VTH; (2) to highlight previous criticisms on the above issues; and (3) to evaluate the foundational aspects critical to Houteff's eschatological formulation.

## Theological Foundation

Although Houteff did not propose any specific method of doing theology, clear indications are inherent in his published works to determine his methodology. In this chapter, we discuss the role Scripture and the writings of EGW play in VTH's eschatological formulation, the level of authority he accredited to them, and how he approached the study of these sources.

### Views of Scripture

#### Analysis

Houteff believed the Bible to be the Word of God. For him, *all* Scripture and not just a mere part of it is

inspired (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:20,21).[1] If so, then, faith in God's revelation played a prominent role in the quest for truth. Respect for the word of God was expected of all Christians, but a much more "fearful responsibility" rested "upon those who carelessly handle the Word of God" and posed as "guardians over the people!"[2]

Houteff held the opinion that a mystical aura overshadowed certain portions of Scripture (such as the identity of the 144,000) until God decided to make it known. The message, then, of the 144,000 as taught by SRod was inspired revelation from God,[3] authoritative, and bore the positive mark of truth.[4] Hence, although all Scripture is

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "Isms, and the Remedy," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 14 (1946): 16.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 18 (1947): 17. Here the "guardians over the people" refer to ministers and leaders of the SDA Church, Ibid.

[3]*SRod*, 2:9, notes the message of the SRod was "not published to explain, or comment on truths which have been previously revealed, and accepted as such, but is to disclose realities which God has Preserved [*sic*] through many generations, not only from becoming extinct, but also preventing their meaning from being discovered by men of wisdom. Thus, He who controls the Scriptures is able to reveal present truth to His people at a time when needed."

[4]*Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 2. Here Houteff claims to provide answers to questions in "connection with the sealing message of the 144,000 (Rev 7:1-8) and the great multitude (Rev 7:9); on the prophecies of Isaiah, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Micah, Hosea, Joel, Daniel, the Revelation, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, etc., but more fully on the first eight books above mentioned; on Christ's parables, on types and symbols, and also on the writings of Mrs. E. G. White."

inspired, none of it is privately interpreted or understood without inspiration. This meant that no man was:

> Capable of disclosing the sealed prophecies or interpreting any part of them or even capable of understanding their importance after they are interpreted except it be by the gift of the Spirit of Truth.[1]

The claim to inspired biblical interpretation became the premise upon which the SRod saw their mission to proclaim the "divine revelations of truth" and call "God's people to a reformation by obedience to the truth."[2] This presupposition seemed fundamental to the way in which VTH used the Old Testament.

The OT played a significant role in Houteff's apocalypticism. It symbolized the "great store house of the Word of God" from which the NT was to feed,[3] which may be observed in his use of selected aspects of OT narratives as symbols of NT counterparts.[4] Some of his OT studies

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 14 (1946): 16.

[2]*Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 11.

[3]*SRod*, 2:141; Cf. *SRod*, 1:106, "Christ gathered the Word of God in the Old Testament time into the great storehouse (the Bible) to feed the world in the New Testament times."

[4]Such as the following selected examples in *SRod*, 1: 69-88: (1) The dream of Pharaoh in Gen 41 is a symbol of the word of God. The years of plenty as a type of OT times, while the years of famine in Egypt are a type of the NT period. (2) Because Pharaoh honored Joseph, he "must stand for some figure, or type." Therefore, seeing that "Joseph typified Christ," "Pharaoh represents the apostles' church,

addressed social and political issues of that era,[1] including comparative religious concerns and the role of America in Bible prophecy as indicative of a whole plan "directed by a supernatural power whose aim is to boycott the people of God."[2]

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or organization." (3) The new oppressive Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Exod 1:8-13) represented the "ministers" and leaders of the SDA Church. (4) Jacob was a type of James White, for the names 'Jacob' and 'James' are the same. And, (5) Egypt was a symbol of the World and the "land of Goshen stand[s] as a symbol of the United States of America in which the church came into existence."

[1]See for example, Victor T. Houteff, "The World Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," *Tract Studies* 12 (1946): 1-92; Idem, "War News Forecast: Digest of Nahum's Predictions," *Tract Studies* 14 (1943): 1-55; Idem, "Is World War II Yet to be Finished, Saints Yet to be Delivered?" *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 24 (1947): 11-19; Idem, "Which Nations will Disarm, and Why?" *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 25 (1947): 3-13; Idem, "A World Wide Stir, and Its Results," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 26 (1947): 15-23, on Mic 5, the restoration of Israel and the final gathering; Idem, "A World Government and the Only People who will Not Bow Down to it," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 17 (1947): 4-13; Idem, "The Final World Government, Communistic or Capitalistic, Which," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 18 (1947): 16-27.

[2]*TG* 2, no. 17 (1947): 10, 11. Cf. Idem, "The Latter Day Confederacy," *Symbolic Code* 13, nos. 3, 4 (1958): 3-12; See also Idem, "The Hated Jews of Today Not the Admired Jews of Tomorrow," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 22 (1947): 23-31; Idem, "Shintoism and Non-Progressive Christianity," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 26 (1948): 13-23; Idem, "Democracy, Communism, Catholicism, or Protestantism, Which is Next to Rule the World?" *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 36 (1948): 3-9; Idem, "Current Events, the Palestinian Situation, and How Close the Separation," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 41 (1948): 3-23.

In his writings, Houteff drew direct application from certain classical prophetic literature of the OT to the Christian church. Interpreting Hos 1:4, he alleged it to be a letter from the Father (God) in which God reluctantly exposed the church's (mother) indecent connection with the world (cf. Hos 1:2) and urged SDA members to "plead with her to repent of her unfaithfulness and return to Him."[1]

He spoke of Zech 6:1-8 as one of the "most remarkable and important pictorial prophecies" in Scripture.[2] Here, the Christian Church was believed to have been suspended between two "mountains" of "bronze" (v. 1), one representing the church prior to A.D. 538,[3] and the other, the church triumphant; a condition, he presumed, would be fulfilled after the SDA Church was purified of sinners.[4]

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[1]*TS* 4 (1943): 5. The appeal was based on Hosea 1 which foretold God's rejection of the Jews and Hosea 2 which described the "church's [i.e. SDA] idolatrous state in the Christian dispensation." This made it necessary for "the antitypical valley of Achor" (Hos 2:15), "pointing forward to the time of an antitypical execution within the Christian church." This execution was synonymous with the destruction of "sinners" and "tares" within Adventism, those who were seen by VTH as "illegitimate children" of the church.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "The Great Paradox of the Ages," *Tract Studies* 2 (1948): 9.

[3]Ibid., 13.

[4]*TS* 2 (1948): 18-24, passim. In the vision, four chariots come out from between the mountains symbolic of four church periods: First chariot, driven by the red colored horses, denotes the martyred leaders of the church prior to A.D. 538. The second chariot, driven by black

Both the prophecies of Hosea and Zechariah, according to Houteff, had a direct application to the SDA Church.

For Houteff, prophecy and visions were an "acid test by which to judge purported Bible Truth; that is, if the thing is not in prophecy, if there is no vision of it found in the writings of the prophets, then, there is no truth in it."[1] This meant that the validity of truth was based upon prophetic revelation which never failed.[2] For that reason, he argued that the visions of the prophets are to become our visions.[3] The process than through which God discloses these realities to us is inspiration.[4]

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horses, represents the period of martyrdom between A.D. 538-1798. The third chariot by white horses, denoted the Millerite message of freedom. And, the fourth chariot, by the "grisled and the bay" horses, represented "Laodiceans" prior to the triumphant church. *TS* 2 (1948): 24-45, passim.

[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The People That Hardly Stand a Chance," Timely Greetings 2, no. 24 (1948): 15.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "One Shepherd to Accomplish What a Multitude of Them Failed to Accomplish," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 2 (1947): 20.

[3]*TG* 2, no. 24 (1948): 15.

[4]*SRod*, 2:9. He insisted that "as the Bible is free from error, even so its interpretation under the same Spirit of Inspiration must also be correct. Therefore, the interpretation of the Bible is true, only when it is revealed through a channel of inspiration. In no other way can God lead His people in all truth. Anything less than this cannot disclose Biblical truth, regardless of its simplicity." *SRod*, 2:13.

**Previous Criticism**

M. L. Andreasen, speaking of VTH's method in general, noted that he does makes "some very fantastic interpretations of Scripture," and so his writings "bear evidence of a confused mind."[1] This seems to harmonize with other SDA writers who found the works of VTH contradictory to Scripture and the writings of EGW.[2] *General Conference Officers to All Ministers*, for example, speaks of VTH propagating teachings that were out of harmony with the fundamental teachings of SDAs.[3] His claim to inspiration was perceived to be that of a false prophet.[4] The article,

[1]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942. Cf. Hazel Hendricks, *The True Witness Speaks: The Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod in the Light of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy* (n.p.), 3-5, who makes a significant testimony of how she became an ardent supporter of the SRod. Even though she had read the Bible through three times it took her seven years to come to the realization that their teachings were unbiblical.

[2]General Conference Officers to All Ministers and Other Conference Workers, Colporteurs, and Church Elders in North America, *Letter by the Defense Literature Committee*, 1934, AHC-AU, Berrien Springs, MI. (Hereafter cited as *GCO to All Ministers*). Also see Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Some Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod Examined* (March, 1956), 58 (hereafter cited *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*).

[3]*GCO to All Ministers*, 1; Cf. General Conference Committee, "'Shepherd's Rod' Propaganda" (December 15, 1946). (Later cited *SR-Propaganda*).

[4]*GCO to All Ministers*, 1.

then drew the attention to EGW's writing on the work and results of subversive offshoots:

> As the coming of Christ draws near, he [Satan] will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them. Men and women will arise professing to have some new light or some new revelation, whose tendency is to unsettle faith in the old landmarks. Their doctrines will not bear the test of God's word, yet souls will be deceived.[1]

Andreasen, further observed how VTH made direct application of certain portions of the Scripture to the SDA Church.[2] He argued that those who were misled by the SRod were not carried away by their teachings but rather by the earnestness of the members affiliated to the movement and the truthfulness of some of the charges levied against the SDA Church.[3] For that reason, God has allowed heresies to come into His church to call us back to the study of God's Word.[4] VTH's views, such as his interpretation of Hosea 1 and 2, and the vision of Zechariah 6, are not in harmony with the views of SDAs.[5]

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[1]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:295.

[2]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]For SDA's, the message of the prophet Hosea was couched against the backdrop of Israel's darkest period of history and the message came as a warning of inevitable judgments. Amidst these warnings the prophet "depicts the

**Analysis**

The writings of EGW played a prominent role in the eschatology of VTH. First, we need to assess the level of respect VTH had for EGW. Next, the method of exegesis adopted by VTH in his use of EGW's writings. And third, the prophetic succession of VTH.

VTH's self testimony is the most reliable witness to the level of his respect for the writings of EGW. In his own words he wrote,

> Our only aim in life is to be true to the Word of God--the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy--faithful in our duties and a blessing to His people--we have no other plans. Therefore, we take the liberty of perusing the pages to which our attention is called with intention to comply strictly with the instruction found therein.[1]

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yearning love of God for His wayward people." See "Hosea: Theme," *SDABC*, 4:886. SDA scholars acknowledge the visions of Zechariah as one of the most "obscure" prophecies, they also see the prophet dealing with a specific historical situation. During the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews were overcome by enemy opposition and for some time had left the building process. Zechariah's message "was designed to bring encouragement to the flagging zeal of the Jews." "Four Chariots" (Zech 6:1), *SDABC*, 4: 1085, 1098.

[1]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 7.

> We claim to be reformers--calling the brethren's attention to their slackness in following the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy--but shall we on one hand criticize them for their unbelief and on the other hand we ourselves do what we would have them repent of?[1]

Houteff appears to have placed EGW on a level of inspiration equal to the Bible. Faithfulness to the "Word of God" meant being true to "the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy."[2] For him, the SOP gave clues to understanding Scripture, God's designed system of transmitting truth, and to appreciating His message as taught by SRod.[3] Consequently, he became heavily reliant on EGW's writing for understanding Scripture.

Houteff did not have a high regard for the SDA leadership and for what he perceived as negligence on their part in heeding the counsels of EGW. The SRod "reformers" were needed to call the attention of the SDA Church "to their slackness in following the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy."[4] He further felt that time had lapsed since 1844 and that,

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[1] *SCode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 7.

[2] *SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 7.

[3] Ibid., 18. Houteff noted that "the symbolism" (Zechariah 4) "points out the system which Heaven has ordained for dispensing the Word of the Lord to His church; that the Spirit of Prophecy at work is the only remedy against isms in the church and in the world." Ibid., 20.

[4] *Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 7.

> Rather than working with God the Denomination backslid by unbelief in the Spirit of Prophecy (Testimonies, vol. 5, pg. 217) and thus lost sight of the Truth that was yet to be unfolded, and that which is now brought to light.[1]

He argued further,

> To have the Spirit of Prophecy, is to have the Spirit Who uttered the prophecies and who only can interpret them, for 'no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,' nor without the inspiration of the same Spirit.[2]

Houteff's method and exegesis of EGW's writing is self-evident.[3] He used her writings liberally and consistently argued that his teachings were in "absolute harmony" with them.[4] In fact, Houteff believed the teachings of the SRod would always remain true and what they published would never be retracted.[5] His publications were either an exposition of selected portions of Scripture

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "Build the Cities, Comfort Zion, Choose Jerusalem," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 11 (1946): 9.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "The Chronological Setting of the Revelation Chapter By Chapter: The Summary," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 14 (1947): 17.

[3]VTH's methods of exegesis are demonstrated and discussed further in section of previous criticisms that follow this analysis.

[4]Victor T. Houteff, "Do You Know?" *Symbolic Code* 7, nos, 7-12 (1941): 5. Our being, as you know, unswerving adherents of the Bible and of Mrs White's writings, full-fledged SDAs, we are sure that both the Bible and Mrs White's writings support the 'Rod' one hundred percent. Ibid. Cf. *SRod*, 1:11.

[5]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942.

supported by isolated EGW statements, or a compilation and interpretation of her work. In some instances, the method he employed in citing EGW misconstrued the primary intention of her statements.[1]

In an interview with VTH in 1942, he did not claim to be a prophet, nor would he assert otherwise.[2] His denial appeared to contradict the direct claim to divine inspiration and the need to validate the teachings of Scripture through the inspired channel of the SRod.[3]

Additionally, he taught that the SOP ceased in 1915 with the death of EGW and that the gift of prophecy remanifested itself in 1930 through the teachings of the SRod.[4] Therefore, according to his theory, the SOP was in

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[1]See for example how VTH uses *GC*, 425 in *SRod*, 2: 229-230.

[2]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942.

[3]*SRod*, 2:13.

[4]M. E. Kern, "The Foundation of God Standeth Sure: 2 Timothy 2:19" (Sermon Preached at Takoma Park Church, February 18, 1950; AHC-AU), 4.

operation through the OT prophets, during the building of the temple,[1] the ministry of EGW, and his own writings.[2]

**Previous Criticism**

*Some Teachings of the Shepherd's Rod Examined* disputed some of VTH's teachings and their consistency with the writings of EGW.[3] For example, Houteff taught that Enoch was ignorant of the truth regarding the flood, so "he preached the destruction then in terms of the coming of the Lord."[4] EGW on the other hand, taught that "God revealed to

[1]See, Victor T. Houteff, "Additional Fundamental Tenets of Faith Held in Common with SDAs," (*AFT*) no. 1, in *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 28 (See Appendix no. 1). Cf. Idem, "What Brings Success To Revival and Reformation?" *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 10 (1946): 20, where he notes that "sacred history proves that nothing has ever prospered in God's work without the living Spirit of Prophecy in its midst."

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "Question and Answer Discussion (Part I)," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 3 (1946): 9. Notice for example: Idem, "If Only 144,000 Translated What Chance For You?" *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 12 (1946): 17, "The only logical and fair conclusion one can come to, is that when the Spirit of Prophecy unrolls the scroll, when God raises an interpreter of the Scriptures, then it is that such a doctrinal correction can be made."

[3]*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 48-58, for a more detailed study of some of the other teachings of VTH.

[4]Victor T. Houteff, "To The Twelve Tribes Which Are Scattered Abroad," *Symbolic Code* 1, no. 10 (1935): 9. Cf. *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 48-49.

Enoch His purpose to destroy the world by flood, and He also opened more fully to him the plan of redemption."[1]

In like manner, VTH alleged that the coming of the Lord in Jude 14-15 was not referring to the second advent of Christ, but, rather, to the Lord coming to "His temple in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary" for the investigative judgment.[2] EGW specifically applied this coming to the second advent of Jesus.[3]

Sometimes, the interpretive method adopted by Houteff resulted in EGW's original intent being mis-construed. For example, VTH cited EGW's use of the "number seven" for "completeness"[4] to support his view of the trumpets in Rev 8-11.[5] He reasoned that the number seven "embraces the entire period of probationary time and on to the second coming of Christ" hence the first trumpet was symbolic of the destruction of the wicked who rejected God's

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[1]Ellen G. White, *Story of Patriarchs and Prophets: As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old (PP)* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 85. Cf. Idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 54, 55, quoted in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 48-49.

[2]*SRod*, 2:240. Cf. *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 56-57.

[3]*GC*, 425-426; *6T*, 392, quoted in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 56-57.

[4]*AA*, 585.

[5]Victor T. Houteff, "The Seven Trumpets," *Tract Studies* 5 (1942): 37.

message through Noah.[1] Ellen G. White, on the other hand, was referring to the seven churches which was "symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era."[2]

The above problem may be accredited largely to the use of a "cut and paste" method which often resulted in giving a false meaning to the writings of EGW.[3] Take for example the following use of EGW's writings by VTH.

> "Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. . . . This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel's message in 1844."--*EW*, 277. Again we read, "Be assured that there are messages to come from human lips, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 'Cry aloud, spare not . . . show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins'."--*TM*, 296. "Another message of warning and instruction was to be given the church." --*GC*, 425.[4]

Contextually, E. G. White spoke of the "loud cry," the "Laodicean message," and the "messages of Revelation 14." Houteff on the other hand, applied them directly to the SRod message represented by the coming of "Elijah."

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[1]*TS* 5 (1942): 39-44, passim, for an elaborate explanation on the 1st trumpet.

[2]*AA*, 585. SDA interpreters favor this view where the "trumpets retrace, to a large extent, the period of Christian history already covered by the seven churches (chs. 2; 3) and the seven seals (chs. 6; 8:1)." See "Seven Trumpets" (Rev 8:6), *SDABC*, 7:788.

[3]*GC Com-WAE*, 27.

[4]*SRod*, 2:229-30.

Notice how he uses this statement.

> "Prophecy must be fulfilled. The Lord says: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' *Somebody is to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and when he appears, men may say: 'You are too earnest, you do not interpret the Scriptures in the proper way. Let me tell you how to teach your message*'."--"Testimonies to Ministers," p. 475. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. 4:5).[1]

Houteff used the above EGW statements to support the SRod message and mission. This method of exegesis is common in the writings of VTH and is one of the reasons stated by *GC Com-WAE* why SDAs cannot accept the teachings of the SRod.[2]

## Hermeneutical Approaches

**Analysis**

Houteff may have used a variety of approaches in doing theology. However, the methods of analogy, typology, and historicism are prominent.

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[1]*SRod*, 2:230. (Italics is supplied.) VTH was seen as the antitypical Elijah to come.

[2]*GC Com-WAE*, 26-28. While SDAs may (and do) disagree with Houteff's application of EGW's quotation to Elijah, EGW seems to be pointing to a future time when the Elijah message would be proclaimed. Many SDAs seem to understand EGW in that way.

Analogical Approach.[1] This principle, undergirded by the unity of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20), was recognized by the prophets (Isa 28:10), used by Jesus in establishing truth of His messiahship (Luke 24:27,44,45),[2] by the apostle Paul in his writing,[3] and affirmed by EGW.[4] The purpose of analogy was to "indicate that a certain ambiguous passage of Scripture can be explained by another passage in

[1]Frank B. Holbrook, "Inspired Writers' Interpretation of Inspired Writings," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 133. Geisler defined analogy as "similarity" in "religious language" which "expresses a meaning that is similar, but neither identical nor totally different." N. L. Geisler, "Analogy," *EDT*, 57. The method is explained by Soulen as "a comparison between the similar features or attributes of two otherwise dissimilar things, so that the unknown, or less well known, is clarified by the known." Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 2d ed. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1981), 17.

[2]Holbrook, 133.

[3]Holbrook observed Paul's use of this principle in his citation in Rom 3:10-18 where he alludes to six OT passages to indicate the sinfulness of man. Ibid.

[4]Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White (EW)* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 221, writes, "I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another." Idem, *Education* (Mountain View, CA : Pacific Press, 1952), 190, says, "The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with Scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts." Cf. Raymond F. Cottrell, "Ellen G. White's Evaluation and Use of the Bible," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 143-61.

which the same expression occurs in a clearly understood way."[1]

Houteff appeared to have used the analogical method in his exegesis of Scripture. He argued,

> We would never try to establish an idea on the basis of agreeing with one passage of Scripture while disagreeing with another, for such a conclusion is as sure to be erroneous as if one should conclude that when the sun sets in the evening, it will never arise in the morning.[2]

"Our duty" he says "is to prove God's Word correct rather than to hold tenaciously to our preconceptions and misconceptions until God Himself steps in and puts us to shame."[3] Houteff's use of analogy is best illustrated in his attempt to harmonize the various biblical truths around his concern for the 144,000.[4] Another classic example is how VTH

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[1]Siegfried H. Horn, "History of Biblical Interpretation," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 20.

[2]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 5.

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "The Revival and Reformation," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 13 (1946): 7.

[4]For example, VTH writes "The message of Laodicea is connected to Ezekiel 9 and the sealing of the 144,000. The slaying that takes place in Ez 9 is the shifting or separation in the church of the godly from the ungodly." *SRod*, 1:26. "As the 144,000 are the "first fruits," the fulfillment of Ezekiel 9 and the sealing of the servants of God (the 144,000), marks the commencement of the final harvest, or as it is also called, "The Loud Cry." At that time the great multitude of Revelation 7:9, will be gathered in the church by the servants of God (the 144,000). (See Isaiah 66:19,20)." *SRod*, 2:161.

attempted to tie together his study of Dan 2:44, Joel 2, Isa 2, Hos 1 and 2, and other biblical passages to the remnant concept.[1]

Regarding typology, Duane A. Garrett asserts that it "is perhaps the least understood but most important concept in the hermeneutics of biblical prophecy."[2] It is "based on historical connections and is bound to the historical sense of Scripture."[3] This method was often employed by the Church

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 29 (1947): 7-8 and *TG* 1, no. 48 (1947): 28, applies Daniel 2 to the 144,000. *SRod*, 1:102-103 discusses what constitute the remnant; Victor T. Houteff, "That Which Shall Be in the Last Days," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 5 (1946): 3-23, ties in Isa 2 with the 144,000. See *TS* 4 (1943): 11-70, for VTH's application of Hosea 1 and 2.

[2]Duane A. Garrett, "Type, Typology," *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 785. The term comes from "the Greek word for form or pattern" denoting "both the original model or prototype and the copy that resulted." G. R. Osborne, "Type, Typology," *EDT*, 1222-223, noted that the NT "anti-type" was "especially used in two directions: (1) the correspondence between two historical situations like the flood and baptism (1 Pet 3:21) or two figures like Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:14); (2) the correspondence between the heavenly pattern and its earthly counterpart, e.g., the divine original behind the earthly tent/tabernacle (Acts 7:44; Heb 8:5; 9:24). There are several categories-persons (Adam, Melchizedek), events (flood, brazen serpent), institutions (feasts), places (Jerusalem, Zion), objects (altar of burnt offering, incense), offices (prophet, priest, king)."

[3]Gerhard F. Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 187, noted that "in biblical typology the typical sense of words, descriptions, events, actions, institutions, and persons becomes fully apparent through the later antitype."

Fathers, favored by the Reformers,[1] and used by the early SDA writers.[2] Houteff acknowledged the role of the SRod in making "types and symbols" understood by the SDA Church.[3] Some of his major typological studies included, *The Harvest: Parabolical-Ceremonial*,[4] *The Great Paradox of The Ages*,[5] *The Sign of Jonah*,[6] and *Mount Zion at 'The Eleventh Hour'*.[7]

Houteff adopted a modified form of historicist[8] premillennialism. Relying heavily upon his SDA heritage, he demonstrated historicism in his own work by developing his

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[1]Friedbert Ninow, "Typology," *EDB*, 1341.

[2]According to Don F. Neufeld the earliest use of typology was in the writing of O. R. L. Crosier on "The Law of Moses" in *Day Star Extra*, Feb. 7, 1846. Don F. Neufeld, "Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 120-21.

[3]*Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 2.

[4]*TS* 3 (1934): 2-102.

[5]*TS* 2 (1948): 3-67.

[6]Victor T. Houteff, "The Sign of Jonah," *Tract Studies* 10 (1942): 1-48.

[7]*TS* 8 (1941): 3-110.

[8]Three basic schools of interpretation flourished when the Millerite Movement began and during the early years of the SDA Movement: (1) Preterism, the belief that the major part of prophecy has been fulfilled in the past; (2) historicism, where prophecy has been fulfilled all through history with more yet to be fulfilled in the future; and (3) futurism, the belief that most of prophecy will be fulfilled in the future before the end of the age. See, Neufeld, 111.

SDA undergirdings into fully blown doctrines that were inspired by dispensationalist overtones. His consistent literalism included an eschatological preoccupation with OT prophecies concerning Israel (this will be discussed further in the next chapter). Paradoxically, while insisting on a literal gathering in Palestine, VTH spiritualized the gathering to be that of the 144,000 as opposed to the Jewish nation. While the 144,000 were considered literal in number, they nevertheless came from spiritual Israel. Therefore, while Houteff's approach may have been biblicist in nature, his method of interpretation lacked the grammatical-historical principles necessary to ensure the validity of his exegesis.[1]

**Previous Criticism**

In order to understand previous criticisms against the hermeneutical approaches of VTH, it is essential to look at some of the general principles SDA scholars have identified by which the unique genres of Scripture may be understood.[2] These principles focus on issues of revelation,

[1]The Grammatical-historical principle was one of the methods adopted by NT writers. The "principle indicates that a passage is to be understood in its historical context and its natural grammatical sense." Holbrook, 132-33.

[2]Louis F. Were, *Biblical Principles of Interpretation Establish Truth and Safeguard Against Last-Day Errors* (Australia: A. B. Were, 1973 reprint), provides a

inspiration, illumination, and guidelines for the interpretation of the Bible.[1] The emphasis by Davidson and Gulley focuses on the importance of a biblical-based hermeneutics.[2] *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, observed that while VTH adopted some hermeneutical principles, these time-honored methods seem to have been used in a questionable manner.[3]

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list of thirteen different principles to guide us in our interpretation of last-day prophecies. Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," 163-93, discusses the foundations and general principles of Biblical interpretation. Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* (Lincoln, NE: College View Printers, 1985). Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," *HSDAT*, 59, provides a list of principles different to that proposed by Gulley. Cf. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 689-707, lists seven fundamental practices of interpretation in Scripture.

[1]Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD*), rev. ed., ed. Don F. Neufeld, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979), s.v. "Prophet," and "Interpretation of Prophecy." "A Prophet" (Deut 18:15), *SDABC*, 1:1017-19; "Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *SDABC*, 4:25-38; "Untempered Morter" (Ezek 22:28), *SDABC*, 4:655-56. For principles of interpreting symbolic prophecy see "Their Faces" (Ezek 1:10), *SDABC,* 4:576-77.

[2]Davidson, 64-68, 96; Cf. Gulley, 674-77, 707-16. Biblical-based hermeneutics is synonymous to the Historical-Grammatical method.

[3]See *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 6-48, on how VTH applied those methods in the exegesis of his major doctrines.

Analogy in the writings of VTH appears to extend beyond the comparison of truth within Scripture itself to include a comparison with EGW and the teachings of the SRod. Houteff's analogical method seemed to have construed certain aspects of EGW's writings to substantiate the SRod teachings which he considered to be inspired.[1] This approach lacks legitimacy and does not do justice to either the Scripture or EGW.

*GC Com-WAE* demonstrated VTH's misuse by highlighting some contradictory statements and twisting of "Bible texts in an effort to make them teach things they do not say."[2] *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, also reached a similar conclusion saying that VTH merely presented "fanciful and private interpretation of the Scriptures, against which we are warned in 2 Pet 1:20."[3] Therefore, the counsel of Bass, speaking generally on the safeguard against such an approach to interpretating Scripture is worth noting. He suggested that the exegetical process must be done in the "light of

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[1]*SRod*, 1:11. Cf. *TG* 1, no. 14 (1946): 17; *Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 11, "'The Shepherd's Rod' claims 'inspiration' and that by its divine revelations of truth, whereas the General Conference Committee themselves claim no 'inspiration' neither do their works nor their interpretation of the Scriptures show it."

[2]*GC Com-WAE*, 26.

[3]*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 57.

context, the mood of the author, the conditions to which he is writing, and the over-all pattern of Scriptures."[1]

Typology is recognized by some scholars as an important hermeneutical key in biblical interpretation.[2] However, "types do not partake of the nature of unrealities" but "tend to look forward to ultimate realities."[3] Thus:

> Care must be exercised to differentiate between type and prediction. Although a type has reference to the future, it is not in itself a prediction. Rather, it is recorded as a historical fact without evident reference to the future. The antitype proves to be the "body" of which the type was a foreshadowing, and thus is more vital and ultimate reality than the type.[4]

The significance of types may have inspired Newport in his attempt to establish a direct link between BDSDAs and the SDA Church through the use of typology. He argued that typology is perhaps the most obvious point of continuity

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[1]Bass, 149.

[2]See Richard M. Davidson's doctoral dissertation, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 15-111; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 35-59.

[3]W. G. C. Murdoch, "Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 213.

[4]Ibid., 214.

between BDSDAs and mainstream SDA theology, but more so, an extension of SDA typological hermeneutics.[1]

On the other hand, Houteff's forced typology[2] appeared to have characteristics that were similar to that of dispensationalists,[3] and were at variance to SDA typological understanding. The influence of dispensationalism was early refuted by SDA scholars and will be discussed further in chapter III.

Historicism[4] was also noticeable in the works of VTH, "though on numerous points of detail Houteff differed from his Adventist heritage."[5] VTH seemed to have ignored the importance of following the principles of the historical-grammatical method necessary to ensure that his interpretation of the Bible and the SOP did not contradict

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[1]Newport, "The Branch Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists," 41-42.

[2]See the Section of this dissertation entitled, "typological approach" in Chapter 2 for references to VTH's typological works.

[3]Erickson, *COE*, 115, speaks of how typology is used profusely by dispensationalists.

[4]*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Biblical Historicism," denies both preterism (past fulfillment) or futurism (distant future fulfillment) but holds to prophetic interpretation which supports the fulfillment of biblical prophecy throughout history and continues to take place today.

[5]Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium*, 207.

the light God had already given to His people.[1] Hasel, in 1974, emphasizing the need for genuine historicism in the process of interpreting and understanding Scripture, has this to say:

> The interpreter of the Bible must remember that he is dealing with "living oracles" (Acts 7:38) of God, which fact imposes on him the requirement to possess religious insight and sympathy for the biblical text. It must be constantly recognized that it is God Himself who through the Bible and the Holy Spirit creates in the interpreter the necessary presuppositions and the essential perspective for understanding Scripture. The more comprehensive the interpreter's experience spiritually and otherwise, the deeper and fuller the development of his understanding; the more detailed his knowledge of the milieu, the time, and the background of the work he is to interpret, the better balanced will be his judgment and the greater will be the likelihood that he will discover precisely what the text means.[2]

Although Hasel is not specifically addressing the methods of interpretation used by Houteff, the principles discussed by him are applicable to the SRod.[3] Houteff may have misinterpreted the Scripture unintentionally. In any case, his works have generated criticism from SDA scholars,

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[1]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 5.

[2]Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," 170.

[3]Houteff's method has been severely criticized by SDA scholars. See Hendricks, 71-78; *GC Com-WAE*, 1-4; Pacific Union Conference Committee of Seventh-day Adventists, *A Reply to the Shepherd's Rod* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1934), 50-68. (cited hereafter as *PUC Com REPLY*).

and this may have contributed to limit the influence of his movement among SDAs.

## Evaluation

One of Houteff's greatest strengths was perhaps the fact that he was a sincere student of the Word of God. He took the Apostle Paul's counsel to Timothy at heart, "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15, KJV). Indifference and unbelief to revealed truth was seen by VTH as an insult to God and a sin against the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth.[1] For that reason, he argued that "no one can afford to doubt the Word of God."[2] To "disbelieve the Word of God, or to be indifferent, indecisive, and inactive" is a terrible thing.[3] SDAs may learn from Houteff the value of taking the Bible seriously and becoming personally acquainted with God's word.

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Fruits of the Anointed One," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 41 (1947): 25.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 12 (1946): 27, says, to doubt "Truth" and "implicitly heeding God's call" and "will" was subject to a similar fate as the recipients of Noah's day.

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "The Children of the Barren More Than the Children of the Bearing Woman," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 39 (1947): 13.

Andreasen observed that in VTH's personal study, he often came up with unique insights from Scripture.[1] His high view of the Bible, supported by the conviction that he was inspired, gave impetus to his own teaching and built up the confidence of those who believed in him. By accepting the OT and NT, he affirmed his commitment to Scripture as a whole. He was prepared at all times, to give a reason for the hope he had in God's word (1 Pet 3:15).

On the other hand, Houteff's idea that certain portions of Scripture were enshrouded by a mystical aura, gave an adverse impression that certain truths in the Bible only belonged to a selected group of people. This made him appear as if he were the only inspired channel through which the great truths of prophecy were to be revealed.[2] Two

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[1]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942.

[2]EGW cautioned that anyone who regarded "their individual judgment as supreme," or assumed that his knowledge "must come through no other channel than directly from God," is in "grave peril" and places "himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy, and overthrown." See *AA*, 164. Cf. *3T*, 414, "God has made His church a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give one an experience independent of the church. He does not give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church, Christ's body, is left in darkness." *5T*, 293, cautioned, "There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they

reasons may account for why it may have been difficult for VTH to interpret Bible prophecy adequately.

First, SDA scholars have underscored the vital role of hermeneutics in understanding Scripture.[1] When these rules of interpretation are ignored, the Scripture may be easily misunderstood, as may have been the case of VTH. Hermeneutics is the process by which the interpreter "seeks to bridge the vast linguistic, historical, social, and cultural gaps that exist between the ancient and modern worlds" so that the text(s) may be understood in a contemporary situation.[2] It is the "science and art" of "deriving meaning" or "interpreting literary documents."[3]

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see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for "in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

[1]Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Prophet," and "Interpretation of Prophecy." The basic principles of interpretation are set forth in "A Prophet," *SDABC*, 1:1017-19; "Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *SDABC*, 4:25-38; "Untempered Morter," *SDABC*, 4:655-56. For principles of interpreting symbolic prophecy see "Their Faces," *SDABC*, 4:576-77.

[2]William W. Klein, Craig L. Bomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 6; Cf. Gorden D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: OMF Literature, 1982), 15-22; Kah Seng Ng, *SEARCH: An Exegetical Process in Sermon Preparation* (Silang, Cavite, Philippines: AIIAS Publications, 1989), 1-4.

[3]Klein, Bomberg and Hubbard Jr., 5; Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 372.

The term, derived from the Greek *hermēneuō*, simply means to interpret, explain, or translate.[1] Hence, every sentence in a prophecy should have been ascertained precisely within the wider context of the prophet's intended audience.[2]

Second, Houteff may have neglected the need to distinguish between classical and apocalyptic literature.[3] According to Kenneth D. Mulzac, classical prophets addressed primarily the immediate local issues of Israel's apostasy and the ethical, and political corruptions among God's ancient people and surrounding nations.[4] Apocalyptic literature, on the other hand, is eschatological and cosmic. The results for such a neglect may have led Houteff to misunderstand his own role in prophetic interpretation.[5] Being self imposedly

[1]Roger S. Boraas, "Hermeneutics," *Encyclopedia Christianity* (2001), 2:531.

[2]Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Prophet," and "Interpretation of Prophecy."

[3]Kenneth D. Mulzac, *A Chronological Approach to the Prophets* (Huntsville, AL: Beka Publications, 1996), 6, distinguishes between the two. Classical prophets were primarily "forthtelling" while apocalyptic prophets were "foretelling." "Forthtelling" had a local focus while "foretelling" had eschatological and cosmic concerns.

[4]Ibid., 4-6, where the author reminds us that it is critical to note several factors when dealing with prophecy: attention must be drawn to the "prophetic genre," "social and historical context," and the "literary devices," employed by the prophet and to determine if the prophet was "engaging in forthtelling or foretelling."

[5]See the document by the General Conference Methods of Bible Study Committee, "Methods of Bible Study," *AR*,

inspired, his interpretations of Scripture were considered infallible just as if they had been handed down by the prophets themselves.

Houteff, no doubt loved and studied the writings of EGW. For him, no individual could be "led into all Truth without the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy."[1] It was the SOP which gave clues to understanding God's divinely designed system of transmitting truth.[2] This passion to study the writings of EGW made him conversant with her works, which he quoted extensively in his teaching. Much of what Houteff conjectured in his teachings may be found in isolated statements of EGW. The close similarity between certain aspects of his teachings, and those of EGW, made his writings appear as though they were genuine SDA doctrines.

Some of Houteff's interpretations of EGW contradicted her own statements or applied them arbitrarily.[3] Ironically, his misinterpretation of EGW led him to accuse

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January 22, 1987, 18-20, in Appendix 3 for a thorough discussion of the differences between apocalyptic and nonapocalyptic prophecy.

[1]*TG* 1, no. 14 (1946): 17.

[2]Ibid., 18. Houteff noted that "the symbolism" (Zech 4) "points out the system which Heaven has ordained for dispensing the Word of the Lord to His church; that the Spirit of Prophecy at work is the only remedy against isms in the church and in the world." Ibid., 20.

[3]Cf. Examples cited in Hendricks, 6-19.

the SDA leadership of neglecting the truths of the SOP. This characteristic, which is typical of many offshoot movements, was evident from the very beginning of the SRod movement.[1] EGW disagreed with those who, like VTH, use her writings to "deride the order of the ministry as a system of priestcraft."[2] This remains true even if such individuals try to give a resemblance of authority to their erroneous teachings by the use of her writings.

EGW warns:

> From such turn away, have no fellowship with their message, however much they may quote the *Testimonies* and seek to entrench themselves behind them. Receive them not, for God has not given them this work to do. . . . This class of evil workers have selected portions of the *Testimonies*, and have placed them in the framework of error, in order by this setting to give influence to their false testimonies. When it is made manifest that their message is error, then the *Testimonies*, brought into the companionship of error, share the same condemnation; and people of the world, who do not know that the testimonies quoted are extracts from private letters used without my consent, present these matters as evidence that my work is not of God or of truth, but falsehood. Those who thus bring the work of God into disrepute will have to answer before God for the work they are doing.[3]

VTH's method of exegesis led him into interpretive difficulties with the SOP. His claim to inspiration was rooted in his prophetic consciousness as he saw himself to

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[1] *PUC Com REPLY*, 5; *HTSR*, 24-27 passim.

[2] *TM*, 51.

[3] Ibid., 51-52.

be the interpreter of both the Bible and the writings of EGW.[1] VTH's "claim comes in no ambiguous terms."[2]

Houteff's multiplex approach to the study of Scripture and the writings of EGW is worth noting. In his study, he did not limit himself to any particular approach. This made it possible for him to provide a variety of interpretations to the understanding of the Scripture. Using the analogical method, VTH was able to employ selected portions of Scripture in a systematic fashion to support his eschatology. With typology, he was able to draw numerous types and antitypes from Scripture. And the historicist approach enabled him to build upon the historical foundation of SDA theology in his apocalyptic reflection.

Regarding analogy, Elliott E. Johnson has pointed out that a legitimate basis for this principle, "is the belief in the unity of meaning found expressed in the

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[1]Eisele, 7.

[2]Ibid., 8. Cf. Victor T. Houteff, "If You Were Nothing What Would You Choose to Be?" Timely Greetings 2, no. 34 (1948): 28, 29. VTH claims, "*For there is none other today than the Rod literature which God recommends you to hear*. And when you hear the Rod, you will find yourself wrapped in the love of Christ and in the "arms" of God. Try it. Now listen to His Word and let Him in the language of the prophets tell you more about the day you and I are now approaching, the day with which we are almost face to face." Ibid. (Italics is supplied).

biblical canon."[1] He underscores three essential kinds of analogical correspondence indicative of legitimate interpretation:

1. There must be analogy between the messages of Scripture. Although the correspondence may be compatible and harmonious between two given passages, they may not be necessarily complimentary. The interpreter must ensure that the correspondence between them "involve essentially the same message expressed in both passages."[2]

2. The interpreter must recognize analogy with an antecedent subject. This is critical in view of,

> The canonical development of what is said about a subject as two passages appear within the progress of revelation. The content of the antecedent affirmation commonly is incorporated into the subsequent affirmation about the same subject.[3]

3. Analogy must be consistent with "Scriptural interpretation of prior prophecies."[4] The application of this hermeneutic is "based on a unity of meanings expressed in the collection of books in the canon."[5]

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[1]Elliott E. Johnson, "Premillennialism Introduced: Hermeneutics," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus* ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 18.

[2]Ibid., 19.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 20.

The interpretive process, therefore, as noted by Johnson, must be consistent with the theology of Scripture as a whole. This fundamental principle of proper analogy appears to be lacking in VTH's writing and stands in open disagreement with the Bible and EGW.[1]

Typology, on the other hand, has its advantages in the potential it has to clarify doctrine. Houteff, was a firm believer in using types and antitypes and it showed in his extensive use of this method. It helped to clarify areas of ambiguity and sometimes seemed very logical. However, the basic weakness of his use of typology was consistent literalism whereby types were dogmatized.[2] Not everything in Scripture is meant to be interpreted typologically.

The tendency to force typology into any given text ignores the genres of Scripture and the principles of biblical interpretation. Hasel, therefore, is correct in saying that a "type is always incomplete until the antitype brings out the fuller import and deeper meaning of the type."[3] Garrett further noted that it is a "difficult and

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[1]*HTSR*, 15.

[2]See for example his use of the "Kingdom" and "David" as discussed in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 6-8.

[3]Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," 187.

extremely subjective" matter "to establish doctrine on the basis of typology."[1] Hence, in order to ensure a sound understanding of types, a certain set of criteria for interpretation must be followed.[2] Unless this is done, the use of types will not be legitimate. Houteff's use of typology seems to have had a predisposition to literalist premillennialism.[3]

As noticed in Houteff's use of analogy and types, a basic historical thread runs through his method of interpretation and is visible in the major areas of SDA eschatology. Some of these overtones will be seen in his

[1]Duane A. Garrett, 785.

[2]Murdoch, 216-17, underscores six criteria for interpreting types (paraphrased):

1. Carefully note specific points of correspondence between the types and the antitypes.
2. Note points of difference and contrast between the types and the antitypes.
3. Study points of correspondence and difference in the light of the historical context of each.
4. Do not give meaning to every minute detail in types. Treat the broad themes of the plan of redemption rather than the incidentals of the types.
5. Do not speculate on typology that is not designated by inspired writers.
6. Seek to understand God's purpose in giving both the type and the antitype. The later may have a more vital and broader event or principle than the former but continual similarity of meaning between them must be present.

[3]Newport, "The Branch Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists," 41-41, tries to link VTH's typological hermeneutics to his SDA roots; Bailey and Darden, 20-21; and Pitts, 23. Also see discussion in chapter 1 of this dissertation on the "dispensationalist movement" and "SDA premillennialism."

study of the 144,000, the sealing, and the harvest, which will be discussed further in the sections that follow. However, on numerous points of detail Houteff differed from SDAs. While it is important to understand the literal sense of Scripture, as historically affirmed by SDAs, the danger of a "consistent literalism" which ignores NT reinterpretation of types, has been clearly identified by Gulley as a form of dispensational hermeneutics.[1] Such an approach to understanding OT prophecies are inconsistent with prophetic interpretation.[2]

**Ecclesiological Foundation**

Much of what VTH taught grew out of his understanding of the Church. Thus it is necessary to explore his concept of mission and organizational structures, and how he perceived the SRod as an "upshoot" from the SDA Church.

[1]Gulley, 223.

[2]Ibid., 726.

**Analysis**

Houteff firmly believed in "order and system" as the "first laws of heaven."[1] His first intention was not to break away from the SDA Church.[2] He says,

> True, the church is God's church, but those who have taken charge of it are no better than the Sanhedrin in Christ's day. It is because God has supreme regard for His church that He has thus with His Truth invaded it, and is thus to reclaim His people by cutting down those who are unlawfully enslaving them, teaching them doctrines of devils as shown in this study; and keeping them from coming in contact with Heaven's Truth for this time of crisis.[3]

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[1]*TS* 7 (1954): 75. Cf. "Light was given by His Spirit that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church--that organization was essential. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth." *TM*, 26.

"God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have His work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it." *PP*, 376.

[2]*TS* 7 (1954): 5, insists that "such a break need never to have taken place."

[3]*TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 10. The "truth" VTH is referring to is the teachings of the SRod in contrast to the "teachings of the devil" as advocated by the leading brethren of the SDA Church.

Houteff believed that the SDA Church was God's supreme possession. At the same time, he reasoned upon what appeared to him as backsliding in the SDA Church, was the result of unbelief in the SOP and failure to accept God's truth, thus making the work of the SRod necessary.[1] Thus, the GC had ceased to become the voice of God to the SDA Church at large.[2] But while God had forsaken the organizational leadership, His hand was still extended to those within the church who were keen followers of truth.

> His people as an organization are forsaken of Him, but as individuals who come to walk in His light to follow Him in Truth and righteousness are reaccepted. When the present controversy over the message of the hour is ended, then those who survive the purifying process, the Judgment for the Living in the house of God (1 Pet 4:7), the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan 8:14), will be the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, the members of the church, the body of Christ.[3]

This meant that the SDA Church was to undergo a purifying process. Members of the remnant were to make up the end-time body of Christ's church. For this great cause,

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 11 (1946): 9.

[2]Ibid. Houteff insists "And if you still wonder why God permitted the errors to creep into the church, the answer is: So that by their fostering and propagating them He may at a time such as this expose the workers of iniquity and prove to the laity that His church is now as badly overrun by the Devil as was the Jewish church at Christ's time, thus to awaken the honest ones and to set them free from their Laodicean self-deception, and thus from the overflowing scourge (Isa 28:13-15)." *TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 9, 10.

[3]*TG* 1, no. 29 (1947): 10.

the SRod was appointed by God to become His voice to the SDA Church in accordance with Mic 6:9.[1]

Not surprisingly, then, VTH felt that SDAs were lethargic, self-satisfied, and complacent as the church of Laodicea (Rev 3:14-18).[2] His mission was unambiguous.

> The primary purpose of *The Shepherd's Rod* is to unlock the long-concealed mystery concerning the ever-challenging and much discussed subject of the 144,000 (Rev 14:1), with the central object in view of bringing about among God's people that "thorough reformation" foretold by the Spirit of Prophecy (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 251).[3]

Two significant purposes are underscored: (1) the SRod was to unlock the mysteries of the 144,000 and, (2) the SRod would bring about a reformation in the SDA Church. These objectives became the primary missionary obsession of the SRod movement.

In early 1934 when the GC rejected the message of VTH, he and thirty-seven followers organized themselves to launch their activities in an official capacity.[4] The

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 11 (1946): 6.

[2]See *SRod*, 2:94-95. Houteff even began to view the SDA Church as apostate, charged with "whoredom" by God for "having illicit connections with the world" in contrast to themselves as the "remnant" true church. Hence the attempt to draw the faithful into their ranks. Victor T. Houteff, "Lewdness Flees Away---Revival and Reformation Win," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 6 (1947): 19.

[3]*SRod*, 1:5.

[4]Garnett, 10, notes an additional two organizational developments. One was in 1937 shortly after his marriage to

following year (1935), they purchased the Mt. Carmel site.[1] There they established an autocephalous organization.[2] A fortress spirit and desire to avoid the corruptions of the world inspired the Davidians to settle beyond the limits of Waco city.[3]

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Miss Hermanson, and the other was during World War II when members of the Rod were facing problems regarding their religious status.

[1]The property was three hundred and seventy-seven acres located two and a half miles from the Waco city limits. Pitts, 26. The center became the headquarters for Davidian activities nationally and internationally. On the other hand, Mount Carmel Center was intended to be a temporary headquarters for the 144,000 preparatory to their transfer to Palestine where the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom was to take place for the closing work of the gospel prior to the second advent of Christ. See *SDAE*, s.v. "Davidian SDA's-Shepherd's Rod."

[2]The autonomy of the early DSDA organization did not include the capacity to elect its own leadership. VTH, as the founder of the early DSDAs was seen to be inspired and continued in leadership at Mount Carmel until his death when his wife, Florence, took up leadership. Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium*, 204.

[3]*HT On-line*, s.v. "Davidians and Branch Davidians." Pitts, 26, notes that the fascinating quasi-community reached a capacity of sixty-four by 1940.

Following the precedence of the SDA Church,[1] VTH adopted the tithing system for the operation of the DSDA organization. He argued:

> Whether our management of the tithe be right or wrong, after the tithe has been turned to the "storehouse," the tithe payers have done their duty and stand blameless before God, whereas the stewards of God's "storehouse" alone from that time on bear its responsibility.[2]

Hence, the "storehouse" was interpreted to be the SRod movement to which the tithe should be sent.[3] Houteff, perceived the SDA Church as misusing tithes and offerings making it look as if its sole purpose was to feed, house and clothe the ministers.[4] Because of this, early DSDAs were encouraged to channel their tithes to the SRod and to pay a

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[1]Beginning with "Systematic Benevolence" adopted by the Battle Creek church in 1859, and the suggestion of a tithing system by James White in 1861, the GC in the session of 1876 formally resolved that it was the duty of all brothers and sisters, "under ordinary circumstances, to devote one-tenth of all their income from whatever source, to the cause of God." Schwarz, 178.

[2]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 7.

[3]However, he argued that the paying of tithe to the Davidians must be based on a positive response to the following questions: "Do I believe that The Shepherd's Rod contains the message of the hour, the sealing message of the 144,000? Have I received any spiritual help from it? Has it caused me to repent of formerly indulged sins? Am I now a better Seventh-day Adventist than I was before I accepted it? Has it made me love the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the brethren more than ever before?" See *TA* 4 (1944): 42.

[4]*Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 4.

double tithe[1] in addition to voluntary gift giving and free will offerings.[2] All of the income was used for what was seen as "God's work" which included the infrastructural development of Mt. Carmel.[3]

Early DSDAs saw themselves as a laymen's movement, "the only one ordained to lead the latter day church, freed from sin and sinners, into the land of promise."[4] Citing Isa 49:7, VTH insisted that God overlooked denominationally recognized ministers and spoke instead through despised people, those whom the nations abhorred, to servants of rulers, and to laymen.[5] This meant that God chose from among the ordinary people an "eleventh-hour movement" that gave power and force to the third angels messages in order to

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[1]*HT On-line*, s.v. "Davidians and Branch Davidians." The second tithe was more on a voluntary basis but it was also stressed as important and divinely ordained. According to VTH, "Formally it was used to forward our Academy work and to pay some of its back debts. But now, as the Association grows and expands, the use of the second tithe is likewise widening." *TA* 4 (1944): 63.

[2]*Scode* 2, nos. 3-4 (1936): 2.

[3]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 8, includes the development of Mt. Carmel as part of God's plan and therefore not a secular one. It was seen as part of God's business.

[4]Victor T. Houteff, "Questions and Answers on Present Truth Topics," *The Answerer* 3 (1993): 23.

[5]Victor T. Houteff, "The Servants of God in the Gathering Time," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 46 (1947): 6.

"lighten the earth with his glory" (Rev 18:1).[1] The movement drew its followers from the SDA Church, delivered them from spiritual bondage, and hastened the establishment of the kingdom.[2]

**Previous Criticism**

Early SDA scholars were not oblivious to the insinuating influence of the SRod. In 1955 a concise but detailed history of the SRod was documented by the GC in an attempt to dissuade SDA sympathizers and to bring to the awareness of the SDA membership the nature and work of VTH. In this publication, the Committee on Defense Literature of the GC exposed background issues surrounding VTH's faction, his attitudes towards the SDA Church and leadership, and the actions taken by the SDA Church against him which resulted in the removal of his membership.[3] *HTSR* pointed to the

[1]Victor T. Houteff, "Questions and Answers on Present Truth Topics," *The Answerer* 1 (Reprint, 1993): 67. Houteff further points out that according to Zech 3:10, when the purification takes place, the gospel work will quickly finish by having every member of the Lord's house call his neighbor to his own patch of land, to that which God has pre-ordained that everyone should have. Every member, he says, will become a missionary in one capacity or another. This is the layman's movement that will finish the gospel work. Idem, "Laodicean or Davidian--Which?" *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 8 (1946): 25.

[2]*TA* 3 (1993): 20.

[3]*HTSR*, 3-27. Cf. p. 30 above.

gradual development of an attitude of disaffection in VTH towards the church and its leadership.[1] The adversial attitude was seen as the work of Satan.[2]

*SR-Propaganda*, also noted some deceptive methods used by the SRod. One method was the gathering of names from the SDA Church. The list would then be used to solict tithes and offerings from DSDA sympathizers, and for the distribution of SRod literature intended to create the impression that the writer was a loyal SDA.[3] The diversion of finances by the SRod was a complete change in their former position.[4] This change of attitude may have grown out of the belief that they were ordained by God to bring about a revival and reformation and to finish the work on earth.[5]

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[1]Ibid., 3-8.

[2]*GC Com-WAE*, 18-19. Cf. *TM*, 22, 23. Also see "Undermining of Confidence in Leaders First Step in Apostasy," *PUC Com REPLY*, 54-55.

[3]*SR-Propaganda*, 4.

[4]*SRod*, 1:251, notes the DSDA membership were previously urged to pay their tithe and offerings to the SDA Church. As cited in *SR-Propaganda*, 4. Also see *PUC Com REPLY*, 55 and *HTSR*, 22.

[5]Cf. *TA* 3 (1993): 23.

The Mission of the Church:
Revival and Reformation

**Analysis**

The chief objective of the SRod message was "to bring about a reformation among God's people."[1] This work was presumed to be ushered in by way of an "upshoot" in the SDA Church.[2]

DSDAs saw themselves as genuine SDAs who were disfellowshipped from the mother church by "lukewarm" brethren through a majority of consensus.[3] Despite being removed from church membership, they claimed to remain loyal SDA members strictly focusing their work within the SDA system as the work of John and Christ within their

[1]*SRod*, 1:5. Cf. Victor T. Houteff, "A Rod that Speaks Calls for Reformation and Creates Great Controversy," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 27 (1947): 3-11; *TG* 1, no. 13 (1946): 3-10; Idem, "Revival and Reformation Precede the Great and Dreadful Day of the Lord," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 8 (1947): 16-27.

[2]*SRod*, 1:20, 30, describes the SDA Church in its lowest ebb. "May God lift us from the low spiritual level into which we have fallen, and save us from this Laodicean, lukewarm condition. May we, as wise Ninevah of old, defeat the prophecy, that heaven may rejoice."

[3]*TG* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 17. Victor T. Houteff, "A Dead Top, an Offshoot or an Upshoot---Which?" *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 43 (1949): 3, refers to themselves as being "cast out" or "forced" out of Adventism.

denomination.[1] Hence, they called themselves "upshoots" from a dying or dormant SDA Church.[2]

Houteff proposed five "upshoot" movements to exist during probationary history derived from the parable of Matt 20:1-7:[3] (1) The Jews in Moses' day; (2) the Christian church which was commissioned to go into the vineyard; (3) the First-day Adventists soon after A.D. 1820; (4) the fledgling SDA Church with the sanctuary message; and, (5) an "upshoot" laymen's movement called by God with a specific message of revival and reformation for the SDA Church.

In Houteff's opinion, those in charge of the SDA Church were "self-exalting" and "no better than the Sanhedrin in Christ's day."[4] He saw them as "misled spiritual guides" and "self-deceived religious leaders,"[5] who taught "doctrines of devils" and undermined the confidence of men "in the prophets and of Christ's ability to correctly

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[1]*TG* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 18.

[2]Ibid., 19.

[3]*TG* 2, no. 43 (1949): 5-11.

[4]*TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 9,10.

[5]*SRod*, 1:255.

reveal and portray Truth to His servants."[1] Such could not be used by God because the church was "polluted" and cursed.[2]

Because of the condition of the church, he saw it as one of the fallen churches represented by the blasphemous heads of the leopard-like beast of Rev 13.[3] Because of the condition of the church, Houteff reasoned that it would eventually give way to a new name and a new organization when the cleansing and purification took place.[4] This would result in the 144,000 who would become the new organization during the period of the Loud Cry.

**Previous Criticism**

Mazzella observed that in 1935 and 1936 Houteff bitterly denounced the SDA Church for calling his party "an offshoot."[5] However, by "1950 he himself labeled it as the most prominent of an ever increasing family of offshoots;

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 9.

[2]*TS* 2 (1948): 38, VTH comments regarding the Laodicean state of the church; *SRod*, 1:155.

[3]Ibid., 217; Cf. *GC Com-WAE*, 16. Apparently, VTH saw SDAs among six other denomination, among which, the Papacy was the first.

[4]*SRod*, 1:155.

[5]Mazzella, 6. Cf. *HTSR*, 22,24.

the Davidian Seventh-day Advent, the prophetic offspring of the parent Seventh-day Adventist Laodicean Church."[1]

The supplementary material in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined* set out a series of warnings against error to be expected within the church of God.[2] One such warning was directed against those who abused the Laodicean message. It noted the counsels of EGW that while the Laodicean message was relevant to the SDA Church, it was not meant to "discourage and dishearten the church." Rather God reproved, rebuked, and chastened; "but it is only that He may restore and approve at last."[3] Those, therefore, who used the Laodicean message to tear down what God Himself had built, did not "bear the divine credentials."[4]

## Evaluation

Houteff's negative attitude towards the SDA Church, its mission and organizational structures, may not have been totally unfounded. As Andreasen had pointed out, some of

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[1]Mazzella, 6. Cf. Houteff, "The Leviticus of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church," 3; *TG* 2, no. 43 (1949): 1-5.

[2]See Appendix, no. 2.

[3]*TM*, 22, 23. Cf. *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 63.

[4]Com on DLit, SR-Examined, 63.

his charges against the SDA Church were true.[1] His zeal to stem the tide against unholy methods of fund-raising in churches, the lack of emphasis on parental guidance, and the lack of sanctity given to the house of worship is commendable.[2] This added to the effectiveness of his message because he touched on the soft spot of SDAs by calling sin by its right name. Much of what Houteff taught regarding the state of the SDA Church could be deduced from the testimonies and counsels of EGW on Laodicea and the need for reformation among God's people. The same may also be true of other eschatological themes in the writings of EGW, such as the sifting and the remnant among God's end time people.

On the other hand, while believing that the SDA Church belonged to God, Davidians still went ahead and organized themselves separately.[3] This is surprising. One would naturally expect the SRod to remain faithful to Adventism since they believed that a sifting was to take place among God's people. This teaching suggests that the

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[1]Andreasen to McElhany and Branson, Letter by General Conference Field Secretary, 1942.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "Baptism and the Lord Our Righteousness--The Gate To the Church," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 19 (1947): 2.

[3]Rosado, "Lessons from Waco," 9. The *HT On-line*, s.v. "Davidians and Branch Davidians," notes that giving the organization a name (In 1942) was essential to achieving a conscientious-objector status by his followers during the war.

remnants mentioned in Scripture were "survivors" (Isa 10:20) or those "spared" (Jer 50:20; Ezek 9:8; Amos 5:15; Mic 2:12; Zeph 2:7) among God's people for their faithfulness (Hag 1:12), and not a reference to those who departed from them. To begin a rival organization to the SDA Church is contrary to divine counsel.[1] EGW cautioned that "dissensions, unhappy differences, and petty church trials dishonor our Redeemer."[2]

While VTH upheld the teachings of EGW, other aspects of his teaching, such as the use of the tithe, clash with her instructions. She counseled, "The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work."[3] "God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry."[4]

Houteff also insisted on the SRod being a laymen's movement independent from the mission and goals of the SDA Church. Although his intentions were for the preaching of truth, as he saw it, it put the SRod movement outside the

[1]See The Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Warnings against Error," in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 58-63, Appendix 2.

[2]*4T*, 19.

[3]*9T*, 249.

[4]Ibid., 250.

pale of Seventh-day Adventism.[1] Again, EGW had given perceptive counsels regarding this danger:

> Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. . . . For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these [leaders] by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy, and overthrown.[2]
>
> Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. . . . In order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.[3]
>
> Like the different parts of a machine, all are closely related to one another, and all dependent upon one great Center. There is to be unity in diversity. No member of the Lord's firm can work successfully in independence. Each is to work under the supervision of God; all are to use their entrusted capabilities in His service, that each may minister to the perfection of the whole.[4]

If VTH had shown a sincere attitude of love for the SDA Church, he would have taken the counsels of EGW more seriously, and possibly could have made a significant contribution to Adventist understanding.

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[1]See "Warnings against Error" in Appendix 2, p. 306.

[2]*AA*, 164.

[3]*9T*, 258.

[4]Ellen G. White, *Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 287.

Houteff's desire for a revival and reformation in the SDA Church is supported by EGW.[1] The enthusiasm with which he taught and urged upon others the need for a renewal of spiritual commitment to God has much to offer. SDAs may learn from Houteff the role of piety in the life of a Christian. Holy living is no doubt the pinnacle of a believer's walk with Christ (cf. Matt 5:48; Rom 12:1; Eph 1:4; Col 1:22).

Athough Houteff stood in opposition to the organized SDA Church, much could be gleaned from his spirit of dedication and firmness to what he believed was truth. The courage to remain faithful in the face of opposition appeared, at least to those who accepted his inspiration, as a mark of a true follower of Christ (cf. Rev 2:10; 14:12; 17:14).

SDAs may also learn from Houteff that while the mission of the church should have a prominent role in church life, it is as vitally essential to ensure that the spiritual pulse of its members are healthy. Revival and reformation within the SDA Church is just as vital to the

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[1]Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages: From the Writings of Ellen G. White (SM)* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:128; Idem, *The Story of Prophets and Kings: As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel (PK)* (Mountain View, CA : Pacific Press, 1943), 626.

survival of the Church as the preaching of the gospel to others.

The negative attitude Houteff had toward the SDA leadership appears in contrast to EGW's counsel against reproof "used to destroy confidence in the church or the ministry."[1] Anyone, she says, "either among us or outside us" who claims to call a people out of Adventism because of its corruptness does not speak for God.[2] On the contrary,

> The oneness and unity of God's truth-believing remnant people carries powerful conviction to the world that they have the truth, and are the peculiar, chosen people of God. This oneness and unity disconcerts the enemy, and he is determined that it shall not exist.[3]

The fact also that VTH insisted on an "upshoot" movement to develop within Adventism, as an entity separate from the organized church, suggests that his movement was in reality an "offshoot" destroying the unity of the body of believers. Ellen G. White points out that "Satan knows" that "unity is the strength of the church . . . and he employs his whole force to bring in dissension."[4]

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[1] *General Conference Bulletin*, May 27, 1913, p. 164, 165.

[2] *TM*, 41.

[3] *1T*, 237.

[4] *SM*, 2:159.

While VTH is correct in pointing out an urgent need for revival and reformation,[1] he failed to recognize that it was not the same as beginning a new and separate organization. Revival, as E. G. White referred to, is an individual work.[2] Only then was reformation to be truly seen among God's people. This is what Satan fears, she says, "that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation."[3] No doubt, the SDA Church may have been in a lukewarm state, as purported by VTH.[4] Nevertheless, it does not diminish the church's status as God's missionary tool to the world. A revival and reformation may be necessary but such a reform was to take place within the SDA Church and not the reorganizing of a new movement.

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[1]Cf. *SM*, 1:121, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs." See Ibid., 128, "A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit."

[2]*SM*, 1:122.

[3]Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville, TN : Southern Pub. Assn., 1930), 133.

[4]Neall, 2, 3, points out that the idea that Christ's coming was contingent to the state of the church and was delayed by the failure of church members living holy lives was not new in SDA literature of the time.

Although the SRod claimed to be loyal SDAs, they criticized SDA leadership, used tithes for themselves, and insisted on a movement separate to the organized SDA Church. In subsequent years, the gulf separating VTH and the SDA movement gradually became unbridgeable. VTH had gone down an irreversible track in opposition to the SDA Church. His theological and ecclesiological perspectives, in contrast to that of SDAs, will also be obvious in his eschatological foundation.

## Eschatological Foundation

The whole panoramic eschatology of VTH will be analysed in the next chapter. The present section deals with VTH's distinctive emphasis on the 144,000. This eschatological foundation will be analyzed in the light of Scripture and EGW's writings.[1] The basic approach used will

[1]This study does presupposes that inspiration is the sole reliable source for truth. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 221-40, discusses the Word of God as inerrant and dependable. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), affirms absolute inerrancy as the most important theological topic among evangelicals. For SDAs, inspiration does not mean inerrancy. See Peter M. Van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," *HSDAT*, 22-57. Inspiration is in harmony with SDA fundamental belief no. 1, which affirms "The Holy Scripture" as "the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." [Gerard P. Damsteegt], *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 4. A succinct summary of

be the historical-biblical method,[1] a hermeneutical procedure that stands in contrast to the historical-critical approach.[2]

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SDA beliefs maybe found in General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 179-82.

[1]This method is also called the "historical-grammatical" or "biblical-based hermeneutics." Holbrook, 132-33. The emphasis is to accurately interpret Scripture by considering the linguistic, historical, and socio-cultural context of the Biblical text under investigation. See Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," 58-104; Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, 100-13; Gulley, 637-716.

[2]According to Soulen, 87-88, the Historical Critical Method refers to "reality" that "is uniform and universal" and "accessible to human reason and investigation, that all events historical and natural occurring within it are in principle comparable by analogy, and that man's contemporary experience of reality can provide the objective criteria by which what could or could not have happened in the past is to be determined." Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Berrien Springs, MI: Berean Books, 1996), 33-34, identified two categories operating in the Christian Church: the *classical* (or radical) *liberal* and the *moderate liberal* approaches. Both "endorse liberalism's skepticism regarding the full inspiration, trustworthiness, and authority of the Bible." Edgar Krentz, in his book outlines the three principles of the scientific method that were highlighted by Ernst Troeltsch: (1) the principle of methodological doubt, which implies that religious history achieves probability and is subject to criticism. (2) The principle of analogy where present experiences becomes the criterion of probability in the past. (3) The principle of correlation which rules out the supernatural, miracles, and salvation history. See Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 55; Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 83-84, notes the method permeating "theology taught in universities like yeast permeates a lump of sour-dough."

**Analysis**

Houteff believed that the subject of the 144,000 was the least understood among "godly people" and EGW.[1] He identified 1844 as the fulfillment of the "angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Rev 7:2, NIV).[2] He argued that the "angel" (Rev 7) remained for a time in the "east" preventing the sealing work of the 144,000 from taking place.[3] In 1929, the "angel" arrived with the unfolding truth of the 144,000. Hence, the sealing work of the 144,000 is to take place in the SDA Church from 1929 up to the slaughtering time of the vision of Ezek 9.[4] He wrote,

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[1]Houteff argued that although EGW was far more acquainted with the subject of the 144,000 than anyone living during her time, she "failed to point out the exact company by assembling the references together, and clear the mystery." The reason was the 144,000 "was not present truth in their time." *SRod*, 1:13.

[2]Ibid., 22. He wrote "John's prophecy in Revelation 7, of this ascending angel was only a vision of something to come, and the fulfillment of this prophecy was realized when Sister White was given her first vision in 1844, which was a vision of the 144,000." Cf. *EW*, 13-20.

[3]*SRod*, 1:22.

[4]VTH drew attention to EGW's statement regarding the relationship of Revelation 7 and Ezekiel 9. *SRod*, 1:26. "This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision." Cf. *TM*, 445.

> The cases of all who are sealed from 1929 to the final close of probation will be investigated before the throne in the heavenly sanctuary while living. The investigation commences after the fulfillment of Ezekiel 9. Those who are sealed from 1929 to the fulfillment of Ezekiel 9 (close of probation for the church), are living saints, 144,000 in number, who shall never die--translated without tasting death.[1]

Houteff conceived a literal number of 144,000 "living saints."[2] These go through the climactic events of earth's history and are translated into heaven without seeing death.[3]

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[1]*SRod*, 2:162.

[2]*SRod*, 1:22.

[3]*SRod*, 2:162. According to VTH, the righteous dead after 1844 including EGW herself were not among the 144,000. These righteous saints were to come to life during the time of trouble (Dan 12:1-3) and a short time prior to the second advent of Jesus. See *SRod*, 1:25-26. At one time EGW stated that she, with the 144,000, would be able to visit other worlds. See Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN : Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), 543-44. It has been arugued that she did not claim to be one of them, but, did she ever deny otherwise? At the time she wrote it, she believed Christ would come while she was still living. Dan 12:1-3 spoke of a resurrection to take place during "a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then" (v. 1). At that time, "multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (v. 2). E. G. White in reference to the deliverance of the saints in Dan 12:1-3, wrote, "All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. "They also which pierced Him" (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient." *GC*, 637.

Regarding the sealing of the 144,000 and the Sabbath seal, VTH explains:

> This sealing of the 144,000 is not a Sabbath seal. However, those who are sealed must be Sabbath keepers. It is a seal, or mark, that separates the two classes in the church, and those who are sealed, or marked are not marked because they keep Sabbath only, but because they sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the church. So both the sealing and the slaughter are in God's church, and not in Babylon, or in the world.[1]

Houteff made a clear distinction between the sealing of the 144,000 (Ezek 9) and the Sabbath seal. He insisted that while it was necessary to receive the seal of God's Sabbath, it was also essential to "sigh and cry for the abominations that are in the church, for otherwise they cannot receive the mark by the angel with the writer's inkhorn of Ezek 9."[2] The sealing was an indication of salvation (Eph 4:30) whereby "the grace of sanctification

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[1] *SRod*, 1:29. VTH pointed out that according to Rev 9:4, "the saints of God were sealed with the seal of God," even prior to the proclamation of the third angel's message and the Sabbath truth. Hence it "must be concluded that the saints of God are sealed with present truth in all ages, and whatever that present truth is, that is the seal." Ibid., 28.

[2] *SRod*, 1:28. Cf. *TM*, 445; *5T*, 210-16. In *3T*, 266, E. G. White wrote, "The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. . . . Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand with fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people." White further notes that the work of "sighing and crying" was essential because "the sealing time is very short, and will soon be over." *EW*, 58.

wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost is the seal and assurance of one's redemption."[1]

**Previous Criticism**

The date, 1929, set to mark the beginning of the sealing of the 144,000 was problematic.[2] EGW discouraged the use of any time setting for the fulfillment of any of Christ's promises.[3] She says, "Time has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test."[4]

The other problem noted by *GC Com-WAE* was the attempt by Houteff to draw a clear distinction between the Sabbath seal and that applied to the 144,000.[5] In contrast, SDAs have historically attested the close link between the "seal" and the "Sabbath" truth.[6] The word rendered "seal" from the Greek *sphragis* is used in 1 Cor 9:2 to refer to an

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[1]*SRod*, 1:27.

[2]See *GC Com-WAE*, 19, regarding the counsels of EGW against such attempts.

[3]*TM*, 55.

[4]*EW*, 75.

[5]*GC Com-WAE*, 21.

[6]SDA scholars had long established this connection. Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God: 144,000 of the Servants Being Sealed* (New Bedford: Benjamin Lindsey, 1849), 1-47. Uriah Smith, 454-60. Cf. "Seal" (Rev 7:2), *SDABC*, 7:782.

inscription by which something is authenticated.[1] EGW used this definition in connection with those who manifested the character of God as recipients of the seal.[2] Thus, the seal of God is the

> Sign of a sanctified life, a token of God's ownership, and an assurance of His special care. And inasmuch as the Sabbath is a sign of sanctification (Ezek 20:12; Exod 31:13), true Sabbath keeping will constitute the outward manifestation of the seal of the living God placed upon the foreheads of the 144,000.[3]

The interpretation of the SRod appears to be questionable in de-emphasizing the Sabbath as the seal of God.[4] EGW was not ambiguous on this issue:

> The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. 'The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and thee through your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.' Exod 31:12,13.

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[1]A. F. J. Kranz, "A Brief Commentary on Revelation 7, or Sealing Work and the 144,000," presentation to the Bible Research Fellowship, November 11, 1951 (AHC-AU), 2.

[2]Ibid. EGW described those who receive the seal of God as: "Those that overcame the world, the flesh and the devil" *TM*, 445; "Those whose character have been cleansed of every defilement" *TM*, 214; and those in whom no lie was found in their mouths because they were blameless before the throne of God. Rev 14:5.

[3]Kranz, 2. In Exod 31:12-13, the Sabbath is clearly designated as a sign between God and His people. Cf. *8T*, 117; *GC*, 640, "Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God." Also see W. M. Adams, "A Challenge" Paper on the Shepherd's Rod (AHC-AU, 1936), 4.

[4]*SRod*, 1:29.

> *Here the Sabbath is clearly designated as a sign between God and His people.*[1]

Ellen G. White underscores that the seal is revealed in the observance of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath seal is a sign between God and His people.

## The 144,000 as the Remnant

**Analysis**

Houteff perceived the name "Seventh-day Adventist" as a "curse" for the 144,000,[2] and conditional due to the Laodicean state of the SDA Church.[3] It made purification necessary to produce the 144,000 righteous saints.[4] The idea then of "remnant" inferred a "separation, removal, or

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[1] *8T*, 117. (Emphasis supplied). Cf. "Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the Living God." *GC*, 640.

[2] "And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen [the 144,000]: For the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name" Isa 65:15. Cf. *TM*, 300.

[3] *SRod*, 1:101. Cf. "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: And thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name" Isa 62:2.

[4] *SRod*, 1:101. See Isa 52:1; Isa 4 and Zeph 3:13, "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: For they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Cf. *PP*, 725.

destruction of a part" of the SDA Church.[1] Hence, the "remnant" (Rev 12:17) refers to a small portion which is left within the SDA Church after the mighty shaking prophesied in Ezek 9,[2] and Isa 63.[3] In that sense, the sealing of the 144,000 (Ezek 9) parallels the "sifting" of "the godly from the ungodly" within Adventism.[4] "Those who are sealed (marked) and escape the ruin are the ones who

[1]*SRod*, 1:102, signifying a "very small portion, a fragment, or a small bit" that endures the shaking and finally gathered during the harvest.

[2]Victor T. Houteff to Fellow Member, n.d., *Jezreel Letter*, no. 2, reprint 1997, Mountain Dale, NY: Universal; *SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 9.

[3]For further comments on Isa 63 and its relationship to the 144,000, see the following: *SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 9. *SRod*, 1:102, 154, 156-60. Cf. Lev 5:13; 2 Kgs 19:4; Isa 37:4; Ezra 9:8; Isa 1:9; Isa 11:11; Isa 16:14; Jer 44:28; Ezek 6:8; Joel 2:32; Rom 11:5; Rev 11:13. VTH cites these references in the context of the shaking within Adventism. See *EW*, 270, who refers to the "shaking" "caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans."

[4]*SRod*, 1:27. To support his arguments, VTH cites EGW in reference to Laodicea. See *1T*, 181, "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people."

will constitute the number which prophecy declares to be 144,000."[1]

Thus as Houteff summarized,

> Micah 4:6, "In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted," meaning the church now, in this present condition. "I will make her a remnant:" That is, after the separation,(purification), those who are left,--the 144,000, being the remnant. The affliction is the time of purification.[2]

The purification then is a painful but necessary process because "when God gets through with this washing process, He will have a people pure and clean."[3] Then the 144,000 will make up a "great army" who, "filled with the Holy Ghost will fearlessly proclaim the message in all the world, going forth conquering and to conquer."[4]

**Previous Criticism**

*PUC Com REPLY* observed the overemphasis placed by the SRod upon the 144,000.[5] The idea of the 144,000 as a remnant from the SDA Church after the slaughter of Ezek 9 cannot be supported by Rev 7. At first sight it may seem as

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[1]*SRod*, 1:30. The total SDA membership of the time was approximately 300,000. Hence less than half of the 300,000 were to make up the 144,000.

[2]Ibid., 177.

[3]Ibid., 178.

[4]Ibid.

[5]*PUC Com REPLY*, 35.

if Rev 7 is explicitly contrasting two distinct classes of redeemed peoples, the 144,000 (Rev 7:4-8) and the great multitudes (Rev 7:9,10).[1] However, LaRondelle argues that the first scene of "Rev 7 represents the church militant" while "the second scene the church triumphant."[2]

In that sense, "the last scene (Rev 7:9-17) is proleptic, anticipating the future joy of the new earth, which is expanded further in similar terms in Rev 21:1-4; 22:1-5."[3] This means the 144,000 are symbolic of the remnant or "the last generation" of people who triumph over the beast and his image (Rev 14:1), go through the great time of trouble (Rev 13:11-18), and see Jesus when He appears to redeem them (Rev 1:7).[4] The "great multitude" on the other

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[1]Craig S. Keener, *Revelation: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 243.

[2]Hans LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 148.

[3]Ibid.

[4]M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 299-321, is devoted to a discussion of the "final generation," namely the 144,000 through whom "God stands finally vindicated." Cf. *GC*, 649.

hand, are symbolic of "the remaining triumphant saints of all ages."[1]

The 144,000 and the Latter Rain

**Analysis**

Houteff asserted that inspiration did not use the term "latter rain" loosely but rather denoted "the last rain before the harvest, the rain that completes maturity and that ripens the grain."[2] The latter rain, therefore, comes in two phases: First, as "miracle-working truth," then the "miracle-working power" of God's Spirit (Joel 2:28).[3] Only after both the former and the latter rain (truth) are given (Joel 2:23) will God pour out his "spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

> Plainly, then, the "latter rain" is miracle-working truth that causes the saints to mature for the harvest of which the 144,000 are the first fruits (Rev. 14:4). Then, in order to quickly gather the second fruits, God

[1]"A Great Multitude" (Rev 7:9), *SDABC,* 7:784.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "Bright Clouds Bring Gentle Rain," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 17 (1946): 3. He further notes, "The latter rain of Truth, therefore, is the very last, the one that is to develop the people of God for the harvest, for the time in which God separates the wheat from the tares (Matt 13:30), the wise virgins from the foolish ones (Matt 25:1-12), the good fish from the bad (Matt 13:47, 48), and the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:32,33)."

[3]VTH noted "that the "rain" comes first and the pouring out of His spirit afterwards. Therefore, the rain is one thing, and the pouring out of the spirit is another." *SRod*, 2:256.

> pours His Spirit upon every first fruit saint, (upon "every one grass") old or young, boy or girl--not upon one here and upon another there.[1]

Houteff taught that the "miracle-working truth" is necessary to develop the 144,000 for the heavenly garner.[2] It illustrates the last shower of truth intended to mature the 144,000 for the sealing.[3] Regarding the power of the Holy Spirit, Houteff writes:

> The pouring out of the Spirit is the power that is to descend upon God's servants to carry on the work

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[1]*SRod*, 2:4. VTH used E. G. White's counsels regarding the importance of obedience to revealed truth as support for his interpretation on the Latter rain. "Only those who are living up to the light they have, will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it." *TM,* 507.

[2]According to Houteff, the latter rain was to be plentiful forecasting an abundant harvest to follow. He says, "It will make rivers, springs, and pools where not expected. All this is a forecast of a great harvest, even from the desert places--from the heathen lands. 'After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.' Rev. 7:9." Victor T. Houteff, "Be a New Threshing Instrument in the Hand of God," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 9 (1947): 13.

[3]Houteff noted, "The 'rain' falls in the 'first month,' that is, the month by which the closing work for the church is represented--the sealing time of the 144,000. Therefore, in that period of time (before Ezekiel Nine) a great light is to be revealed. It is remarkable to note the perfect grammatical order of the words at the time of their application, clearly dividing the Word of truth as though it were written just at the time the prophetic words are revealed." *SRod*, 2:256.

represented by the former and latter rain. "And upon all flesh" is the Spirit that is to convince the honest in heart of the truth and bring them into the church, of which Pentecost was a type. "And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil"--represents a great harvest of souls that shall be garnered in by the result of the "rain" and the "Spirit" (Joel 2:24.).[1]

In Houteff's opinion, the "latter rain" prepares the 144,000 for the sealing and qualifies them to receive the "miracle-working power" (Joel 2:28) for the final proclamation of truth to the world.[2]

**Previous Criticism**

SDA scholars have understood the "latter rain" to symbolize the transforming work of the "Holy Spirit" in the life of a Christian, and not specifically as "truth" itself, even though it is presumed that it is "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26) who guides the believer "into all truth" (John 16:13).[3] As Llewellyn A. Wilcox has observed, OT

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[1]*SRod*, 2:257.

[2]VTH argued that the former rain represented the "Spirit of Prophecy." "For He hath given you the former rain moderately" is the light of truth that is characterized by the former rain which must have fallen previous to the time of the latter rain. Therefore, the former rain is none other than the writings of the "Spirit of Prophecy." If so, it is implied that the "latter rain" was represented by Houteff's own teaching of the 144,000 which was to usher in the sealing and the Loud Cry. See *SRod*, 2:257.

[3]Gordon W. Collier, *The Early and Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1967), 17-24; George E. Rice, "Early and Latter Rain," in *The Power of*

references to the Early and Later rain (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24; 3:3; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1) express in a vivid form the climate and agricultural life of Palestine.[1]

DeWitt S. Osgood concurred that the work of the rain in the agricultural life of Palestine is similar to the work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of Christians.[2] For Collier, individual Christians receive the early rain upon conversion and throughout their entire Christian experience, while the latter rain represents the empowering of the Spirit for the Loud Cry.[3]

EGW's writings supported this concept of the Spirit's work on the hearts of Christians as that of the rain on earth. Concerning the Spirit's role in the early rain, she says:

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*the Spirit*, ed. George E. Rice (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 22-30; Neal C. Wilson, "Why Wait?" in *The Power of the Spirit*, ed. George E. Rice (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 45-50. Cf. Llewellyn A. Wilcox, *Now Is the Time* (Escondido, CA: Outdoor Pictures, 1962), 143-44; B. E. Wagner, *Preparation for the Latter Rain* (Loma Linda, CA: B. E. Wagner, n.d.), 8-12.

[1]Wilcox, 143. Cf. Horn, *SDABD,* s.v. "Palestine."

[2]DeWitt S. Osgood, *Preparing for the Latter Rain* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1973), 15-16. Cf. Collier, 18, who points to the necessity of both the early and later rains for "the church, as well as individual Christians."

[3]The terms "early" and "latter" rains are used to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, both of regenerating and empowering the people of God. Ibid.

The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. To the end of time the presence of the Spirit is to abide with the true Church.[1]

We may be sure that when the Holy Spirit is poured out those who did not receive and appreciate the early rain will not see or understand the value of the latter rain.[2]

It is left with us to remedy the defects of our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.[3]

Without the Spirit and power of God, it will be in vain that we labor to present the truth.[4]

We can be fitted for heaven only through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; for we must have Christ's righteousness as our credentials if we would find access to the Father. In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, to elevate the taste, to sanctify the heart, to ennoble the whole man.[5]

Concerning the Latter rain she wrote,

As the "former rain" was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the "latter rain" will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest.[6]

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[1] *AA*, 54-55.

[2] *TM*, 399.

[3] *5T*, 214.

[4] Ibid., 158.

[5] *SM*, 1:374.

[6] *GC*, 611.

Houteff's attempt to separate the role of "truth" and "power" of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain seems strained. Both aspects of the latter rain may be given simultaneously by the Holy Spirit (Cf. Matt 28:18-19; Luke 12:11-12; John 14:26) and not distinctly separated as implied by Houteff.

## The 144,000 and the Loud Cry

**Analysis**

The Loud Cry (Rev 18) plays a paramount role for the saints of the end time.[1] In Rev 18:1, the "glory" (Gr. *doxa*) of the angel's work "refers to the quality of God's presence through those sent by Christ."[2] Houteff concurs that the quality of God's presence which is to accompany the 144,000 during the "Loud Cry" is an important subject that should not be passed over lightly.[3] Only the 144,000 survive the separation (1 Pet 4:17) and participate in the Loud Cry.[4]

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[1]LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 419.

[2]Ibid., 420, points out that the same quality corresponds to the angel that comes from the East with the seal of the living God during the sixth seal in Rev 7:2 and to the angel of Revelation 10.

[3]Victor T. Houteff to Elders and Laity, n.d., *Jezreel Letter*, no. 5, reprint 1997, Mountain Dale, NY: Universal.

[4]According to VTH, the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan 8:14) was the Judgment for the Living, or "the purification of the church," which is accomplished by destroying the "tares" and sparing the "wheat." *JL*, no. 5

Three significant factors stand out in VTH's teaching about the Loud Cry:

First, prior to the Loud Cry, a "judgment for the living" would take place in the house of God (1 Pet 4:17; cf. Ezekiel 9).[1] The 144,000 who remain would be used by God during the Loud Cry to save those in Babylon (cf. John 10:16). Only then, could people be truly called out into "a sinless place--into the church purified, the ark for today, the only place where the plagues do not fall."[2] Regarding this place of refuge, Houteff wrote:

> And where could that be but in the purified land and church of God, where there is no more sin and no more sinners to endanger the peace of God's people? Vain, indeed, it would be if the people were called from one place of sin and brought into another place of sin. As clear as crystal it is that the purification of the

(Reprint, 1997): 2. Cf. *5T*, 80, "But the days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor."

[1]Only after the purification of the church and the sealing of the 144,000 will Revelation 18 culminate in the Loud Cry. "As the saints hear the voice of the good Shepherd in the gospel message, they separate themselves from the world and join the 144,000." *SRod*, 2:169.

[2]*JL*, no. 5 (Reprint, 1997): 3. "God's people come out of Babylon to join His purified sin-free church, His guileless servants, the 144,000, the first fruits of the mountain of the Lord's house." *TG* 1, no. 5 (1946): 12-13. *TS* 8 (1941): 66, "As in Noah's ark, the type, so in the antitypical ark, the kingdom, nothing shall hurt or destroy."

> church ("cleansing" -- Dan. 8:14; Judgment of the Living -- 1 Pet. 4:17) takes place before the Loud Cry of the Third Angel's message begins in the world, before God's people are called out of Babylon.[1]

Second, the 144,000 would receive "miracle-working power" (Joel 2:28) to proclaim the Loud Cry.[2] Applying Joel 2:2, Houteff likened the work of the 144,000 to a large army "such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come."[3] Before the 144,000 the "wilderness and the solitary place" will "blossom abundantly and bring forth fruit."[4] "Signs and wonders and miracles will follow the believers" as they

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Church Entering into and in the Harvest Period," *Timely Greetings*, vol. 1, no. 21 (1946): 21.

[2]*JL*, no. 5 (Reprint, 1997): 2. Houteff argued that this was the plain teaching of EGW in her following statements: "Only those who have withstood and overcome temptation in the strength of the Mighty One will be permitted to act a part in proclaiming it [Third Angel's Message] when it shall have swelled into the Loud Cry." Ellen G. White, "Preparing for Heaven," *Review and Herald*, November 19, 1908, 9. "Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners,' she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer." *PK*, 725.

[3]*TG* 1, no. 14 (1946): 23. He draws this comparison from Joel 2:2.

[4]VTH applied Isaiah 35. V. 1, "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, v. 2, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God" to the results of the Loud Cry. Victor T. Houteff, "What We May Be If We Work with God and Let Him Work with Us," *Symbolic Code* 12, no. 3 (January 1957): 15.

proclaim the Loud Cry which results in the conversion of a great multitude.[1] Satan knowing this glorious and imminent task ahead of them, "has tightly closed the people's eyes against this Truth and as a result they are in a terrible deception."[2]

Third, Houteff argued that although "White wrote in 1892 that the Loud Cry of the Third Angel's Message had already begun," the actual swelling into the Loud Cry is

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[1]Ibid., 16. From Isa 35:5-7, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow." Regarding miracles during the Loud Cry, see *GC*, 612, "Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand."

[2]Victor T. Houteff to Friend, n.d., *Jezreel Letter*, no. 8, reprint 1997, Mountain Dale, NY: Universal. Cf. "I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, 'Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come . . . .'" --*EW*, 119.

only by virtue of an "additional message" through the SRod.[1] He wrote,

> The only conclusion admissible, therefore, is that since the church has never accepted an additional message, and since there has never come one (other than that in The Shepherd's Rod publications) that would give "power and force" to the old message, the Loud Cry could not have begun at any time previous to this. Moreover, the "abominations" in the church have not only kept back the Loud Cry but have also even silenced the fainter cry which precedes it. Indeed, "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans," being unfit even to finish the proclamation of the message in its fainter cry, must be altogether unfit to proclaim it in the Loud Cry. Obviously, if he does not now quickly repent and accept the additional message which is to begin the Loud Cry, then not only will he not help proclaim it but he will even be "spued out."[2]

Houteff reasoned that the Loud Cry which was to begin in 1892, was muffled by the rejection of the message of Righteousness by Faith in 1888.[3] This resulted in a delay of the Loud Cry. Instead of the church becoming the light of the world, it went into darkness.[4] There was an urgent need to work for "sinners in Zion," doing everything possible to call the "144,000 to their task, and thus hastening the time of the ingathering of the great multitude

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[1]*TA* 1 (Reprint, 1993): 82. Cf. *SM*, 1:363, "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."

[2]*TA* 1 (Reprint, 1993): 82-83.

[3]Ibid., 83.

[4]Ibid., 84.

from the world--the day of the Loud Cry."[1] Both the 144,000 and the great multitudes are living saints.[2]

**Previous Criticism**

*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, did not consider VTH's teachings about the 144,000 and the Loud Cry favorably.[3] It argued upon the basis of EGW that the 144,000 represented the "the ultimate triumph of God's remnant church" (Rev 14:1-5; 15:2,3) in heaven.[4] This, it argued, stood in contrast to the 144,000 serving upon the earth as a distinctly organized group prior to the Loud Cry as purported by VTH.[5] EGW makes no distinction between the two.

> The numbers of this company had lessened. Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled in by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks.[6]

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[1]*TS* 5 (1942): 51.

[2]The Universal Publishing Association, "Origin and Meaning of the Name 'Davidian,'" *Report & Analysis* (February 28, 1993), 31.

[3]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 35-39.

[4]Ibid., 35. Cf. *AA*, 590-91.

[5]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 35.

[6]*EW*, 271. Cf. *1T*, 182.

While multitudes will be blown away like dry leaves as a result of the shaking, "the ranks will not be diminished. Those who are firm and true will close up the vacancies that are made by those who become offended and apostatize."[1] On the other hand, the faithful among God's people, will become recipients of the latter rain and empowered for the loud cry.

> At that time the 'latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.[2]

> During the loud cry, the church, aided by the providential interpositions of her exalted Lord, will diffuse the knowledge of salvation so abundantly that light will be communicated to every city and town. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of salvation.[3] They will declare the truth with the might of the Spirit's power. Multitudes will receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord.[4]

Houteff may be justified in saying that the church will be pure as it enters the Loud Cry as a result of the shaking. His theory that the remnant within Adventism make up the 144,000, as a separate group from the great

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[1]*SM*, 3:422; *5T*, 81.

[2]*EW*, 86.

[3]Ellen G. White, *Evangelism (Ev)* (Washington, DC : Review and Herald, 1946), 694.

[4]Ibid., 700.

multitudes who join the ranks of God's people during the loud cry, appears questionable.

## Evaluation

Not everything that was taught by VTH concerning the 144,000 and the sealing was erroneous. The idea that the 144,000 are living saints (Rev 7:1-4) and the notion of a special resurrection (Dan 12:2) to take place before the second advent is supported by SDAs.[1] Probably, no one having roots in Adventism had previously emphasized the doctrine of the 144,000 in the same vigorous manner in which Houteff did. He no doubt alerted the SDA Church to a rather neglected area of study and instigated SDA scholars to a more serious reflection of the 144,000. This in itself was a valuable contribution to SDA understanding.

Many of Houteff's ideas carried SDA overtones. The close relationship between the sealing of Ezek 9 and Rev 7, the seventh-day Sabbath as the test during the Loud Cry, and others have overlapping ideas. On the other hand, there are some fundamental differences in the understanding of Rev 7. *SDABC*, for example, points out that Rev 7 is a parenthesis between the sixth seal of Rev 6:12-17 and the seventh seal of Rev 8:1.[2] Its purpose is to answer the question "Who

[1]*GC*, 637.

[2]"Seventh Seal" (Rev 8:1), *SDABC*, 7:787.

shall be able to stand" (Rev 6:17) the impending universal destruction of the end time?[1] The interlude portrays divine interposing and deliverance (Rev 7:1-4) intended to reassure God's people of their special place in salvation history.[2]

The "angel" with the "seal of the living God" (Rev 7:2) portrays an "eternal gospel" (Rev 14:6,7) that was to swell into a loud cry lightening the whole world with its glory (Rev 18:1).[3] Consequently, then, a certain "delay" of the end is suggested in Rev 7:1-3. However, the assertion made by VTH that the angel's message began in 1929 with the teaching of the SRod, lacks clear support in Revelation and EGW.[4]

Houteff's claim that the 144,000 are sealed prior to the Loud Cry implies (1) that there are two sealed groups, the 144,000 and the great multitudes of people sealed during the Loud Cry (Rev 7:1-10); (2) that probation first closes for the 144,000, before it closes for the great multitudes

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[1]LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 144.

[2]Ibid., 144-45. Cf. The "four winds" symbolic of war, strife and commotion (Dan 7:2; Jer 49:36-39) are restrained by divine intervention.

[3]Uriah Smith, 462.

[4]Cf. LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 151. VTH is the only one so far to have reached the conclusion on the "angel" from the east in Rev 7:2 in connection with the understanding of the 144,000 in 1929.

after the Loud Cry;[1] and, (3) that the Sabbath which becomes "the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed"[2] is only a test for the great multitudes. This is because the enforcement of the spurious day of worship coincides with the establishment of the image of the beast in Rev 13:11-17 during the Loud Cry.

In contrast, SDAs believe that there is only one closing of the door of probation for all humankind, that the final sealing will be placed upon all who endure the test of the Sabbath, and that it is only after the 144,000 have been sealed that probation will close and the plagues begin their destructive work (Rev 7:1-4; cf. Rev 15-16).[3]

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[1]See Table 3, "Concept of the 144,000 by selected premillennial groups."

[2]"Preparing for the Image of the Beast" (Rev 13:14), *SDABC*, 7:976.

[3]Kranz, 1, refers to the "holding back" or "restraining" of the winds of Revelation 7 to "agencies of destruction which fall as divine judgments on men (Jer 51:1; 49:35-38; Dan 7:2; Zech 6:1-5; Ezek 13:13). Hence, the winds of Rev 7:1, when released causes worldwide destruction as described by the terrible judgments of Rev 15-16.

The "remnant"[1] concept in OT times included the body of God's faithful people throughout successive generations.[2]

[1]Chiefly translated from the Hebrew word *shear* and its derivatives and *yether*, meaning "what is left over," or "what remains," the remnant "refers to that which has survived after an elimination, a judgment, or a catastrophe." See Gary G. Cohen, "*sha'ar*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:894-95; Horn, *SDABD,* s.v. "Remnant"; Raymond B. Dillard, "Remnant," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (1988), 2:1833; Elmer A. Martens, "Remnant," *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 669.

Kenneth D. Mulzac, "The Remnant Motif in the Context of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Jeremiah," (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1995), 9, insists on a broader definition of the remnant which incorporates the meanings of the six basic terms used in the OT to refer to the remnant motif. Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time," *Adventist Affirm* 2 (Fall 1988): 5-12, 62-64, notes the remnant permeates the teachings of the OT and NT and is also rich in apocalyptic literature.

[2]Horn, *SDABD,* s.v. "Remnant."

Through the examples of Noah (Gen 7:23),[1] Enoch,[2] Abraham,[3] Jacob,[4] and Elijah (1 Kgs 18:22; 19:10,14), the survival of the remnant has been demonstrated in the context of judgment and salvation.[5] These twin aspects were held together in the writings of the prophets like Amos (3:4,8,12-15), Isaiah (1:8,9; 4:2,3; 6:13), and his contemporary Micah (2:12-13; 4:6-8), and Zephaniah (1:4; 2:7,9; 3:13).

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[1]Most writers begin their exegesis of the remnant idea in the OT with Noah. Hasel, "The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time," 6; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah," (Ph.D. diss., Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Monographs Studies in Religion Volume V, 1974), 135-47. (Hereafter cited as, "Remnant: History and Theology.") Kenneth D. Mulzac, "Remnant," *EDB*, 1117; Robert L. Cate, "Remnant," *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 753; M. W. Elliott, "Remnant," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

[2]He is distinguished by his particularly godly life. In a time of growing apostasy, he "walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Gen 5:24 NIV).

[3]Particularly his intercession on behalf of Sodom (Gen 18:22b-33). In Genesis 19, the focus is not the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25) but rather the salvation of the remnant, Lot, and his immediate family (19:15-29). They constitute the remnant. See Hasel, "Remnant: History and Theology," 151.

[4]Hasel, "Remnant: History and Theology," 153, 154.

[5]Mulzac, "Remnant Motif," 5, underscores the relationship of the remnant to the theme of judgment and salvation.

In the NT the remnant concept is implicit.[1] The verb *leipō* is used six times in the NT,[2] to mean something that "remains." In that sense, Jesus spoke of what "remained" (*leipō*) for the rich young ruler (Luke 18:22) to do. John the Baptist summoned a repentant remnant from Israel (Matt 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:6-8, 19-31; Cf. Mark 1:5). And Jesus, according to Hasel, called the remnant of faith (His 12 disciples) to form the nucleus of the new people of God, the church (Matt 4:18-22; 9:1-13; Cf. 19:28).[3] In Paul's treatment of the remnant (Rom 9-11), the concept is interwoven into Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ and

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[1]Santo Calarco, "God's Universal Remnant," *Ministry*, August 1993, 6.

[2]Luke 18:22, refers to the lack of the rich young ruler; Titus 1:5, is used to describe the defects which Titus is left to straighten out in the Church in Crete; Titus 3:13, counsels all to be done to ensure Zenas (the lawyer) and Apollos lack nothing; Jas 1:4f. the verb meaning to lack nothing; and 2:15, refers to the lack of wisdom.

[3]Hasel, "The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time," 9; Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Living the Remnant Lifestyle," *Adventist Affirm* 2 (Fall 1998), 44. The remnant idea included the sifting and the selection process (Matt 13:24-30; 47-50; 7:21-27; 22:11-14; 25:1-13), the metaphors of the "sheep" (Matt 10:6; Luke 12:32), "shepherds" (Johh 10:16), and separation (Matt 25:32-34), which demonstrates association with the OT concept of the remnant. See Mulzac, "Remnant," *EDB*, 1118; Hasel, "The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time," 9; Calarco, 6.

God's faithfulness to save the "remainder" of faithful ones in Israel.[1]

In Revelation the remnant (12:17) are victors (12:11) from a universal catastrophe. The remnant who survive the "wrath of the Lamb" (6:16,17), are the "servants of God" (7:3).[2] Revelation 11:13 notes the surviving remnant give glory to God.[3] Revelation 12 speaks of an age-long war waged by the dragon on the remnant, those "who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (v. 17). It pictures Satan in a desperate all-out assault on the remnant.[4] The assault is found in Revelation 13 during the period of the final apostasy on earth. The remnant people

[1]Paul insisted (Rom 9:27) that God's promise to save Israel will not fail (vv. 4,5), and that a remnant (*hypoleimma*) will be preserved (Cf. Isa 10:22,23 and 1:9).

[2]Cf. Ezek 9:1-11; Rev 7:1-8; 14:1-5. The adjective *loipos* "remnant," is found eight times in Revelation. See W. Gunther and H. Krienk, "Remnant," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:250-52. As in every age, God has always had a remnant nucleus to whom the promises of the covenant are reaffirmed. See Horn, *SDABD,* s.v. "Remnant."

[3]Compare with Rev 9:20 "The *rest* of mankind"; 19:21 "The *rest* of them"; 20:5 "The *rest* of the dead"; Hasel, "Remnant," 736; Gunther and Krienk, 3:250-52.

[4]Wesley Amundsen, "The Remnant Whom God Hath Called," *Review and Herald* 129 (April 24, 1952), 4, says the effects of the diabolical warfare will be felt by the remnant in a variety of ways: (1) pressure through external agencies, (2) war with Satan as subtle insinuations comes to divert minds from the truth, or (3) in the form of separatist groups "thorns in the flesh" of the remnant church who cause no end of annoyance.

come through as victors during a time of counterfeit worship (Rev 13:10; 14:12), and receive the seal of God's approval (Rev 7:1-4). Revelation 14:12 parallels 12:17 and both of these references affirm the loyalty of the remnant under attack.[1] Totally committed to God's plan of salvation, the remnant proclaims the final warning (14:6), calls God's true people out of Babylon (18:2-4), including refugees from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (14:6).[2] This remnant (*loipos*), of Rev 12:17; 14:12, is the nucleus of restoration which in turn becomes a channel to proclaim "the eternal gospel" (14:6) on a global scale.[3]

The 144,000 and the Latter Rain. Like Houteff, SDAs have also seen the work of the latter rain in relation to "the ripening of the harvest."[4] The harvest is the close of

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[1]Marvin Moore, "The Remnant: A Challenge for Christian Living," *These Times* 92 (January 1983), 20; Cf. Bacchiocchi, "Living the Remnant Lifestyle," 51.

[2]Calarco, 7; Bacchiocchi, "Living the Remnant Lifestyle," 44; Shirley S. Holmes, "Remnant Pilgrimage," *Adventist Affirm* 2 (Fall 1988), 38.

[3]John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1979), 205; Ross Cole, "It's About the Survivors: Another Look at the Meaning of the Remnant," *AR* [Online Edition, accessed September 1, 2003]; available from http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1505/story4.html, 5.

[4]Ibid. Cf. *AA*, 56.

probationary time.[1] Thus, the latter rain comes to empower the climactic message of the third angel.[2]

> Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children.[3]

> Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven. Souls that were scattered all through the religious bodies answered to the call, and the precious were hurried out of the doomed churches, as Lot was hurried out of Sodom before her destruction.[4]

The latter rain also prepares God's people for the impending time of trouble and the coming of Jesus.[5]

> As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel.[6]

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[1]Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 72.

[2]Rev 18:1-4.

[3]*GC*, 464; *EW*, 85-86; *TM*, 506.

[4]*EW*, 278-79.

[5]Collier, 51; Wilcox, 145.

[6]*1T*, 353; *EW*, 277, "The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swell's to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet."

> But near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest "in the time of the latter rain."[1]

Both the Bible and the writings of EGW support the view in which pre-eminence is given to the Spirit of God in the life of a Christian rather than the Christian's obedience to truth. While obedience to truth is an essential part of salvation, VTH may not justifiably impose a distinction between "truth" and the "power" of God's Spirit in the latter rain.

Houteff has presented an alternative view whereby the latter rain may be explained as the work of the Holy Spirit through the truth of God's word in the heart of a Christian. It is possible that SDAs have placed all the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and overlooked its work through truth. Houteff's explanation that a Christian matures by obedience to truth emphasizes the importance of making truth more than an intellectual ascent.

VTH is right in stressing a time of sifting to take place prior to the Loud Cry. In Amos 9:9, the prophet foresaw God scattering Israel among the nations and "there tossed about, as it were, in the 'sieve' of affliction and

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[1]*AA*, 55.

persecution that it might be determined through this trial who would remain loyal followers of God."[1] This imagery, taken from the ancient method of separating grain from the chaff, "finds its spiritual counterpart today in the trials, temptations, and tests of life."[2] EGW often referred to the necessity of this process among the members of God's church.

> The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause. The angel said, 'Think ye that any will be compelled to sacrifice? No, no. It must be a free-will offering.[3]

> I saw that we are now in the shaking time. Satan is working with all his power to wrest souls from the hand of Christ. . . .[4]

> We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word or deed obey His commands.[5]

EGW clearly referred to the shaking as a process that had already begun. However, she also refers to it as a time for a major testing in the not-too-distant future.

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[1]"I Will Sift" (Amos 9:9), *SDABC,* 4:983.

[2]Brian D. Jones, "God's Family the Church," *Adult Sabbath School Lessons Teacher's Edition* (Warburton, Vic: Signs Publishing, Oct-Dec, 1996), 137.

[3]*EW*, 50, 51.

[4]*1T*, 429.

[5]*6T*, 332.

Thus, the sifting is a process that continues among God's people until the final testing.[1]

In light of the current belief of many SDAs that the 144,000 are the same as the great multitudes in Rev 7:1-4,9, EGW's writings about the shaking seems to indicate two groups.[2] One group that has gained the victory and goes boldly to preach the third angel's message, and another consisting of those who accept the message preached by the first group.[3] Although EGW does not make any specific connection between the first group and the 144,000, it is quite logical for her readers to draw that conclusion, as VTH did.

However, neither Scripture nor EGW makes a clear distinction between the two groups. Regarding the 144,000, the Bible is clear that they represent those who are able to stand (Rev 6:14-17; cf. 7:1-8), go through the climactic events of the end-time and behold Jesus when he descends in the clouds of heaven. Therefore, as EGW had alluded, although a remnant among God's people remain after the

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[1]See *5T*, 81; *GC*, 608; *6T*, 400.

[2]Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947), 49, where EGW notes that during the "shaking" time caused by the testimony of the True Witness to Laodecia, some precious souls will be disclosed to view.

[3]See GC, 608-12.

shaking, they are immediately joined by a multitude of believers who make up the entire end-time remnant (144,000) people of God prepared and ready for translation when Christ returns. While SDAs recognize different characteristics between the 144,000 and the great multitude, they do not see them as distinct groups of living saints at the second coming of Christ.[1]

**Summary**

Summarizing Houteff's foundational principles, both positive and negative aspects can be seen. On the bright side, Houteff no doubt was a deligent seeker for truth. He spent numerous hours in the study of God's word and it made an impact on him and others. His respect and zeal for EGW's work is commendable. He upheld her writings and used them freely in his work. Because of his love for Scripture, Houteff approached its study from many angles,

[1]"A Great Multitude," *SDABC*, 7:784. Cf. Beatrice S. Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book 1*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 269, 275-76, notes, on the other hand, that the 144,000 are the same group as the great multitude under different circumstances. Both groups (Rev 7:1-4,9), he argues, may be interpreted to symbolize the last phase of the church one earth.

presenting the gospel in a multifaceted manner. He used analogy, typology and identified himself with his SDA roots.

Houteff worked tirelessly to bring about a revival and reformation within the SDA Church. Unfortunately, when his teachings seemed to fall on deaf ears, it stirred a spirit of animosity in him towards the church and its leaders. Nevertheless, his courage to stand for what he thought was truth is an example of the fortitude expected of those called by God. Such faithfulness in the face of apparent opposition is reflected in his teaching of the 144,000 who stand as victors before the throne of God. But there are lessons for SDAs to learn. Sincere conviction on what is truth may not be sufficient in the final reckoning. No matter what a person may think is truth, he is fallible and may be safer in the counsel of experienced and godly men.[1]

Houteff's interpretation of inspiration may have been a direct result of either his lack of theological training or a disregard for the basic rules of prophetic interpretation. He perceived his own writings as "inspired" by God and demonstrated a degree of literalism in his use of analogy, typology, and the historicist methods.

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[1]Ellen G. White speaks of the need to seek the counsel of experienced men. See *TM*, 501, 251; 7*T*, 20.

For VTH, the SDA Church organization seemed corrupt, spiritually dead and in desperate need of revival and reformation. His whole eschatology was built on this theological premise. Because of this he insisted on separating the SRod as a distinct and autonomous "remnant" or "upshoot" from the SDA Church. This made the SRod movement an organization on the fringe of Adventism. For that reason, the SRods may not call themselves SDAs.

Houteff's claim to a unique understanding of the 144,000 contradicts the views held by SDAs. Newport is partly correct in saying that VTH's historicism, premillennialism and acceptance of EGW is a "continuation, with some fine-tunning, of the older paradigm."[1] Like other scholars, Newport appears to overlook the fact that what makes VTH different from SDAs (i.e., his consistent literalist approach) is also what makes him closer to dispensationalism.

Houteff's insistence that the 144,000 are (1) a distinct group from the great multitude; (2) recipients of two separate portions of the latter rain; (3) a "special" army of evangelists during the Loud Cry; and (4) a distinct category of the redeemed saints, cannot be supported by

[1]Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium*, 201.

SDAs. His teachings concerning the 144,000 serve as the foundation building blocks upon which his whole apocalypticism is built. How his theological presupposition affected other aspects of his eschatology will be the focus of our next chapter.

CHAPTER III

HOUTEFF'S APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY

The 144,000 lay the foundational basis upon which VTH's apocalypticism was built. The concepts of the Davidic Kingdom, Ezek 9 and judgment of the living, and the harvest merit careful evaluation and will be the focus of attention in this chapter. Each section of the study will be analyzed and subsequently followed by a reflection on criticisms and evaluation. It concludes with a summary of the areas investigated in this chapter.

## The Apocalyptic Kingdom of David

According to Hendricks, the idea of the Kingdom of David was the false "foundation of all of the Shepherd's Rod teachings."[1] Houteff was unmistakably convinced that his theory was intricately intertwined with the 144,000 and was taught by Scripture and the writings of EGW.[2] This section

[1]Hendricks, 40. Also see Robert W. Olsen, "The Shepherd's Rod Vs. the Seventh-day Adventist Church," (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 1-6.

[2]*TA* 2 (1944): 75. Cf. Isa 2; Mic 4; Ezek 36, 37; Jer 3:1-33.

of the chapter evaluates the Kingdom theory taught by VTH. Areas of analysis includes the issues of timing, location, prophecies regarding the Kingdom, the Davidic throne, and the expansion of the Kingdom.

## Timing of the Kingdom of David

**Analysis**

The timing of the Davidic Kingdom, in VTH's opinion, runs in parrallel to the sealing work for the 144,000 who eventually make up the initial inhabitants of the Kingdom. *Additional Fundamental Tenets (AFT)*, no. 9 says,

> That these events shall ultimate in the setting up of the Kingdom (Dan 2:44; Isa 2:1-4; Mic 4; Ezek 37), wherein the 144,000, those who follow the Lamb "withersoever He goeth" (Rev 14:4), shall stand with Him on Mt. Zion (Rev. 14:1), and there "receive the forces of the Gentiles" Isa. 60:5, 11.[1]

Thus the time for the setting up of the Kingdom (Davidic) is to take place prior to the salvation of the "Gentiles," a term often used by VTH to refer to the "great multitude " of Rev 7:9.[2] Several significant points are

[1]See *AFT*, no. 9, in *FB of DSDAs* (Appendix no. 1). Cf. *TG* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 21-31. VTH used the terms Kingdom and Davidic Kingdom synonymously. Some of the key passages considered in this doctrine are Ps 46:4-6, 48:1-8, 102:13-18; Isa 11:11-16; Ezek 34, 35, 36; Dan 2:44; Mic 4:1,2,8. *HTSR*, 6-16, deals with "The Kingdom" issues in the writings of VTH.

[2]In *TG* 1, no. 11 (1946): 12, VTH refers to the 144,000 as the "first fruits" (cf. Rev 14:4) and to the

noted in *AFT*, nos, 3-8: (1) *AFT,* nos. 3 and 4 underscore the sealing of the 144,000 and the purification of the church. (2) *AFT,* nos. 5 and 6 note the letting loose of the four winds of Rev 7 representing the enforcement of Sunday worship. And, (3) *AFT,* nos. 7 and 8 point to the return of the 144,000, sons of Jacob, to the land of their forefathers.[1]

According to Houteff, the above events signal the time for the establishment of the Kingdom. This Kingdom, as is noted in *AFT*, no. 9, is there to "receive the forces of the Gentiles" (Isa 60:5,11). This meant that while the time of probation had closed for the SDA Church, it remained open for the great multitudes who were to be saved from all nations.[2] Houteff explained that God's promise to recreate and rebuild the ancient kingdom of David (Ezek 36:33-5) was to be fulfilled after Judah and Israel were scattered among the Gentile nations and assimilated by them (vv. 22-3). Only after the scattering, would God then gather the 144,000 from the four corners of the earth and bring them back to

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Gentiles as "second fruits." Cf. Victor T. Houteff, "The Old Family Tree," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 31 (1947): 5-6; *TG* 1, no. 25 (1947): 5-6; Victor T. Houteff, "Pre-'Eleventh Hour' Exra," *Tract Studies* 1 (1941): 23.

[1]See *AFT*, no. 9, in *FB of DSDAs* (Appendix no. 1). Cf. *TG* 1, no. 10 (1946): 24-27.

[2]Ibid.

their own land.[1] This interpretation, he claimed, is supported by Dan 2:44,45.[2]

VTH postulated that the "eleventh-hour message" (of the 144,000) was "timed and designed to reveal the Davidian Kingdom rising anew before the appearing of Christ in the clouds."[3] This message was to be proclaimed by the 144,000 who would be ushered into the Davidic Kingdom (barn) in which Christ would store the precious wheat after it was separated from the tares (Matt 13:24-30).[4] The 144,000 (wheat) then were the remnants within the SDA Church after the tares were weeded out. Thus the "house of David--the kingdom that is to be set up, which is but the church purified, no sinners among them (Isa 52:1), shall be as the angel of the Lord before the people."[5]

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Jews and The Christians' Faith In The Prophets," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 15 (1946): 8-9.

[2]Ibid., 11.

[3]*TA* 2 (1944): 77.

[4]*TG* 1, no. 15 (1946): 11.

[5]*TG* 1, no. 10 (1946): 26.

**Previous Criticism**

Early SDA scholars dismissed the optimism of VTH for a restored Davidic state in Palestine before the second coming of Jesus. This concern was particularly addressed in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, a document produced by The Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1956, and in the work by Hendricks.[1] The earliest responses by SDAs to the SRod movement, *PUC Com REPLY to the Shepherd's Rod*, published in 1934 by the Pacific Union Conference Committee of Seventh-day Adventists, did not address the issue on the return to Israel.

*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, and Hendricks followed a similar method. Selected statements of VTH were provided regarding the time for the return to Israel followed by counter statements from the writings of EGW. The introduction to *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, clearly stated that its purpose "is to show anew why, when tested by the rule stated in Isaiah 8:20, Mr. Houteff's doctrine is

[1]See *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 6-16; Hendricks, 7-41. Compare with Literalist premillennialists who insisted that OT Messianic prophecies were to be fulfilled literally and in detail in the millennial kingdom to literal Jews in the flesh. Mauro, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:637; and Hamilton, 38-40, 42-44, quoted in *SDASB*, 9:652-53.

unacceptable to Seventh-day Adventists."[1] They pointed to EGW statements regarding "God's plan for His people."[2]

Several significant points were underscored by *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, from the writings of EGW: (1) "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."[3] (2) The time for the literal fulfillment of God's purpose for Israel is in the future, to be fulfilled upon those who will be redeemed from this earth.[4] And, (3) the time for the "restoration of Israel," is in our destination, the new heaven and not this earth (Gal 4:26; cf. Heb 12:22).[5]

Hendricks, taking the same position, noted with precision several clear teachings of EGW: (1) The time in which the people of God will receive the kingdom will not take place until the advent of Jesus.[6] (2) The present mortal and corruptible state of human nature in this life means that "man in this present state cannot enter into the

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[1]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 5.

[2]Ibid., 13-15.

[3]Ibid., 13. Cf. *PK*, 713.

[4]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 14. Cf. *PK*, 720.

[5]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 14. Cf. *9T*, 287, 288; *GC*, 649.

[6]Hendricks, 7. Cf. *GC*, 322.

Kingdom of God."[1] (3) The time for the kingdom "is yet future. It is not to be set up until the second advent of Christ."[2] And, (4) at the advent of Jesus "the peaceful and long-desired kingdom of the Messiah shall be established under the whole heaven."[3] Upon the foundations provided by EGW, Hendricks confirmed that the time for the Kingdom of God will not be set up either in part or in whole before the second coming of Christ.[4]

## Location of the Kingdom of David

**Analysis**

For Houteff, the Kingdom of David was to be established in Palestine. Although the SRod moved to Waco, Texas, in 1935, the move was only seen as transitory. They anticipated an imminent transfer to Palestine where the ancient city of Jerusalem was to become the headquarters of the restored Kingdom of David.[5] The beginning of Christ's

[1] *GC*, 323.

[2] Ibid., 347.

[3] Ibid., 302.

[4] Hendricks, 9.

[5] UPA, "Origin and Meaning," 31.

Kingdom, at least in VTH's mind, was "to be set up in the promised land."[1]

> Moreover, these prophecies show that the renewal of the ancient kingdom of Judah is to be a real thing, not something imaginary. Its subjects are to be real people, not ghosts. Now we can see that the common expression, "going to heaven," means first going to the Promised Land, there to be fitted for the society of the pure and eternal.[2]

Therefore the Kingdom was clear and not imaginary in the teachings of VTH. Its location was without question the promised land. According to Jeremiah,

> The days are coming . . . 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD. (Jer 30:3)

Commenting on Jer 30:3, VTH writes,

> I am positive upon Bible authority that the kingdom restored is not to be made up in heaven above. It is to be made up in the very land where God's people lived until they were driven out because of their sins. Yes, the Bible teaches that all the twelve tribes some day will return and possess that land--the land that He gave to their fathers. After the millennium God's people will possess not only Palestine, but they will possess the whole earth. They must first, however, return from among the Gentiles and possess the land of their fathers in fulfillment of the prophecy we are now studying. Necessarily, then, it must take place before the millennium, before God's people go to heaven.[3]

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[1]*TA* 2 (1944): 83.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 22 (1947): 28, speaking of the prophecies of Zeph 2:1-15 in connection with the restoration of Israel.

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "World Conditions When God's People Delivered," *Symbolic Code* 13, nos. 1, 2 (1957): 8.

Thus, Houteff affirmed that Palestine would be taken over by God's people before the coming of Christ and the millennium. In like manner, he foresaw the redeemed people of God taking possession of the whole earth after the millennium. But in order for these things to happen, Christ must first descend upon the Mount of Olives making it give way to a great valley for the establishment of the Kingdom of David. When this event takes place,

> The servants of God shall then flee to the valley of the mountains, where the Lord's feet shall stand, and all the saints with them; that is, the Lord's "feet" will open the way for the restoration of the Kingdom, and for the gathering of the people into it.[1]

According to Zech 14:4,5,

> V. 4. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. V. 5. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

In view of Houteff's explanation of Zech 14:4,5, it is quite obvious that he taught an earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ prior to the millennium, whereupon, the

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Restoration and the Time," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 31 (1948): 6-7. VTH used EGW's statement in *EW*, 51-53, regarding Christ descending upon the Mount of Olives to support his position of the establishment of the Davidic kingdom prior to the close of probation. EGW, on the other hand, was referring to the descending of the Holy City (Revelation 21), an event to take place after the one thousand years of Revelation 20.

"144,000 life-savers" make their "headquarters on famous Mt. Zion."[1] Subsequently, "Arab, Jew, or Gentile" will "have to move away and give room to God's clean and purified people."[2] This Kingdom preceded the ingathering of the great multitudes of people into the Jerusalem headquarters.

**Previous Criticism**

Regarding the location of the Kingdom, *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, noted that the literal aspiration of VTH was the result of a "fancy that finds no support in God's Word or in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy."[3] This study, notes the clear warning of EGW, that the teaching of a literal return to Palestine, directed against the Age-to-Come party of millerism, was the work of the enemy to undermine the third angel's message.

> Then I was pointed to some who are in the great error of believing that it is their duty to go to Old Jerusalem, and think they have a work to do there before the Lord comes. Such a view is calculated to take the mind and interest from the present work of the Lord, under the message of the third angel; for those who think that they are yet to go to Jerusalem will have their minds there, and their means will be withheld from the cause of present truth, to get themselves and others there. I saw that such a mission would accomplish no real good, that it would take a long while to make a very few of

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 2 (1946): 11.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "That Which Is to Be During the Time of the End," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 42 (1948): 36.

[3]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 11.

> the Jews believe even in the first advent of Christ, much more to believe in His second advent.[1]

*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, acknowledged that although EGW was not addressing the specific teachings of the SRod, she was nevertheless emphatic that the idea for such a move to Israel should not be endorsed by SDAs.[2] In like manner Hendricks asserted that what seemed a "fantastic theory" was really a "false doctrine" which EGW had warned against since the early beginning of the SDA movement.[3] For that reason, SDA members were urged that "since error is found in the Shepherd's Rod, and it is in open disagreement with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, the only safe course is to reject it teachings and to discontinue its study."[4]

## Prophecies of the Kingdom of David

### Analysis

One prominent feature in DSDA eschatology is the belief that "the covenant promises to Israel through Abraham

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[1]*EW*, 75.

[2]*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 6-16, makes a comparison between the teachings of VTH and EGW on the Kingdom.

[3]Hendricks, 39.

[4]*PUC Com REPLY*, 55.

will be completely and literally fulfilled in true Israel in the last days as the prophecies plainly state."[1]

In view of this fundamental presupposition, the SRod anticipated a time when Zion would be emancipated and enthroned into a queenly splendor (Isa 52:2). Those in Zion were to "seek the LORD their God and David their king" (Hos 3:5). Only then will they be "reassured forever of an even more abundant supply of pure, undefiled (Inspired) Truth"[2] under the leadership of "one shepherd" (Ezek 34:22-24).[3] They believed that upon the fulfillment of these promises "God's church, or kingdom" will become a "theocracy of peace, safety, and invincibility" with no spot or wrinkle (Eph 5:27), and will be led by antitypical David, His servant.[4] It appeared that Houteff saw himself as the

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[1]The Shepherd's Rod, "A Davidian Formal Statement of Motion " (Takoma Park Meeting, July 27-August 7, 1959), 2.

[2]*SRod*, 1:84-5. Cf. "As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness." Ezek 34:12.

[3]*TS* 8 (1941): 19. VTH compared the "theocratic government" of Israel under "one shepherd" with the time depicted by EGW, when the Lord takes "the reigns in His own hands" and again rules the church in the last days. See *TM*, 300.

[4]*TS* 8 (1941): 47.

fulfillment of the "shepherd"[1] whose coming marked the hour of deliverance for Zion and the return to the land of their fathers (Ezek 36:23-38).[2] If so, through him, all who heeded God's call and turned from their evil ways would live (Ezek 33:11-16).[3] God would cleanse their filth and create in them new hearts (Ezek 36:24-27).[4]

According to Houteff, the establishment of the Davidic Kingdom in Palestine was a prerequisite to the "migration of God's people from all parts of the earth to that place for translation to heaven when Christ comes."[5] Following the return of antitypical Judah, God will "gather[s] all nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat" (cf. Joel 3:1,2).[6] The gathering is for "judgment" to be "conducted from Zion and Jerusalem."[7] Only those who respond

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[1]*SRod*, 1:85, notes the shepherd having "an ever-increasing supply of pure (divinely revealed) truth."

[2]*TS* 14 (1943): 24.

[3]Ibid., 49.

[4]*TS* 9 (1942): 48.

[5]*HTSR*, 11. This teaching contradicts Scripture and the SOP. See *EW*, 75.

[6]*TG* 1, no. 15 (1946): 12. From pages 13-15, Houteff insists that Amos 9:9-15; Mic 3:12, 4:1,2; Nah 1:12,13,15, etc. all bear the same testimony.

[7]*TG* 1, no. 15 (1946): 12, noted the work of the Judgment for all the living as depicted in Matt 13:47,48, and Matt 25:32. Cf. *TG* 1, no. 15 (1946): 16,17, regarding the prophecies of Mal 3:2,3, Hab 3:12,13, and Zeph 2:5-7.

implicitly to God will be separated from sin and sinners.[1] Then "the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it" (Mic 4:1).[2] These OT promises were to be fulfilled in spiritual Israel.[3]

**Previous Criticism**

In *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, the contrast between the apocalyptic understanding of VTH and EGW on the Kingdom was shown. It noted that while VTH postulated that the prophecies of Hos 3:3,4 and Ezek 34:22-24 supported his theory of an earthly kingdom, EGW taught otherwise. On Hos

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These references speak of the nature of the judgment and its result.

[1]*TS* 8 (1941): 21. Houteff referred to this time as one of "genuine revival and reformation accompanied by the purification of the church. The Lord is to have a pure church and a clean people." *TG* 1, no. 8 (1946): 25. Cf. Zech 3:10 and Mic 4. *TG* 1, no. 12 (1946): 27, observes that "Zechariah 2 contains the same truth that Isaiah 2, Micah 4, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36 contain."

[2]The appeal for reformation among God's people was a recurring theme of the OT (Mic 4 and 5, Zech 3:10). *TG* 1, no. 27 (1947): 3; *TG* 1, no. 8 (1946): 25. VTH insisted that "God s Kingdom, which Daniel in his second chapter said would be set up "in the days of these kings," is here referred to as "the mountain." *SCode* 12, no. 3 (1957): 13.

[3]*TS* 9 (1942): 49-50.

3:4,5, Ellen G. White referred specifically to the close of earth's history.[1] She said,

> The prophecies of judgment delivered by Amos and Hosea were accompanied by predictions of future glory. . . . Until the end of time, they were to be 'wanderers among the nations.' But through Hosea was given a prophecy that set before them the privilege of having a part in *the final restoration* that is to be made to the people of God *at the close of earth's history, when Christ shall appear as King of kings and Lord of lords.*[2]

While VTH applied the prophecies of Hosea specifically to a terrestrial theocratic Kingdom, EGW clearly saw them as predictions of future glory.

In like manner, VTH's interpretation of Ezekiel 34 is not in harmony with EGW. E. G. White says, "*Christ applied these prophecies to Himself*, and He showed the contrast between His own character and that of the leaders of Israel."[3] Based on insights from EGW's work, Hendricks, in agreement with *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, argued that the "theories concerning the setting up of a temporal kingdom of David *are due to a misinterpretation of Old Testament prophecies*.[4] Thus, concurring with the importance of a

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[1]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 8.

[2]*PK*, 298 (Italics added).

[3]Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ (DA)* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 477. Cf. *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 8 (Emphasis supplied).

[4]Hendricks, 27 (Emphasis supplied).

legitimate understanding of OT prophecies, SDA commentators stressed that,

> Promises not already fulfilled to literal Israel either would never be fulfilled at all or would be fulfilled to the Christian church as spiritual Israel. Prophecies that fall into the latter classification are to be fulfilled *in principle* but not necessarily in every detail, owing to the fact that many details of prophecy were concerned with Israel as a literal nation situated in the land of Palestine. The Christian church is a spiritual "nation" scattered all over the world, and such details obviously could not apply to it in a literal sense. Prophecies of the former classification cannot now be fulfilled because they were strictly conditional in nature and limited in scope, by their very nature, to literal Israel.[1]

The above principle, *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, pointed out, was in agreement with EGW's understanding of prophecy. E. G. White admonished, "that which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."[2] She further maintained that at Christ's second appearing, "the redeemed from among men will receive their promised inheritance. Thus God's purpose for Israel will meet with literal fulfillment."[3]

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[1]"Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *SDABC*, 4:36-37.

[2]*PK*, 713. Cf. *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 13. While EGW was referring to the role of Israel (spiritual) in the world as ambassordors for God, VTH applied these principles to the setting up of a terrestrial Kingdom in Palestine.

[3]*PK*, 720. Cf. *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 14.

**Analysis**

VTH predicted that the establishment of the Davidic throne in Palestine was to be under the rulership of antitypical King David.[1] He was clear that David (the rod) was to be an antitype, therefore, he is not Christ (the branch).[2] Instead, David was to be the "visible king and Christ the invisible king of kings."[3] Many references are used by the SRod to support the Davidic theory. One such passage is Houteff's exegesis of Hos 3:4,5. He says,

> Having abode "many days without a king" (their lot from the days of their captivity in Babylon even to this very day), "the children of Israel shall . . . after-ward" (sometime in the future), says the scripture, ". . . return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." Hos. 3:4, 5. But as David, the king of ancient Israel, had been dead for many years when this prophecy was made, and as it has never been fulfilled, he was the type of the David to come. Accordingly, it is those who "fear the Lord and His goodness [the

[1] *TS* 9 (1942): 43.

[2] *TS* 8 (1941): 45.

[3] *TS* 8 (1941): 47, "Since therefore from the "stem" of Jesse came the "rod" (David), and from the rod sprang the Branch (Christ), David the visible King and Christ the invisible King of Kings shall "in that day"-in our time-constitute the "ensign," and "to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest [or His resting place, the location where the "rod" or ensign stands-the Kingdom] shall be glorious." Yea "I will make the place of My feet glorious" (Isa 60:13), saith the Lord."

> Christian Israelites] in the latter days" (our time), who shall appoint one "head" or "king"--the antitypical David.[1]

Several significant points stand out in VTH's interpretation of Hos 3:4,5: (1) The children of Israel were to abide without a king for many days. (2) The promise of a future restoration of Israel will be fulfilled in the latter days. (3) The future King of the Kingdom is to be an antitype of King David. And, (4) the inhabitants of the Kingdom (144,000) in Palestine will appoint their new King (presummably Houteff), while Christ remained the invisible King in Heaven.[2] This event preceded the gathering of Judah and Israel,[3] prior to the final proclaimation of the gospel to all the world.[4]

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[1]*TS* 8 (1941): 13.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 17.

[4]Interpreting Zech 13:1, Houteff says: The fact that 'to the house of David' there is a fountain opened 'for sin and for uncleanness,' proves that the consolidation of these two kingdoms is accomplished, and that then the gospel is proclaimed in all the world, because no one can by that 'fountain' have his sin and uncleanness washed away after the close of probation. *TS* 8 (1941): 18.

**Previous Criticism**

Both *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, and Hendricks agreed that VTH had misunderstood Scripture on the Davidic throne.[1] They pointed to the lack of EGW support for the earthly Davidic reign of the Kingdom and underscored its fulfillment at the Advent of Christ.[2] Although *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, did not specifically address Houteff's views of Davidic reign in Hos 3:4,5, it did note two foundational principles that negate the conclusions of VTH: (1) The biblical teaching of the promise (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 132:11) of a future offspring (Isa 7:13,14; Mic 5:2; Luke 1:32; John 7:42) to sit on David's throne was messianic. And, (2) Christ is the "son of David" (Matt 1:1; 22:42) to whom these prophecies refer. He is the "Shepherd" (Ezek 34:23, 16,25,28) over his sheep and the "King" over his people (Hos 3:4,5; John 18:36).[3] The messianic import to Christ as the one to whom the Davidic reign refers is supported by EGW.[4]

Hazel Hendricks concurred that the Spirit of Prophecy is "clear that the kingdom of God cannot be set up

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[1]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 8-10; Hendricks, 9-11.

[2]Ibid.

[3]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 8-9.

[4]*DA*, 477, speaking of Ezek 34:23,16,25,28, notes that no other person but Christ will fulfill the role of antitypical David referred to in Ezekiel's prophecy.

until the Second Advent."[1] This conclusion was reached upon the basis of EGW's application of the prophecies of judgment delivered by Amos and Hosea.[2] According to E. G. White, the fulfillment of the prophecies was conditional upon the setting up of the Kingdom by Christ at the close of earth's history.[3] She confirmed, "*Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended* will God 'give unto Him the throne of His father David,' a kingdom of which 'there shall be no end' (Luke 1:32,33)."[4] Thus, Hendricks concluded that "there is to be no king on the throne of David until Christ Himself shall receive it when He appears as King of Kings and Lord of lords. He is the one raised up to sit on David's throne (See Acts 2:29-30)."[5]

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[1]Hendricks, 9.

[2]Ibid., 10-11. Cf. *PK*, 298, 451.

[3]Ibid.

[4]*GC*, 416 (Italics has been supplied).

[5]Hendricks, 11.

**Analysis**

The missionary expansion of the Kingdom was seen by VTH as a major evangelistic thrust during the Loud Cry.[1] This expansion were to be notable in the activities of the 144,000 who were to be the "preachers" during this time.[2] Returning to the example of Dan 2, VTH pointed to the work of the 144,000 as represented by the "stone kingdom" (Dan 2:44) which smote the great image into pieces, bringing all the kingdoms of the earth to an end (v. 45).

Houteff explains,

> The mountain from which it is cut out, must necessarily represent the church from which the first fruits of the kingdom, the 144,000, are gathered. And as the stone grows and becomes "a great mountain" (Dan. 2:35) after it is "cut out," it obviously at first represents the kingdom in its infancy--the "first fruits" only. The fact, also, that the stone grows and fills "the whole earth," is another evidence in the proof that after this long-looked-for kingdom is "set up," a great multitude is to join it.[3]

The stone Kingdom, therefore, in VTH's opinion was not a description of how the earth wil come to an end but

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[1]See *TG* 1, no. 5 (1946): 12-13; *TG* 1, no. 14 (1946): 23; Victor T. Houteff, "If Not Awaked Now, They May Sleep Forever," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 38 (1947): 27.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "An Unpublished Letter of Interest," *Symbolic Code* 10, no. 7 (1955): 11.

[3]*TS* 9 (1942): 41.

rather of how earth's governments will come to their end.[1] The rock being separated from the mountain (Dan 2:34) symbolizes the cleansing within Adventism.[2] Additionally, the breaking of the "iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold" into pieces (Dan 2:35) is symbolic of the harvest (cf. Mic 4:2; Zech 14:6,7).[3] Thus a symbol of dynamic growth (cf. Isa 2:2; Jer 31:28-30), illustrated by the "stone" growing into a "huge mountain and filling the whole world," is used (Dan 2:35).[4]

The concept of an expanding earthly kingdom was also seen in VTH's views of Joel 2. VTH interpreted Joel 2 metaphorically to symbolize God's invincible army during the loud cry (cf. v. 2). This army he says,

> Will surpass in power even the early Christian disciples. Such faith, wisdom, determination, and zeal, as no other people have ever possessed, will invest every believer with a commensurate power, such as none other have ever had.[5]

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Kingdom of Heaven Likened unto Ten Virgins," *Symbolic Code* 11, no. 12 (1956): 19.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 29 (1947): 8.

[3]See Victor T. Houteff, "The Fate of Jerusalem, the Call of Its Future Inhabitants," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 19 (1946): 6.

[4]*TG* 1, no. 48 (1947): 28.

[5]*TS* 5 (1942): 97.

He noted the incomparable "ministry" (Joel 2:2) of the 144,000, "free from all earthly encumbrances" during the loud cry.[1] As a "righteous government" the kingdom in Palestine will become the launching pad for world evangelism. Hence, from Jerusalem the 144,000 spearheaded the Loud Cry of the third angel's message in style and power.[2] Their work, is represented by horses (Joel 2:4), a symbol of their "strength, nobility," and "graceful beauty."[3] Before them all nations will tremble (Joel 2:6) as "this army will act in perfect unity, and each will tend well to his own given part of the work" (cf. Joel 2:7,8).[4] As a result, "the promised land will be reinhabited by the Lord's own converted people."[5] Jerusalem will then become the head-quarters for the salvation of the masses of people during the Loud Cry of the third angel's message.[6]

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[1]*TS* 4 (1943): 45.

[2]Kern, 5. Cf. Victor T. Houteff, "The Mighty Esaus and the Unpretentious Jacobs," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 45 (1947): 19, refer to those who escape the slaughter of the Lord as those who are sent by God as missionaries, preachers, and ministers to all nations and people who have not heard of the gospel.

[3]*SCode* 12, no. 3 (1957): 9.

[4]Ibid., 10.

[5]*TA* 2 (1944): 75,83.

[6]*TG* 1, no. 25 (1947): 5.

**Previous Criticism**

Neither *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, nor Hendricks addressed the specific issues raised by the SRod regarding the expansion of the Davidic Kingdom. The issues are alluded to in the section of Hendricks study, "Light to the Gentiles."[1] Hendricks argued against the teachings of the SRod which purported that,

> Those (of Israel) who declare the sealing message of the 144,000 to the church, shall also declare God's glory among the Gentiles, thus be His salvation unto the end of the earth, and bring all their brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations (Isa 66:19, 20).[2]

Correctly, Hendricks pointed out that according to EGW's application,

> These prophecies of a great spiritual awakening in a time of gross darkness, are today meeting fulfillment in the advancing lines of mission stations that are reaching out into the benighted regions of earth.[3]

A closer response to the issues raised by VTH, as noted in this section of the study, was made by M. E. Kern, in 1950. In his study, Kern made several observations, (1) the teachings of VTH regarding the expansion of the Davidic kingdom from its headquarters in Jerusalem. (2) VTH's strange use of Dan 2, along with other OT

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[1]Hendricks, 20-22.

[2]*TS* 8 (1941): 86. Cf. Hendricks 20.

[3]*PK*, 373-375. Cf. Hendricks, 20-21.

prophecies, to support his theory. And, (3) the analogous mistake of the SRod which parallel that of the Jews who expected the Messiah to set up a temporal kingdom.[1] Kern accused VTH of being "certainly confused" in his understanding of Dan 2, Mic 4, and other OT prophecies. He asserted that VTH's mistake is similar to that made by modern Christians in teaching the return to Palestine based on misinterpretation of OT prophecies.[2] This problem of misinterpretation by Houteff was also affirmed by Cottrell who claimed that,

> The fatal flaw in this system of interpretation is that it ignores the setting to which the Old Testament passages were addressed and the numerous explicit Bible statements identifying these prophecies as conditional on the cooperation of Israel as the covenant people of Old Testament times.[3]

Cottrell underscored that "twisted theology" as presented by VTH "can be fatal both to those who advocate it and to theologically innocent bystanders."[4]

## Evaluation

Houteff's views on the Kingdom fit into the "millenarianism" type of salvationism described by Norman

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[1]Kern, 5.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Cottrell, "History," 2.

[4]Ibid., 1.

Cohn.[1] Cohn notes that although there are countless ways of imagining the millennium and the varied approaches to it, there are five distinct marks for identifying their view of salvation:

> (1) Collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful collectively;
> (2) Terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not in some other worldly heaven;
> (3) Imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly;
> (4) Total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself;
> (5) Miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.[2]

The characteristics provided by Cohn are found in dispensationalist thought. Houteff's eschatology on the Davidic kingdom seems to fit into Cohn's description quite well with some degree of variation in the overlapping ideas. In dispensationalist eschatology, the kingdom that was promised to Abraham and David was rejected and postponed until the millennium.[3] Shortly prior to the fulfillment of this event, a period of intense tribulation will transpire on earth.[4] Nonetheless the church will escape the

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[1]Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 15.

[2]Ibid.

[3]William E. Cox, 32.

[4]Keith M. Bailey, *Christ's Coming & His Kingdom: A Study in Bible Prophecy* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian

tribulation and be raptured so as to be with Christ in heaven.[1]

Concurrently on earth the kingdom is to be proclaimed again by a Jewish remnant of 144,000 in final anticipation of deliverance when Christ returns.[2] During this time Christ Himself will become the ruler of Israel in the Davidic kingdom according to God's promise to King David (2 Sam 7:12-13).[3] Palestine will take a prominent role and the land of Israel will be restored to ethnic Israel.[4] Through the witness of the 144,000 Jews a mass conversion of both Israelites and Gentiles (Matt 25:31-34) will be saved and populate the Kingdom.[5]

Several distinct similarities appear between VTH and the dispensationalistsystems. Like dispensationalists, VTH adopted a consistent literal approach to understanding Bible prophecy.[6] Both systems, (1) shared an optimism towards some

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Publications, 1981), 55.

[1]William E. Cox, 33.

[2]Ibid. Cf. Keith M. Bailey, 83.

[3]Ibid., 78.

[4]John F. Walvoord, "Biblical Kingdoms Compared and Contrasted," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 83.

[5]Keith M. Bailey, 139, 140.

[6]Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "Israel and the Church," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis and

form of a terrestrial kingdom in Palestine; (2) gave pominence to the role of Christ as "Shepherd" of Israel; and, (3) saw the 144,000 as initial inhabitants of Palestine commissioned to a pivotal work in evangelizing the world.[1]

Some differences are noticed between VTH and dispensationalists: (1) chronologically they are not compatible with each other. Dispensationalist theology teaches that Israel plays an important role on earth after the church is taken away in the rapture.[2] For VTH, the OT prophecies regarding Israel (such as Ezek 34-36; Hos 3; Dan 2, Mic 4, and others) were meant for the remnants in the SDA Church prior to and during the loud cry. (2) For dispensationalists, the culmination of the Kingdom is "linked in time to the second coming of Christ and the ending of Israel's captivity in various countries around the world."[3] When this takes place, Christ will ultimately rule his people on the throne of David, as the "Shepherd" over

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John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 116-18. A plurality of interpretations existed among dispensationalists with incompatible and concurrent programs of Israel and the church. See Paul D. Feinberg, "Dispensational Theology and the Rapture," in *Issues In Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 228-235.

[1]See Table 4 on the "Concept of the Davidic Kingdom Among Selected Premillennial Groups."

[2]Feinberg, 228.

[3]Walvoord, "Biblical Kingdoms Compared and Contrasted," 83.

Israel.[1] Houteff, however, interpreted the "shepherd" as antitypical David who was to rule the earthly throne while Christ reigned in heaven.[2] (3) While dispensationalists interpret the 144,000 to be Jewish evangelists,[3] VTH saw them as escapees from the slaughtering of Ezekiel 9. These are called the "remnants" having survived the shaking in Adventism. (4) Dispensationalists predict the expansion of the Davidic kingdom as a direct result of the work of the 144,000 during the millennial kingdom.[4] For VTH, the global missionary activity of the 144,000 (SDA remnants) occurs during the loud cry resulting in the conversion of a great multitude into the terrestrial Kingdom.[5]

The position taken by SDAs refuting the views of a terrestrial kingdom, as proposed by VTH, are based upon several principles of prophetic interpretation: (1) OT promises to literal Israel were strictly conditional upon Israel's cooperation with the divine plan of God. (2) These

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[1]Ibid. Notwithstanding the divergent views of conservative scholars on the fulfillment of the Davidic Kingdom, most of them agree that "Christ is the appointed one who will fulfill the Davidic covenant." Ibid., 80.

[2]*TS* 8 (1941): 47.

[3]See Keith M. Bailey, 64-78. Cf. Fruchtenbaum, 124.

[4]Feinberg, 228; Keith M. Bailey, 140-43.

[5]*GC*, 603-12, dedicates a whole chapter entitled "The Final Warning" to the closing work in this world.

promises were forfeited by Israel's failure to meet the terms of the covenant. (3) OT promises in connection with the Babylonian captivity are applied to the restoration period. (4) Unfulfilled OT promises to the literal Jews now belong in principle to the church. However, the fulfillment of certain aspects of OT prophecies will only be realized in the final reward of the saved. And, (5) valid application of OT prophecies must be understood in harmony with the inspired interpretation of NT writers.[1]

Philip Evans Payne, in "The Historical and Theological Interpretations of the 144,000 in Adventism," reminds us that not all of Houteff's teachings were wrong.[2] This important fact is necessary to remember when analyzing the works of VTH. For example, SDA scholars agree with VTH that Ezek 36:17-35 is "designed to inspire hope in, the restoration from captivity."[3]

Both see God's acts to preserve His name (vv. 16-21), His sovereignty (vv. 22,31,25), and His promise of restoration (vv. 19,24,28-30) as prominent themes in these

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[1]*SDAE*, s.v. "Israel, Prophecies Concerning."

[2]Payne, 33.

[3]"The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel" (Theme), *SDABC*, 4:569.

verses.[1] Moreover, the prophecies describe the "glorious future of Israel" in a way "hard to imagine in the straitened circumstances of exile in Babylon, but it is a vision that could inspire the exiles to live in continued hope" of a future return to their homeland.[2]

SDA scholars also understand that many OT prophecies regarding Israel only met a partial fulfillment due to Israel's failure to comply with the covenant of God.[3] Therefore, the anticipation of a glorious future for Israel and the conviction to go to old Jerusalem was not seen favorably by SDAs. EGW was also aware of this "error" and gave a stern warning against it long before the SRod came into existence.[4] On the same basis, SDA scholars differed from Houteff on the interpretation of Zech 14:4,5. For them certain features of this prophecy will be fulfilled when the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven after the millennium (cf. Rev 21:1-4). However, SDAs believe that even in the

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[1]Robert K. McIver, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: A Practical Guide to Abundant Christian Living in the Book of Ezekiel* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1997), 184-86.

[2]Ibid., 21, 35.

[3]"Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *SDABC*, 4:25-26.

[4]*EW*, 75, "Some who are in the great error of believing that it is their duty to go to old Jerusalem, and think that they have a work to do there before the Lord comes."

fulfillment of this event during that time, "not all the details must be so applied."[1] EGW herself, in her interpretation of Zech 14 (years before the writings of VTH), placed the fulfillment of this event at the end of the millennium.[2]

Three examples are cited here to show how the views of SDAs differ with some of the interpretations of VTH on prophecy. (1) Regarding Jer 30:3, SDAs do not see this prophecy as a literal invitation for contemporary Christians to mass-migrate to Israel. For them the divine promises entailed here had a historical significance to the captives in "Babylon" and to "those in Assyria and in the cities of the Medes" (see 2 Kgs 17:5,6).[3] (2) SDA eschatology considered the "stone Kingdom" (Dan 2:44,45) as an eternal kingdom. Although SDA scholars cannot establish any direct connection between Daniel's use of "stone," Heb. *´eben*, "a single stone," as opposed to the Heb. *şur* for "rock," frequently used to refer to God (Deut 32:4,18; 1 Sam 2:2), they insist there is sufficient internal evidence to identify the symbol.[4] Because "This kingdom has a superhuman

[1]"Shall cleave" (Zech 14:4,5), *SDABC*, 4:1117.

[2]*GC*, 663.

[3]"I will bring again" (Jer 30:3), *SDABC*, 4:461.

[4]"Stone" (Dan 2:45), *SDABC*, 4:776.

origin. It is to be founded, not by the ingenious hands of man, but by the mighty hand of God."[1] Thus the Kingdom "to be set up when Christ comes at the last day to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim 4:1; cf. Matt 25:31-34),"[2] is the eternal Kingdom.[3] This position is overwhelmingly supported by EGW in her writings.[4] (3) SDA scholars have traditionally interpreted the swarms of locusts in Joel 2:2-9 literally, but 2:28-32 is applied to last day events. In this approach, the actual swarms of invading locusts are taken as the basis of the prophets appeal.[5] The allegorical method which views "locusts" metaphorically, as VTH appears to have done is not viewed favorably by SDAs.[6]

Undoubtedly, VTH put many hours into the study of God's Word. That VTH attempted to systematize SDA eschatology into the understanding of prophecy is quite clear. Much could be gleaned from his work. However, VTH's

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[1]"Without hands" (Dan 2:45), *SDABC*, 4:776.

[2]"Set Up a Kingdom" (Dan 2:44), *SDABC*, 4:776.

[3]William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: A Practical Guide to Abundant Christian Living in the Book of Daniel 1*-7 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 145, 146. Also see *PK*, 503. The kingdom is referred to "God's everlasting kingdom." Cf. *DA*, 34.

[4]See *9T*, 287, 288.

[5]"Joel: Theme," *SDABC*, 4:937.

[6]Ibid.

interpretation was based on the proof-text method which pays little or no attention at all to the primary intention of the Bible writer as determined by his literary and historical context. The SRod neglect of the historical method of exegesis seems to be a factor in VTH's sensational apocalyptic exposition of prophecy. The importance of "the historical method, which looks for the meaning the ancient inspired writer intended," says Cottrell, "has built-in safeguards against ever, even inadvertently, making error."[1]

An evaluation of the idea of an apocalyptic kingdom of David, from the viewpoint of SDA beliefs, is biblically unsound. The OT prophecies regarding the Davidic kingdom will meet its ultimate fulfillment when Jesus returns the second time. The Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom but one that will last forever in the New Jerusalem and new earth. VTH no doubt had some differences in opinion with dispensationalists, but they did share the same optimism for a terrestrial Davidic kingdom.

**Ezekiel 9 and Judgment of the Living**

The prophecy of Ezek 9 permeates the writings and theology of VTH. The central focus of this eschatology is the idea of a judgment of the living. This section

[1]Cottrell, "Adventists and the Waco Syndrome," 2. Cf. "Methods of Bible Study," in Appendix 3.

discusses the connection between Ezek 9 and Rev 7, the conditions and time for the sealing, and the close of probation in SRod theology.

## Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 7

### Analysis

For VTH, Ezek 9 and Rev 7 were closely intergrated and related subjects. He suggests that while Ezek 9 provide the basis upon which the 144,000 are selected, Rev 7 gives their identity and the time of sealing. Both chapters focus on the "servants of God."[1] In Ezek 9:1-9, "the sin of the house of Israel and Judah" is depicted as "exceedingly great" (v. 9). Therefore, he arugued that the 144,000 were to separate themselves from the "ungodly" during the sealing period.[2] Thus a literal separation (vv. 5,6) was to take place in Adventism exposing the remnant (those who remain) to a devastating experience.[3] On the basis of Ezek 9 and Rev

[1]*SRod*, 1:26. Cf. *TM*, 445, "This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision."

[2]*SRod*, 1:27. Cf. *1T*, 181, "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans." In *EW*, 58, White says, "The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over."

[3]Victor T. Houteff, "Five Men Slay after One Sets a Mark," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 52 (1947): 24-25, passim.

7, Houteff posited the idea of a two-fold cleansing work.[1] First would come the cleansing of the 144,000 guileless saints who would be sealed from among the tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4-7; cf. Ezek 9), the Church. Those included in this sealing would be the first fruits of the final harvest. The second group to be sealed would be the multitude of Rev 7:9 who would be gathered out of all nations and would make up the second fruits of the harvest. VTH drew support for his teachings largely from the writings of EGW.[2]

Houteff alleged that during the sealing time, God would remove all the unfaithful ministers and leaders from the SDA Church, substituting them with "faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view."[3] According to VTH, this work was depicted by angel(s)

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[1]*TG* 2, no. 42 (1948): 34. OT prophecies such as Mic 3:12; 4:1,2; and Ezek 36:23-28; Joel 3:1,2, are used to support this view. *TG* 2, no. 42 (1948): 34-36, passim.

[2]*TS* 4 (1943): 34. Cf. *3T*, 266, "The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people."

[3]*TS* 4 (1943): 35-6. VTH cites EGW where she speaks of "the days of purification of the church" where "God will have a people pure and true." Only then she pointed out "we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel." *5T*, 80-81.

"smiting all who have not the mark," (Ezek 9:4-6) and "hurting all who have not the seal" (Rev 7:2,3; 9:15).[1] Those who survived the slaughtering (144,000) would become servants of God for the final proclamation of the gospel.[2] As a result, the SDA Church would become a Spirit filled agency for ministry. "His workers will then see eye to eye, and the arm of the Lord, the power of which was seen in the life of Christ, will be revealed."[3]

**Previous Criticism**

Several early articles by SDAs touched on the interpretation of Ezek 9 in the teachings of VTH.[4] While these works identified the critical role of the 144,000 in the writings of VTH, none seemed to touch on the relationship between Ezek 9 and Rev 7 in his writings. This is quite understandable because the subject is not dealt with in a systematic fashion by VTH.

In addressing VTH's direct application of Ezek 9 to the SDA Church, *PUC Com REPLY* argued the need to establish the meaning of "Jerusalem" (v. 4) in Ezekiel's prophecy.

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[1]*TS* 9 (1942): 54.

[2]Ibid., 57. Cf. Isa 66:16,19,20.

[3]*TS* 8 (1941): 26. Cf. *8T*, 47; *7T*, 33; *9T*, 33.

[4]*PUC Com REPLY*, 25-31, 50; *GC Com-WAE*, 8-13; *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 22-48; Hendricks, 42-62.

Should Jerusalem be exclusively understood as a type of the church, or might it also be a symbol of the world?[1] The answer to this question was then deduced from the writings of EGW affirming that while "Jerusalem is a type of the church, it is also a symbol of the *world*[?]."[2] Upon that basis, *PUC Com REPLY* argued that to restrict the application of Ezek 9 to the SDA Church is to do injustice to prophetic interpretation.

In response to the SRod teaching of a two-fold cleansing work in Rev 7, first of the 144,000 then of the great multitudes, *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, drew the following conclusion.

> Nowhere in the writings of Mrs. White do we find it said or implied that *before the close of probation* the identity of the 144,000 spoken of in Revelation 7 will be revealed to us, or that as such they will assume control of the *church militant* and from headquarters in Palestine officially direct its activities for the finishing of the work of the gospel on earth. Nowhere do we find it said that the 144,000 are to be presented to God as the first fruits *before the close of probation*. The 144,000, as a special group, are described as pertaining to the *church triumphant*. (See *Early Writings*, pp. 16-19; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 60, 61.)[3]

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[1] *PUC Com REPLY*, 27.

[2] Ibid. (Emphasis supplied). Cf. *GC*, 22,36; *5T*, 211.

[3] *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 46.

The same conclusion was earlier reached by *GC Com-WAE*.[1] It gave three main reasons why the *SRod* is wrong in its teaching concerning the 144,000: (1) By teaching that the Sabbath is not a distinctive seal of the 144,000,[2] VTH contradicts the testimony of EGW (cf. Rev 7:2-4).[3] (2) By claiming that the 144,000 are sealed prior to the latter rain and the loud cry, VTH contradicts Rev 7:1-4 which indicates that the letting loose of the four winds occurs immediately after the sealing of the 144,000.[4] And, (3) the SRod teaching that the 144,000 bring in a great multitude during the loud cry is neither supported by Scripture or EGW.

## Conditions for the Sealing in Ezekiel 9

**Analysis**

Houteff taught that only 144,000 who "sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the church" will receive the mark of the writer's inkhorn of Ezek 9.[5] In

[1] *GC Com-WAE*, 21-25.

[2] See *SRod*, 1:29.

[3] See *GC*, 640, par. 1.

[4] Cf. *EW*, 279, "The Third Message Close."

[5] Hence the "sighing and crying" becomes the criteria for the sealing. VTH drew his support for EGW, for example, *TM*, 445; *5T*, 210-16; *3T*, 266-67.

conjunction with EGW's statements regarding the sealing, VTH concludes:

> The sealing of the 144,000 is the separation of the faithful from the disloyal ones; the purification of the church. Those who do not keep the truth, and indulge in the sins and abominations, who try to throw a cloak over the existing evils, will fall under the figure of the five men with the slaughter weapons of Ezekiel 9.[1]

Those who "sigh and cry" were referred to as the "faithful" ones within the SDA Church who did not "throw a cloak over the existing evils" that were done among God's people. Only those among SDAs who met this criteria were to receive the seal of God. According to VTH, the marking and the slaying take place only in "Jerusalem" (v. 8), the "house of Israel and Judah" (v. 9).[2] The "ancient men" (v. 6) in "Judah" refers to "those in office" within the SDA

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[1]*SRod*, 1:29.

[2]Ibid. Houteff pointed out that "according to Revelation 7, the 144,000 are of the twelve tribes, Israel and Judah, not of the Gentiles; also, both the marking and the slaughtering, according to Ezekiel 9, are to take place in both Israel and Judah, the church, where the harvest, judgment, commences. And, if the judgment, asks the apostle, 'first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?' 1 Pet. 4:17." He further noted that 'in the cumulative light focusing to this point the 144,000, 'the firstfruits,' stand forth clearly as Christian Jews who are found in the church at the commencement of the harvest. In this respect they are not defiled with women. They have, in other words, from their birth been God's people (Jews)-- not defiled with heathen worship. They 'follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,' with the result that when He stands on Mt. Zion, they, too, stand there." *TS* 9 (1942): 55.

Church who serve as "guardians of the spiritual interests of the people."[1]

In *Jezreel Letter*, no. 2, VTH pointed out "five distinct and supremely important points" regarding the conditions for the sealing.[2] (1) Since the victims of the slaughter are those who, against their God-given knowledge, indulge in *swine's flesh and other abominations*,[3] and since those who escape are versed in the gospel work enough to be sent to preach it to the Gentiles, the slaughter must take place in the church.[4] (2) According to Ezek 9, only those

[1]*SRod*, 1:29,30. VTH cited *5T*, 211, "The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light, and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God's power as in former days. Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment." Cf. *3T*, 265, "But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins."

[2]The following five points have been taken from *JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 6,7. Additional remarks on these points in the footnote section have been inserted for clarity purposes.

[3]Emphasis have been supplied. VTH took the analogy of "swine's flesh" from Isa 66:15-20, to refer to those within the SDA Church, particularly its leaders, who condoned sin and abominations in Adventism. *JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 5.

[4]VTH says, unlike the Judgment for the Dead where "sinners are separated from the righteous in books only, but in the Judgment for the Living the sinners and the righteous

who sigh and cry against sin, meet the conditions to receive the mark of deliverance. (3) Since they are sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles after they escape the slaughter, they are "the remnant," those that are left, the future servants of God. (4) Since they are to gather from the Gentiles all their brethren, all that can possibly be saved, they are the ones who finish the gospel work in all the world. And, (5) since there are two separations, one in the church (Israelites), and one among the Gentiles, those who escape and those who are gathered in--then the former are the first fruits and the later the second fruits--those of Rev 7:4,7-9, one from the tribes of Israel, and one from the Gentile nations.

**Previous Criticism**

The topic of the sealing is discussed in the writings of EGW. Thus VTH's reference to EGW on the sealing and the conditions for the sealing is not strange to SDAs. For that reason, *GC Com-WAE* acknowledged that the call for spiritual reformation is a present truth for the SDA Church. However, in view of the nature and insistent call of the SRod for reformation among SDAs, *GC Com-WAE* denounced it as having a "far-fetched and fanciful prophetic

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are bodily separated one from the other." *JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 4-5.

interpretations" that were warped by a manifestation of extremism.[1] While recognizing that there are evils in the SDA Church, *GC Com-WAE* insisted that,

> We must avoid any teaching whose trend is toward a pulling away, a weakening, and a dissipating of the advent movement, which God Himself has called into being and which He is using to deliver His last message to the world and to prepare the way for the coming of Christ.[2]

No doubt, much of what VTH taught on the conditions for the sealing was drawn from his reading of EGW. His constant bashing of the SDA ministry for what he perceived as a failure on their part to "sigh and cry" (Ezek 9:4), was not unnoticed by *GC Com-WAE*. In response, *GC Com-WAE* reminded of the counsels of EGW that the "spirit of criticism and intolerance toward our leaders, the ministry of the church . . . is not actuated by the right spirit."[3] In fact, such a practice is in direct contradiction to the counsels of EGW regarding respect for the ministry.[4]

*PUC Com REPLY*, on the other hand, concurred with VTH that God's people who "grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it" (Ezek 9:4) are sealed before probation closes. It rejected the notion presented

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[1]*GC Com-WAE*, 25.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 18.

[4]Ibid., 18-19. Cf. *TM*, 22, 23.

by the SRod that the slaughtering takes place before the close of probation.[1] Commenting on EGW's statement that "the class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension" miss out on the seal of God,[2] *PUC Com REPLY* argued that,

> Nearly all the 'offshoot' movements that have left the Seventh-day Adventist denomination are much more concerned about the shortcomings of the church than they are about 'their own spiritual declension.'[3]

Two conclusions may be drawn from previous criticisms regarding VTH's views on the conditions for sealing. First, EGW does talk about the sealing and the need for a revival and reformation among God's people. Her emphasis does affirm VTH's concern for "sin" being called by its right name in the SDA Church and the importance of SDAs living a sanctified life. Second, SDAs do not agree with VTH that the slaghter of Ezek 9 takes place prior to the general close of probation. As VTH had taught, the 144,000 are sealed prior to the Loud Cry. This position, *PUC Com REPLY* concludes is not only "based on bald assumption and 'private interpretation,' but is in direct conflict with the spirit of prophecy."[4]

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[1] *PUC Com REPLY*, 27.

[2] Cf. *5T*, 211.

[3] *PUC Com REPLY*, 28.

[4] Ibid., 27.

**Analysis**

Houteff used a multiplex approach to interpret the sealing time of Ezek 9, understanding it in a variety of ways.[1] For him the sealing is a time of "Judgment" for the living (Dan 7:10; Rev 14:7; 1 Pet 4:17) in which 144,000 spiritual Israelites were sealed during the period of time following 1844.[2] This meant, that judgment for the living in Ezek 9, took place in the "house of God" (1 Pet 4:17), the SDA Church, whereupon the 144,000 are sealed and the wicked destroyed (Ezek 9:5-6).[3]

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[1]The five ways used by VTH to illustrate the sealing is taken from *JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 4. Cf. *5T*, 80-81.

[2]VTH divided the NT into several dispensations after the pattern of OT types. Isaac represented the first section of time beginning at the cross of Christ to 1844. This was based on the words of Paul in Gal 4:28, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." *SRod*, 1: 227. VTH argued that the beginning as well as the end of each section was marked by an important historical event which ushered in another dispensation, where the type met the antitype.

[3]*JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 7.

The sealing was also seen as the "cleansing of the Sanctuary" (Dan 8:14). VTH said,

> In the earthly sanctuary, the high priest entered the most holy apartment once a year, and on that particular day every Israelite was to confess his sin. He who neglected to comply with the divine requirements was cut off from his people. (See Lev 23:29, 30) Thus the day of anti-typical atonement, judgment, or cleansing of the sanctuary, as set forth in Daniel 8:14, is a day of purification for the camp of Israel, the church -- putting away sin and sinners.[1]

From the OT sanctuary type, VTH derived the idea of a physical separation within the SDA Church. The sinner "who neglected to comply with the divine requirements was cut off from the people."[2] Hence the slaughtering in Ezek 9 was interpreted literally.

Closely linked with the "cleansing of the sanctuary" was the concept of the "purifying of His Temple" (Mal 3:1-3). The work of purification is ushered in by the coming of the Lord (v. 2).[3] However, this work is preceded by the

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[1]*SRod*, 2:218. In conjunction to the idea of "cleansing," VTH pointed out that if the promise of cleansing among the living through Ezekiel (36:24-29) were to be fulfilled, it could never take place while they were among the Gentile nations. "Thus shall they return and dwell in the land of their fathers, Palestine, and thus shall they be God's people eternally. These things, you see, are premillennial." Victor T. Houteff, "The Cleansing of the Sanctuary, When and How Done?" *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 33 (1948): 12-13.

[2]*SRod*, 2:218.

[3]The coming of the Lord discussed here "is not the coming of Christ in the clouds to receive His people." *SRod*, 1:170.

coming of antitypical Elijah the prophet, the "messenger" who prepares the way of the Lord (v. 1). Then the Lord will suddenly come to His temple, the church, "to purify or cleanse His people by weeding the unrepented sinners from among them."[1]

For VTH, the sealing and slaughtering in Ezek 9 was also parallel with the time of "harvest" (Matt 13:30). Applying the prophecy of Nah 2:3-4, to World War II, VTH insisted that according to Nah 1:15,

> At the time the war is fought someone is to be publishing inspired revelations of newly revealed Truth, the Truth of the Judgment of the Living, the which is to forever separate the wheat from the tares (Matt. 13:30), the good fish from the bad (Matt. 13:47, 48), the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:32), and the wise virgins from the foolish ones (Matt. 25:1-12). These shall "no more pass through" the church, declares the scripture, they are "utterly cut off."[2]

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "The Revival and Reformation Crowned with the Purification," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 30 (1948): 12.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 15. Cf. Hab 1:15, "Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill you vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed" (NIV).

According to VTH, the "published inspired revelations" were the teachings of the SRod. They were meant to bring about the "harvest" and separation of the good from the bad. In that day, the "teachers of religion" who exalted self and led God's people astray will be found wanting.[1] The judgment work and separation of saints from sinners or "harvest (Matt 25:33) would take place before the advent of Christ in the clouds of heaven (cf. Joel 3:13-16).[2]

Finally, the sealing symbolized a time of "mighty sifting," and "purification of the church." This event was to take place among God's people, His church, for "the angels have charge of the 'city,' Jerusalem, not of the world, and not of Babylon."[3] The slaughter of Ezek 9, therefore, was not the same as the seven last plagues (Rev 16), because the plagues fall on Babylon, but the slaughter, affects only Judah and Jerusalem. For that reason, VTH concluded that the period of time or dispensation following 1844 marked the "judgment," the "mighty shifting," or the "purification of God's church."[4]

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 5 (1946): 8.

[2]Ibid., 11.

[3]*TG* 1, no. 3 (1946): 12.

[4]Cf. *SRod*, 1:227. VTH pointed out that "had the church as a body, or at least the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination accepted the message as presented to them in 'The Shepherd's Rod,' vol. 1, there would be no

**Previous Criticism**

*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, addressed two specific concerns related to the sealing time as presented by VTH.[1] The first concern was the idea of two comings of Christ in the SRod teachings. According to VTH's understanding of the judgment (Ezek 9; Dan 7:10; Rev 14:7; 1 Pet 4:17), Christ was first to come invisibly for the investigation and the slaying of the wicked within the SDA Church before the close of probation (Ezek 9:6; Mal 3:1-3). This invisible coming would be the first of His two comings. The second coming of Christ would be His visible coming when He returns the second time after the close of probation and the seven last plagues (Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:16).

Based upon a comparison of statements by VTH and EGW on the coming of Christ to separate the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-34), *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, made the

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necessity for that class to fall by the figure of the five men with the slaughter weapons. It is the reception or rejection of the message that will fix the destiny" of those who are saved and those shaken away. *SRod*, 2:218. In order to support his argument, VTH cited EGW's statement regarding the shaking. "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the true witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people." *EW*, 270.

[1]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 26.

following observations:[1] (1) EGW declared that the separation of Matt 25:31-34 will take place when Christ comes in glory and will not be the result of an "invisible coming" as purported by VTH.[2] (2) The kingdom of glory referred to in Matt 25:31,32 is "not to be set up until the second advent of Christ."[3] And, (3) the testimony of Scripture to the second coming of Christ proves that there is no previous coming of Christ prior to this spectacular event (see Heb 9:28; Ps 50:3-5; 2 Thess 1:7-10).[4]

In order to counter the SRod argument that (1) "the sealing of the 144,000 is the separation of the faithful from the disloyal ones; the purification of the church" and, (2) "The sealing of the 144,000 cannot extend to the close of probation," *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, pointed to the counsels of EGW against time setting.[5] "Time" E. G. White says, "has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test."[6] Hence, the caution against the SRod

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[1]Ibid., 27-29.

[2]Ibid., 27. Cf. *GC*, 322,323.

[3]*GC*, 347.

[4]Ibid., 638, 640-42, 657, all speak of Christ's spectacular coming with fire the second time.

[5]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 30-31; Cf. *PUC Com REPLY*, 34-37.

[6]*EW*, 75; Cf. *1T*, 409; *GC*, 457; *TM*, 55.

attempt to predict the time for the sealing of the 144,000 and the concurrent sifting of the wicked within Adventism.[1] Supporting the position of *RE-Examined*, *PUC Com REPLY* pointed out the mistake of the SRod in placing the sealing of the 144,000 before the latter rain and setting the beginning date for the sealing of the 144,000.[2]

## The Slaying of Sinners in Zion

### Analysis

For SRod the understanding of the 144,000 is a "life-and-death matter to all" because "sinners" in Zion will be slain (Ezek 9).[3] The "slaying of sinners" is synonymous to the "judgment of the living" which takes place among the people of God.[4] The judgment proceeds in two phases:

> The first phase is a separation that takes away the wicked from among the righteous, Ezekiel 9. The second phase is the book work when the investigation takes place, and when the sins of the righteous and the names of the wicked are blotted out of the records in Heaven.

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[1]*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 30.

[2]*PUC Com REPLY*, 34. Cf. *SRod*, 1:32, "'Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God, or be cut down by the destroying weapons.' *If we were to mark out the exact time of the beginning of this sealing, we would say it began sometime during 1929*." (Emphasis supplied).

[3]See *TS* 1 (1941): 5,6.

[4]*SCode* 12, no. 3 (1957): 19.

> This second phase, the judicial session in heaven, is what commences after Ezekiel 9.[1]

No specific date was set for the commencement of the judgment of the living within the SDA Church.[2] However, it was presumed that "the slaughter of Ezekiel 9 is what marks the judgment passing from the dead to the living."[3] This slaughter of sinners was only to take place after the message of the 144,000 had "reached the church as a body, and every one has decided for or against it, then the slaughter will immediately take place."[4] Three reasons for a literal slaying are provided by VTH in *The Answerer*: (1) The Lord Himself was at the "threshold of the earthly house while the slaughter took place therein." (2) The supporting evidence from *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 211, which says: "Here we see that the church–the Lord's sanctuary–was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God." And, (3) the support from Isa 66:16,19,20 which "show that the slaying mentioned in verse 16 is to be literal."[5]

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[1]*SCode* 12, no. 3 (1957): 20.

[2]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 8.

[3]*SCode* 12, no. 3 (1957): 20.

[4]*SCode* 2, no. 1 (1936): 9.

[5]Victor T. Houteff, "Questions and Answers on Present Truth Topics," *The Answerer* 5 (1944): 56-57 passim.

After judgment and purification of the SDA Church, the 144,000 who remain become the servants of God to finish the gospel work in the world.[1] VTH says,

> And they [the 144,000 who escape the slaying or abide the day (Isa. 66:16) in the separation of the tares from the wheat (Matt. 13:30, 41), the harvest of the firstfruits (Rev. 14:4), the "servants" of God (Rev. 7:3)] shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. Isa 66:20.[2]

The judgment of "sinners" then in the church "incontrovertibly takes place at the commencement of the 'Loud Cry.'"[3] In Ezek 9:3-9, the "complete separation of the wicked from among the just . . . prophetically forewarn of the imminent purification of the church."[4]

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[1]*TG* 1, no. 25 (1947): 11; *TG* 1, no. 52 (1947): 24.

[2]*TS* 1 (1941): 20.

[3]Ibid., 17.

[4]Ibid., 18.

**Previous Criticism**

SDAs do not subscribe to the teachings of the SRod which maintain that the slaughter of Ezek 9 is the slaughter of unconverted SDA members. *GC Com-WAE* provided six reasons why the SRod is wrong in this theory.[1] (1) The *Testimonies* clearly teach that the slaughter of Ezek 9 is the slaughter of the wicked which takes place after the close of human probation.[2] (2) The slaughtering of Ezek 9 is associated with events that will transpire after probation is closed.[3] (3) The contextual evidence provided by EGW in *Great Controversy*, supports the view of the events of Ezek 9 taking place after the close of probation.[4] (4) The fact that the latter rain may be falling around unconverted SDAs without them being aware of it, supports the view that they will not be slaughtered before the loud cry.[5] (5) The support from the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13).

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[1]*GC Com-WAE*, 9-13.

[2]*3T*, 267.

[3]*TM*, 431,432.

[4]*GC*, 656. Note the context of chapters 39, 40 and 41 within which the statement is set.

[5]*TM*, 507, "Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, *we shall not recognize* the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it." (Emphasis supplied).

In the parable, both the wise and foolish virgins were left until the close of probation.[1] And, (6) the apparent contradictions that are prevalent in the teachings of the SRod.

In *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, the same arguments were used to affirm the SDA position. It underscored that the slaughter of Ezek 9, "will occur after the close of probation, and in the general destruction of the wicked during the falling of the seven last plagues and at the second coming of Christ in glory."[2] Hendricks, also tried to establish whether EGW supported a double slaughtering, first of unconverted SDAs, then followed by the slaughter of those in the world.[3] After failing to find any support for the teachings of VTH in the writings of EGW, Hazel Hendricks concluded that unless we are fortified by the truth of God's word, we may be at risk of being ensnared by the terrible delusions of Satan in the teachings of the SRod.[4]

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[1]*COL*, 412.

[2]*Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 23-26.

[3]Hendricks, 53-62.

[4]Ibid., 62.

## Evaluation

After sifting through the numerous materials VTH has offered on Ezek 9 and Rev 7, several significant things need to be pointed out regarding this section of the study. Concerning the relationship of Ezek 9 and Rev 7, scholars have long recognized the presence of OT allusions to eschatological thought present in the book of Revelation.[1] Paulien, addressing the issue of interpreting the symbolisms in Revelation, notes that it is impossible to understand the book of Revelation without taking the OT background seriously.[2] In fact, the OT permeates Revelation so thoroughly that there are forty three different allusions are taken from the book of Ezekiel alone.[3] Such an influence on Revelation is affirmed in the work of Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, who attempted to show how "Revelation is literarily dependent on the Book of Ezekiel."[4]

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[1]See Merril C. Tenny, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 101-16; Jon Paulien, "Interpreting Revelation's Symbolism," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book 1*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 73-97.

[2]Paulien, 84.

[3]Tenny, 104.

[4]Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, "The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1985), 13.

The connection between Ezek 9 and Rev 7, in the writings of VTH, may reflect a sincere attempt on the part of Houteff to reconcile the teachings of the two chapters. The relationship between the two chapters is recognized in SDA works.[1] In this regard, VTH's interpretation was heavily influenced by the writings of EGW.[2] However, while synchronizing her thoughts and making a restatement of her work is in the main a legitimate process of theology,[3] VTH seems to have used EGW's writing to support his own theory of the 144,000. Adopting such a method in understanding EGW's work is not in harmony with good principles of interpretation.[4] Good hermeneutical guidelines require the interpreter to be sensitive to the primary intentions of the writer.

When considering VTH's analysis of the sealing in Ezek 9, it appears that his interpretation implied much more

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[1]Uriah Smith, 461; LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 151-54; Beatrice S. Neall, 255,261; "An Hundred and Forty and Four Thousand" (Rev 7:4), *SDABC*, 7:783.

[2]Take one example of his discussion of the sealing and the selected EGW citations used by VTH in *SRod*, 1:26-40 passim; cf. *EW*, 270-71; *GC*, 452; *TM*, 445; *1T*, 181; *3T*, 265-67; *5T*, 210-16, 492-500; *8T*, 250.

[3]See McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 10, on the aims of systematic theology.

[4]See Douglass, 371-465, passim, for a detailed study of the importance of hermeneutics in understanding the writings of EGW.

than the internal evidence provided by the Scripture and the application supplied by EGW.[1] Many scholars concur that Ezekiel 8-11 focused on the sin of false worship practiced in Jerusalem (Ezek 8:3,5-13; 9:4), followed by the subsequent judgments of God (chap. 9) which were meted on the land and people (9:5-6,8; cf. 7:2,3,10,11,13).[2] The executioners (9:2) who were to show no compassion (v. 5) on the "old men, young men and maidens, women and children," represented the Babylonians who were appointed by God as instruments of judgments on Israel.[3]

The judgment of the wicked in the prophecy of Ezek 9, no doubt, had a significant meaning in its original historical context. This judgment may be applied secondarily to the end of time by following the lead of EGW. However, EGW definitely applied it after the time of probation, when the final judgment is to "fall upon Babylon in the day of the visitation of God's wrath,"[4] and upon all the people of the world at the coming of Christ when all the

[1]See the refutation by SDA scholars on VTH's use of EGW in interpreting Ezek 9 in *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 22-48.

[2]McIver, 81-93; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Ezekiel, Book of," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1988), 1:750.

[3]"Six men" (Ezek 9:2), *SDABC*, 7:605.

[4]*GC*, 653.

"wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth."[1] In any case, it is not a good practice to base doctrine on a secondary application of a prophecy.[2] The secondary application of the prophecy should not be taken as if it were the primary intent of Ezekiel's message. This appears to have been one problem with VTH's interpretation of Ezekiel and likewise his use of EGW in understanding Ezek 9. VTH takes EGW's specific application of Ezek 9 to events that transpire after the close of probation and applies them directly to the SDA Church.

Again, the multiplex approach used by VTH to understand Ezek 9 and Rev 7 seem to have enabled the gathering of scattered thoughts in the writings of EGW in a systematic fashion. What appears problematic is the forced meaning of certain aspects which was not intended by EGW herself. Houteff placed the judgments of Ezek 9 and Mal 3:1-3 as events to happen prior to the loud cry. He seems to overlook the historical import of these references as specific warnings of God to Israel against their sins by applying them directly to the SDA Church.[3]

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[1]Ibid., 655.

[2]Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 202-06.

[3]"Begin at My Sanctuary" (Ezek 9:6), *SDABC*, 4:607; "My Messenger" (Mal 3:1), *SDABC*, 4:1130. Cf. The previous

EGW, in contrast did not promote the idea of a literal slaughtering within Adventism as implied by VTH.[1] While she drew parallels from Ezekiel to the closing scenes of earth's history, her application of the "work of destruction" among the professed spiritual guardians, is couched against the context of "judgments that fall upon Babylon in the day of the visitation of God's wrath."[2]

The historical context of Ezekiel's prophecy should not be dismissed. As Daniel I. Block noted concerning the massacre at the *sanctuary* (9:6), "Yahweh's own residence, is the place where Israelite apostasy and defiance are most visibly expressed (8:5-18),"[3] thus the instruction for the slaughtering was probably intended as a "general designation for all participants in the cultic abominations in Yahweh's own temple"[4] at the time of the prophet. In like manner, while EGW stressed the Messianic import of the "Messenger of Covenant" in Malachi 3:1 (see on Mark 1:2),[5] she also applied

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analysis of the "the sealing time" in the work of VTH.

[1]See *TA* 5 (1944): 56-57, passim.

[2]*GC*, 153, 656.

[3]Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 308.

[4]Ibid., 309.

[5]*DA*, 161. For EGW, the cleansing of the temple met its fulfillment in the events of John 2:12-22.

them to the closing events of earth's history and the second coming of Jesus.[1] Her use of the prophecies of Ezek 9 and Mal 3 appears to be at odds with VTH.

The significance of Ezek 9 and Rev 7, as pointed out in the writings of VTH, cannot be ignored.[2] While VTH's parallel between the marking of Ezek 9 and the sealing of the 144,000 may not be completely unique,[3] his direct application of these prophecies to the SDA Church stands out. The instruction to "slaughter" (Ezek 9:6), Heb. *tahargu* employs a verb occuring 167x in the OT.[4] The OT contexts in which this root refer to holy wars and complete destruction (Num 31:7,17; Josh 8:24-28), killing for revenge (e.g., Gen 34:25; 2 Sam 3:30), and narrative contexts (Exod 2:14, 13:5), as punishment for apostasy (Exod 32:27). Usually, in the prophetic corpus, it carries the sense of

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[1]See *GC*, 424; *PP*, 339.

[2]Ellen G. White to A. R. Henry, 27 October 1894, in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1979), 1303, notes the importance of studying this prophecy carefully.

[3]Some before him and contemporaries had reached similar conclusions. See for example, Uriah Smith, 461; H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet* (New York: Loizeaux, 1949), 58.

[4]W. R. Domeris, "*hereg*," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:1055-57.

slaughter or massacre.[1] However, the text in question was clearly not intended as a specific reference to the end-time church.[2] In SDA opinion, the primary application of this prophecy refers to the close of Jerusalem's probation.[3]

Other distinct features of Ezek 9 stressed by VTH do not appear in the writings of EGW. For example, E. G. White applied the identifying "seal of God" (Rev 7:2), like the "mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament" (Ezek 9:4), to character qualifications.[4] The mark, derived from the Heb. *tāw*,[5] was a sign of hope but also represented Yahweh's signature of approval on the citizens of the Kingdom.[6] Underscoring the vital role of "Yahweh's

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[1]Ibid., 1:1055-56. Cf. Harold G. Stigers, "*hereg*," *TWOT*, 1:222.

[2]Block, 302, outlines the nature and design of Ezekiel 9 to underscore that the chapter should be interpreted as an expression or exposition of cult worship of 8:16-18. The graphic description of execution depicts God's intolerance to any defilement of His temple. Cf. McIver, 87; Donald E. Gowan, *Ezekiel: Knox Preaching Guides* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1985), 50-56.

[3]"Begin at my sanctuary" *SDABC*, 4:607.

[4]"Mark" (Ezek 9:4), *SDABC*, 7:606. Cf. *COL*, 67; *TM*, 446.

[5]Block, 307, notes "Taw is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the archaic cursive script it had the shape of an X or a cross, a form that remained essentially unchanged from the early stages of the evolution of the alphabet until the adoption of the square Aramaic script."

[6]Cf. To the identifying blood on the doorposts of Israelite houses on the night of the Passover (Exod 12) and

signature" E. G. White asserted that the sealed ones will be the defenders of the Sabbath truth (Isa 56:1,2,6-8; 58:12,13; Rev 14:6-12).[1] Multitudes of God's children scattered in Christendom will then receive the truth of the Sabbath and join the ranks of God's remnant people.[2]

Finally, when analyzing EGW's work, she did not make any clear distinction between the 144,000 and the great multitude as the end-time remnant people of God. The distinction between the two groups appeared much more certainly in the works of VTH. Thus, while the idea of a severe judgment is inherent in Ezek 9 (vv. 5-6), recognized by the prophet's isolation (v. 8), the judgment may have met specific historical fulfillment (eg., 2 Kgs 15:29; 17:1-6; 2 Kgs 24).[3] The relevance of Ezek 9 in eschatology is supported by Jewish and the Christian tradition which suggests that "at the time of the final judgment, the scenes described in Ezek 9 will be repeated; only those bearing the *taw* on their foreheads will be saved."[4] EGW supports this historical method in understanding OT prophecy. However, it

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the scarlet cord in Rahab's window (Josh 2:18-21; 6:22-25).

[1]*GC*, 451-60.

[2]Ibid., 611, 612.

[3]Block, 309.

[4]Ibid., 310.

was her application of Ezek 9 which VTH seemed to impose as a direct fulfillment in the SDA Church. Such an approach does injustice both to Scripture and the writings of EGW.

## Wheat and the Tares

The idea of the wheat and the tares is important to the apocalypticism of VTH. Here we discuss the meaning, timing, the separation and close of probation, as they relate to the teaching of VTH on the harvest.

### Meaning of the Harvest

**Analysis**

Houteff's definition of the "harvest" is neatly blended into his understanding of the 144,000.

> The Master said the harvest is at the end of the world; the angels are the reapers. Then there is reaping to be done. "Harvest" means a collection of crops; to gather, store up, or garner in. According to this the harvest is by no means a remnant, but just the opposite, for at harvest we gather in the most.[1]

Several significant points stand out in Houteff's definition of the harvest. The meaning of the harvest is that it is an event that takes place "at" the end of the world and is not the end of the world per se. Therefore, the harvest "does not bring the millennium of peace . . . but rather it brings God's wrath, the time of trouble such

[1]*SRod*, 1:102.

as never was, the time in which His people in Babylon are called to 'come out of her' and into His purified church, the Kingdom."[1]

According to his understanding of the harvest, it refers to the gathering of God's people into the "barn" (Matt 13:30), a symbol of the purified "church" after the sifting.[2] This means that the harvest takes place while probation lingers, "a short period of time just before, rather than the moment at, the appearing of Christ in the clouds."[3]

The gathering of the remnant is not the final harvest itself but rather a mere part of it. Those who escape the destruction or "separation of the two classes in the church . . . as prophesied in Ezekiel 9, and Isaiah 63"[4] make up the 144,000 remnant.

**Previous Criticism**

*GC Com-WAE* in analyzing the teachings of VTH regarding the harvest, affirmed that the "reaping" of the harvest in Rev 14:14-16, in conjunction with the harvest in

[1]*TA* 2 (1944): 14.

[2]Victor T. Houteff, "The Exodus of Today," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 16 (1946): 25.

[3]*TA* 2 (1944): 14.

[4]*SRod*, 1:102.

the parable of Matt 13, means that this event takes place after the close of probation.[1] This position, it argued, is supported by EGW who stated, "When the work of the gospel is completed, there immediately follows the separation between the good and the evil, and the destiny of each class is forever fixed."[2] When commenting on Rev 14:17-20, *GC Com-WAE* noted that the clear reference to the harvest applies to the wicked (tares) who receive their punishment after the close of probation.[3]

In further analysis, *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, pointed out that Scripture uses the term "harvest" in different ways. It then proceeded to identify two principle ways in which the term "harvest" maybe understood.[4]

First, the word "harvest" may be understood missiologically (cf. Matt 9:37,38). When applied accordingly, the reapers refer to the faithful servants of God who spread the gospel message (cf. John 4:35).

Second, the term "harvest" is also used to describe the final harvest of the wicked at the second coming of Christ. This second meaning of the term "harvest" is

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[1]*GC Com-WAE*, 7.

[2]*COL*, 123. Cf. *GC Com-WAE*, 6.

[3]*GC Com-WAE*, 8.

[4]See *Com on DLit, SR-Examined*, 16-17.

intended in the parable of Matt 13:30,39-43, and in Rev 14:14-19. Hence, *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, argued that the main reason for the inadvertent teaching of the SRod on the "harvest" is a direct result of their failure to distinguish between the two different usages of the term in Scripture.[1] For that reason the SRod have taken texts that refer to the final fate of the wicked after the close of probation and applied them directly to the harvest of souls in the gospel era.

## Timing of the Harvest

**Analysis**

For Houteff the timing of the harvest of Matt 13:24-29 does not take place at the coming of Christ. It precedes the advent and symbolizes the gathering of God's people during "the very last days of probation for earth's kingdoms, the days and work which bring the end of the world."[2] This means that the time for the harvest is twofold in nature.

First, the harvest of the 144,000 as "firstfruits to God and the Lamb" (Rev 14:4).[3] These are "remnants" who

[1]Ibid.

[2]*TA* 2 (1944): 14.

[3]*SRod*, 1:103.

survive the judgment for the living which takes place in the house of God (1 Pet 4:17; cf. Matt 25:32).[1] This harvest comes in the form of a mighty shaking or sifting in Adventism after which only a "remnant" remains.[2] "The separation marks the beginning of harvest."[3]

Second, the harvest of the 144,000 antecedes the second harvest of the "great multitudes" during the Loud Cry.[4] VTH argued that "purification" was a prerequisite because the "saints" from all nations must be gathered into a "purified and truth-filled church . . . there is to be no mixed company of saints and sinners in the 'holy mountain' of the Lord" (cf. Zech 8:7-9).[5] Thus in the writings of VTH, the harvest is illustrated and variously called:

> "Judgment" (Dan 7:10; Rev 14:7; 1 Pet 4:17); "Cleansing of the Sanctuary" (Dan 8:14); "Purify His Temple" (Mal 3:1-3); "Harvest" (Matt 13:30); "Mighty Sifting," "purification of the church," (*5T*., p. 80).[6]

Unless these OT promises (Zeph 1:2-5; Ezek 37:23) are fulfilled the ingathering of the second fruits will not

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[1]Victor T. Houteff, "Zion and Her Daughters In the Last Days," *Timely Greetings* 1, no. 6 (1946): 38-39.

[2]*SRod*, 1:102.

[3]Ibid., 104.

[4]See *SRod*, 1:229.

[5]*TG* 1, no. 16 (1946): 25.

[6]*JL*, no. 2 (Reprint, 1997): 4.

take place.[1] Upon fulfillment of these prophecies all nations will (Isa 60:11,13,14; Mic 4:2; Zeph 3:13; Jer 31:33,34) gather into "'the house of the God of Jacob' meaning the church into which the 144,000 are sealed, Israel the true."[2] The harvest is then the 'result of effort', of toil, 'the gathering of a crop', the result of labor and filling up the barns with grain.[3] It is a reaping that continues "until the gospel work is finished."[4] Thus, the "two harvests yield the first and the second fruits" of those saved in the end-time.[5]

**Previous Criticism**

Arising from Houteff's understanding of the parable of Matt 13:24-29, he taught a twofold harvest in which the 144,000 are first reaped from within the SDA Church, followed by the reaping of a great multitude during the loud cry. *PUC Com REPLY* attempted to address this issue and to ascertain if the teachings of VTH on the timing of the

[1]See *TG* 1, no. 21 (1946): 16; Victor T. Houteff, "The Dead and the Living Make Up the Whole House of Israel; Gog Fails," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 4 (1947): 15.

[2]*SRod*, 1:17.

[3]*TS* 3 (1934): 64.

[4]*TG* 1, no. 16 (1946): 28.

[5]Victor T. Houteff, "The Chronological Setting of the Revelation Chapter By Chapter: The Summary," *Timely Greetings* 2, no. 14 (1947): 18.

harvest was in accordance with Scripture and EGW.[1] Two specific concerns were investigated: (1) The question as to whether or not the harvest of Matt 13:24-30,37-43 could be equated with the loud cry, and (2) issues regarding the 144,000 and the harvest. *PUC Com REPLY* asserted that the most vital teaching of the SRod regarding the harvest "rest upon the claim that the separation and burning of the tares of Matt 13 and the slaughter of Ezek 9 take place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church before the latter rain and the loud cry."[2]

First, *PUC Com REPLY* confirmed the importance of the latter rain and the accompanying power which is to give strength to the loud cry and the third angel's message (cf. Rev 18:1,2). In this section of the study, supporting EGW references that were noted by *PUC Com REPLY*, underscore the areas which SDAs and VTH held in common.[3]

Second, *PUC Com REPLY* investigated the SRod claim that the harvest of Matt 13 refers to the loud cry. In the

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[1]See *PUC Com REPLY*, 9-39.

[2]Ibid., 10.

[3]Ibid., 10-11. Cf. Ellen G. White, "The Need of a Revival and a Reformation," *Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902, 16, "God rebukes His people for their sins. . . . Then a multitude not of their faith, seeing that God is with His people, will unite with them in serving the Redeemer." *DA*, 827, "The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. . . ." *GC*, 450, 612, in reference to the outpouring of God's Spirit.

brief survey of both the Bible and EGW, *PUC Com REPLY* drew the conclusion, later affirmed by *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, which identified the two different uses of the term "harvest" in Scripture.[1] Thus it was established that the mistake in VTH's understanding of Matt 13 was due primarily to his failure to distinguish between the "harvest" referred to in Matt 13 as the final judgment of the wicked at the second coming of Christ, and the harvest of the gospel. This lack of biblical understanding resulted in VTH applying the harvest of Matt 13 to an event which takes place prior to and during the time of the loud cry.

## Separation and the Harvest

**Analysis**

In addition to VTH's argument concerning the time for the harvest, he also taught a twofold separation theory. Regarding the first separation VTH explains,

> Said Jesus, "in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." The tares, therefore, are gathered just prior to the harvest, and burned in the time of the harvest (for note the prefix "in"). "But gather the wheat into my barn." Matt 13:30. The wheat represents the 144,000; the "barn" is a symbol of security. This glorious company is saved and protected. Satan cannot harm them. They are to be translated

[1]*PUC Com REPLY*, 12-14. Cf. *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 16-17.

> without seeing death. John describes them as "being the firstfruits [of the harvest] unto God and the Lamb."[1]

The separation of the "tares" from the "wheat" is to take place within the SDA Church. Both the wheat and the tares are to grow together in the church until the harvest (Matt 13:30).[2] In VTH's opinion, the separation of the tares was to be fulfilled in the slaughter of SDAs by the angel of Ezek 9.[3] Only after the removal of the "tares" will the 144,000 enjoy the security within the church.

On the other hand, VTH noted the necessity of a second separation.

> Since these escaped ones (the first fruits, the 144,000 servants of God--Rev. 7:3) "shall bring all your brethren" (the second fruits the great multitude--Rev. 7:9) "for an offering . . . out of all nations" (Isa. 66:20, first part), this great ingathering necessarily therefore, is the closing work of the gospel--the second section of the harvest.[4]

The 144,000, "free from the wicked (the tares) shall then, as "the servants of our God," bring in the second fruits, the great multitude which no man can number, out of

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[1]*SRod*, 1:228.

[2]*TG* 1, no. 21 (1946): 3.

[3]*TA* 1 (Reprint, 1993): 94,95.

[4]*TS* 3 (1934): 70.

all nations."[1] This separation takes place in Babylon where the "just are called from among the wicked."[2]

Chronologically then the Kingdom runs parallel to the sealing work of the 144,000. The sealing and separation of the wheat from the tares (Matt 13) is symbolized by the "rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands" which broke the great image to pieces in Dan 2:45.[3] The crushing of the kingdoms (v. 44) is symbolic of a second harvest which would result in the sealing of the great multitude during the Loud Cry. Clearly then the establishment of the Davidic Kingdom would precede the close of human probation and the second advent of Jesus.[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., 68.

[3]Houteff points out that according to Zech 12:3,8,9, "At that time Jerusalem, the city of the saints, is to become a burdensome stone for all the people of the earth. That is, they will hate the city and its inhabitants and will attempt to take it, but instead they will be cut in pieces; for the Lord will defend His people. Then it is that even the most feeble among the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as willing, as daring, and as capable as was ancient David. And the house of David--the kingdom that is to be set up, which is but the church purified, no sinners among them (Isa 52:1), shall be as the angel of the Lord before the people." *TG* 1, no. 10 (1946): 26.

[4]See *AFT*, no. 9, in *FB of DSDAs* (Appendix no. 1). Cf. *TG* 1, no. 10 (1946): 24-27. In Houteff's exegesis of Isa 25:3,4 and Isa 16:5 he says, "Since according to this scripture the establishment of Christ's throne is yet future, and since furthermore it is to be set up in the tabernacle of David (the which did not take place at His first coming), Christ, therefore, when He comes to reign in

**Previous Criticism**

Analyzing the SRod teaching that a separation of the "wheat" and "tares" takes place in Adventism prior to the latter rain and the loud cry, *PUC Com REPLY* observed that it was based purely on inference and inadvertently stood in direct conflict to the plain teachings of EGW.[1] It pointed to the clear statement by E. G. White that said, "The tares and the wheat are to grow together until the harvest; *and the harvest is the end of probationary time*."[2] Thus the Scripture (Matt 13:30) and EGW are both in agreement that the "wheat" (good) and "tares" (bad) are to co-exist until the close of probation. *GC Com-WAE* likewise established this position in its analysis.[3]

*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, argued that the twofold theories on the harvest (such as the two separations, two closings of probations, and two comings of Christ), were a deliberate attempt by VTH to bolster the teaching of a

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His forthcoming kingdom, will sit on the throne of David. And as He is then to judge, seek judgment, and hasten righteousness, the entire action occurs just before the close of probation--the time in which He can hasten righteousness." *TS* 8 (1941): 97-98.

[1]*PUC Com REPLY*, 16.

[2]*COL*, 72. (Emphasis mine).

[3]*GC Com-WAE*, 6-8.

theocratic kingdom of David in Palestine.[1] In addition to this, it pointed out that the clear testimony of Matt 13:39-43,49-50, emphasized (1) that the separation of the "wheat" and "tares" will occur *at the end of the world*; and, (2) the *angels* will be the agents to effect that separation.[2] From this analysis it was shown that the "separation" of Matt 13 referred to the final separation to take place between the good and the wicked after probation had closed. Therefore, the "separation must follow, and not precede, the close of probation."[3] Numerous citations by E. G. White were used to show her consistent support for this interpretation.[4]

## Probation and the Harvest

**Analysis**

Regarding the sealing or the harvest of the 144,000, VTH argued that it "cannot extend to the close of probation"

[1]*Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined*, 18.

[2]Ibid., 19.

[3]Ibid., 20.

[4]Ibid., 20-21. Cf. *COL*, 72, 73, 75, 122, 123; Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA : Pacific Press, 1942), 49; *GC*, 321, 490, 491.

nor meet its fulfillment at the coming of Christ.[1] Two reasons are given by VTH.[2]

First, the slaughtering (Ezek 9) of the wicked in the SDA Church results in the sealing of the faithful remnant (144,000). Therefore, SDAs were not to console themselves with the belief that the slaughter of Ezek 9 (synonymous to the "burning of the tares" in Matt 13) was something imaginary or something which would take place after the close of probation.[3] VTH maintained that probation would close for the SDA Church once the sealing of the remnant (first fruits) has been completed (cf. Matt 25:1-13). On the other hand, while probation is closed for the church, the door of mercy still remains open for the "great multitude," who make up the second fruits of Rev 7. Having made a distinction between the harvest of the 144,000 and

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[1]*SRod*, 1:35-36. VTH cited *EW*, 277, to support his theory. "I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. . . . This message seemed to be an addition to the third message." VTH pointed out that in the expression, "the angels hurrying to and fro," E. G. White was referring to the fulfillment of Ezek 9 which preceded the coming of the mighty angel of the loud cry of Rev 18:1.

[2]*SRod*, 1:35-36, passim.

[3]*TG* 1, no. 45 (1947): 19.

the great multitude, VTH promoted the idea of two probationary periods for those living in the end-time.[1]

Second, VTH taught that the church must be pure, clean, and free from every stain of sin before Jesus comes. He based this on EGW statements regarding God having a purified and true church before the close of probation.[2] He reasoned that if the purification of the SDA Church must result in the sealing of the 144,000, then probation will close for SDAs after the sifting. Only "then the Loud Cry begins with a pure ministry imbued with the Spirit of God."[3] Unless this takes place, the work of God in the world could not finish and the saints called out of Babylon could not come into a "sinless place," the church purified, where they will be safe from the plagues.[4]

**Previous Criticism**

The idea of a double closing of the door of probation taught by VTH posed several difficulties. VTH made biblical comparisons that were not made by Scripture itself. He taught that the shutting of the door for the five foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13) refers to the

[1]*TA* 2 (1944): 36.

[2]*TA* 3 (1993): 41. Cf. *GC*, 425; *PK*, 725; *5T*, 80.

[3]*JL*, no. 5 (Reprint, 1997): 2.

[4]Ibid., 3.

slaughtering (Ezek 9) and the burning of the tares (Matt 13), SDAs who rejected the teachings of the SRod.[1] This meant that the three separate events all prefigured the destruction of the sinners in the SDA Church, after which the 144,000 remain.

Responding to this interpretation, *PUC Com REPLY* showed that when Matt 25:1 is read in the context of Matt 24:50,51, it places the narrative of the ten virgins against the backdrop of "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Thus, the description of the agony of the wicked at the time of their destruction clearly places this event after the close of probation.[2] The view that the separation of the wise and the foolish virgins (Matt 25) occurs after the close of probation is supported by E. G. White. This was pointed out in *PUC Com REPLY*. It noted that the events which describe the separation of the ten virgins in *Christ's Object Lessons* is preceded by E. G. White's clear statement that "the great final test comes at the close of human probation when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied."[3] Thus it was asserted by *PUC Com REPLY* that the consistency of the teachings of Scripture and EGW regarding Matt 25 gives

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[1]*SRod*, 1:30; *SRod*, 2:182.

[2]*PUC Com REPLY*, 19.

[3]*COL*, 412.

little excuse for us to go astray and become confused in the fog of erroneous doctrines.[1]

*PUC Com REPLY* also addressed the issue of whether or not the Church will be pure and perfect before and during the loud cry.[2] It concurred with the SRod teaching that the time of shaking will result in the Church being greatly purified. However, it is the shaking that purifies the church before the latter rain and the loud cry, not the slaughter of Ezek 9 or the separation and burning of the tares of Matt 13, as claimed by the Shepherd's Rod. *PUC Com REPLY* underscored that while EGW confirms that all who receive the latter rain will have their lives purified,[3] it does not necessarily mean that all the church members of the visible organization will be pure and perfect during the loud cry. The teachings of Scripture (Matt 13:30) and EGW clearly state that both "wheat and tares" will grow together until the harvest,[4] and that the harvest is the end of the world (Matt 13:39).

In the light of previous criticism, no evidence is found to support the theory of a double close of probation.

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[1] *PUC Com REPLY*, 20.

[2] Ibid., 20-25.

[3] *5T*, 214.

[4] *COL*, 72.

The examples used by VTH to endorse his teachings all point to their fulfillment after the close of probation and not prior to or during the loud cry of the third angel.

## Evaluation

The alarm of earlier SDAs to the dangers of VTH's theory regarding the harvest and their responses to it is understandable. While their basic approach of comparing selected statements by VTH with those of EGW is legitimate, more could have been done to ensure a satisfactory response on a wider theological basis. This evaluation begins with a discussion of various approaches to the interpretation of parables then proceeds into discussing a few interpretative issues posed by the teachings of VTH.

Let us first begin with a few background issues on parables and interpretation. Allegory was the predominant method that was used for parable interpretation from the second century until the time of Adolf Jülicher (1857-38) in the nineteenth century.[1] Jülicher in his 1888 book, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (the parables of Jesus) marked a turning

[1]Matthew Black, "The Parables as Allegory," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 42 (1959-60), 274; Raymond E. Brown, "Parable and Allegory Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentium* 5 (1962): 36; Charles W. Hendrick, "Parables and the Kingdom: The Vision of Jesus in Fiction and Faith," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1987), 369.

point in parable interpretation.[1] Nevertheless, Jülicher insisted that there was only one *tertium comparationis* (only one single point of comparison) in a parable.[2] This rather narrow approach to parable interpretation has given way to more flexibility today.[3]

Because a parable may have a variety of different meanings, some guideline principles are necessary in order to extract correctly the explicit message they are intended to convey. In the parable of the harvest (Matt 13:24-30,36-43) the phrase "the kingdom of heaven is *like* . . . " (v. 24), is an explicit indication that the components of this parable are a "simile" of the Kingdom of heaven.[4] There

[1]However, while Jülicher freed the interpretation of parables from the grip of the allegorical method he provided a rather narrow definition of what a parable should be. This has generated much discussion in recent years. See Charles E. Carlson, "Parable and Allegory Revisited: An Interpretive Review," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 235; Cf. Black, 274-77.

[2]Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1981), 53.

[3]Ibid., 18-19, shows how the label "parable" may be used to describe a number of different kinds of things. The NT term "parable" occurs 48x in the Gospels and may refer to a range of different types of genre from an illustration (Heb 9:9), saying (Matt 15:15; Mark 7:17), proverb (Luke 4:23), metaphors (Luke 5:36-38), a figure of speech (Mark 7:14-17), similes or similitudes (Mark 4:30-32), story (Luke 14:16-24), and allegory? (Matt 22:2-10; 13:1-8,18-23). For a detailed study on parables, see C. H. Peisker, "*parabolē*," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 2:743-49.

[4]Peisker, 747.

is a mixed crop in the Kingdom of grace (Matt 13:25) that was to remain until the harvest.[1] Thus according to the parable, the "tares" or "weeds" are gathered out of his Kingdom (v. 41) at *the end of the age* (v. 39). This does not agree with VTH's placement of the harvest before the Loud Cry.

The Greek word translated "tares" or "weeds" is *zizania* (v. 26), a bearded darnel which looks exactly like wheat.[2] In fact, the resemblance of the two plants to each other is so close that it is almost impossible to distinguish between the two until maturity.[3] In addition there is a risk that the roots of the tares and wheat may have become so intertwined that one cannot be pulled out without removing the other.[4] Hence, in contrast to VTH's

[1]Scholars concur with VTH that the Kingdom may represent the Church of God on earth. See G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 133; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 119-20; C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Glasgow: Collins, 1935), 137; "Another Parable" (Matt 13:24), *SDABC*, 5:407.

[2]Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Iowa Falls, IO: World Bible, 1992), s.v. "*zizanion*."

[3]William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1958), 81, 82; Beasley-Murray, 132.

[4]W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint*

interpretation, the instruction not to remove the tares until the harvest (v. 29) suggests a single harvest of the wicked at Jesus' coming, and not the removal of one group (the 144,000) before the Loud Cry and then another, (the great multitude) through the Loud Cry itself.

On the other hand, VTH's insistence that the "barn" (v. 30) and the "kingdom" (v. 41) both represented the SDA Church is arbitrary and too restrictive. While the field in the parable is explicitly identified as "the world" (v. 38), the "weeds" (v. 40) "from his kingdom" (v. 41) may be thought of ideally as encompassing the whole world.[1] Hagner, in his interpretation of the parable, argues that the gathering of the "weeds" from the Kingdom (church), "is not in the sense that they actually were a part of the Church . . . but in the sense that they were in the world" and had "existed alongside the righteous (cf. v. 30)."[2] Craig L. Blomberg agrees with Donald Hagner and insists that the kingdom "must refer to God's universal, sovereign reign rather than equated with the church."[3] This openness to the

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*Matthew* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991), 2:414.

[1]Donald Hagner, *Matthew: Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1:394.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 199.

understanding of the Kingdom of grace (church) stands in contrast to the restrictive arbitrary definition (kingdom being the SDA Church) given to it by VTH.

VTH's argument as to why the sealing or harvest should precede the close of probation violates the principle of consistency with the remaining parable and reads into the parable an unwarranted interpretation. The parable does not have any direct link to Ezekiel 9 apart from the connection imposed by VTH. It is a connection that is taught by neither Scripture nor EGW. The parable notes that the evil doers are gathered "out of his kingdom" (v. 41) and thrown into the fiery furnace (v. 42). Hagner notes,

> The words . . . , "they will cast them into the furnace of fire," are drawn nearly verbatim from Dan 3:6 (exactly the same quotation is found in v. 50). This is to be related to the fire of Gehenna mentioned in 5:22 and 18:8-9 (cf. Esp. 2 Esdr 7:36). The formulaic character of this imagery is again apparent in the final clause of v. 42 . . ., "in that place there will be weeping and the grinding of teeth," which is found verbatim not only in v. 50 but also in 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 (cf. Luke 13:28).[1]

Interestingly, while in Matt 24:31 the angels gather the elect from the earth, the idea is inverted in Matt 13:41 where they gather the evildoers for the fires.[2] But in both cases the gathering is associated with the coming of the Son

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[1]Hagner, 394.

[2]Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 327.

of man. The parable itself strongly indicates that both good and bad members in the kingdom (church) were to remain together until the "harvest," at which time the separation will take place (Matt 13:40-43).[1] The harvest as a metaphor for judgment in the OT (cf. Amos 9:13),[2] is consistently carried into the NT. The mention of the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in Matt 13:42 from Matt 8:12 (cf. Luke 13:28), and the distinct repetition of this phrase (Matt 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), confirms the close association of the harvest with the judgment at the end of the age.[3]

**Summary**

The first core eschatological position held by VTH considered in this chapter reveals a close similarity between his teachings and dispensationalists. The similarity exists in the teaching of a terrestrial Kingdom in Palestine. Despite the similarities, there are also differences in the two systems. What has been established is that both systems subscribe to consistent literalism when approaching the study of Scripture. VTH's proof text method, when applied to the interpretation of OT prophecy may account for his insistence on predictions about the

[1]See Dodd, (1935), 137.

[2]Blomberg, 198.

[3]Gundry, 274.

establishment of an earthly kingdom of David being fulfilled today. SDAs on the contrary, see that the elements of prophecy that have not been fulfilled will eventually meet their ultimate fulfillment in the post-millennial New Jerusalem.

Some of VTH's interpretation of OT prophecies misconstrued the primary intent of Scripture or used EGW out of context in order to support his private interpretations concerning the kingdom. SDAs rejected the claims of VTH that the terrestrial kingdom would be established prior to the loud cry. They insisted that the fulfillment of this prophecy will take place after the second advent of Jesus. The kingdom, they insist, is none other than the eternal kingdom of Christ. Hence, the prophecies which VTH related to the earthly reign and rulership of David were in fact predictions of the rulership of Christ in the eternal kingdom.

According to VTH's teaching concerning Ezek 9 and Rev 7, a slaughtering will take place within the SDA Church. The remnants after the slaughtering make up the 144,000 who will be used by God during the loud cry to bring a great multitude into the Kingdom. Only those among SDAs who meet the criteria for the sealing (sigh and cry against the sins

in the church) will be separated from those do not during the mighty sifting to take place.

While SDAs believe the prophetic message of Ezek 9, they likewise consider its historical relevance. Thus, in the opinion of SDAs, Ezek 9 can only be legitimately used in an applicatory sense and not literally as purported by VTH.[1] VTH drew numerous support from the pen of EGW but it would be wrong for him to build a whole new doctrine based upon the secondary application of an inspired writer without considering the primary intent of the passage under discussion.

VTH appears to make the same mistake in his interpretation of the harvest as his interpretation of the Kingdom and Ezek 9. He seems to try to systematize SDA eschatology to support his understanding of Scripture. The teachings of the 144,000, the Kingdom, and Ezek 9 are all read into his teaching of the harvest of Matt 13. The fact that VTH does not follow the basic hermeneutical rules for good parable interpretation may account for his misapplication of the harvest parable.

The notion of a double harvest or separation (like the sealing of Ezek 9) and a double close of probation for

[1]SDAs (at least EGW) also applied Ezek 9 to the last days literally, though EGW, applied only the sealing, and not the slaughter, to a time before and up to the close of probation.

humanity does not exist in Matt 13. VTH's insistence that the harvest takes place prior to the close of probation is contrary to Scripture and the writings of EGW and cannot be supported by SDAs. While VTH's version of the harvest may seem appealing to SDAs because of its systematic integration with other doctrines such as the 144,000, it does not hold up to close biblical scrutiny. VTH is correct in pointing out the necessity for a cleansing to take place in the church. EGW refers to this as a period of "shaking" to take place in God's church.

> The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause. The angel said, 'Think ye that any will be compelled to sacrifice? No, no. It must be a free-will offering.[1]
>
> I saw that we are now in the shaking time. Satan is working with all his power to wrest souls from the hand of Christ.[2]
>
> We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands.[3]

However, the shaking E. G. White refers to is not the same event as the harvest of Matt 13 as VTH had argued. The argument for a twofold harvest (the 144,000 and the

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[1] *EW*, 50, 51.

[2] *1T*, 429.

[3] *6T*, 332.

great multitudes) in Matt 13 fails to meet the fifth principle of parable interpretation whereby the interpreter should avoid inserting into a parable meaning that is not warranted by the parable itself.

In contrast to the teachings of VTH, EGW notes that while a large class of unsanctified church members will abandon their faith,[1] "their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks."[2] Hence, while VTH applied EGW's counsels on the shaking directly to the 144,000 and the great multitude, he likewise equated the shaking with the harvest of Matt 13. This interpretation is not in harmony with EGW, who applied the harvest to the period after the close of probation.[3]

While the parable of Matt 13, as VTH has suggested, may imply two types of people in the church, it seems to be speaking of the universal church at the end of the age when the angels are sent to bind the wicked for the furnace (vv. 41,42). Interpreting the Kingdom (church) narrowly or reading into the parable selected passages like Ezek 9, Isa 63, or Dan 2 is problematic.

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[1]*GC*, 608.

[2]*EW*, 271; see also *1T*, 182.

[3]*COL*, 72.

In like manner, the idea promoted by VTH of two probationary periods does not fit into the parable. If this were the case, probation would be closed first for the SDA Church and later for the rest of the world. This concept was the basis upon which VTH insisted that the harvest must take place prior to the close of probation. For SDAs the "harvest" (v. 39) "begins at the close of probationary time."[1] This emphasis is more consistent with the eschatological teachings of Scripture.

[1]"Harvest" (Matt 13:30), *SDABC*, 5:408.

# CHAPTER IV

# OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## Overall Summary

This dissertation has examined the apocalyptic eschatology of DSDAs. The investigation sought to fill a theological gap in SDA studies by analyzing the historical background and core theological doctrines taught by Victor T. Houteff. Because the writings of VTH are a rich mine for theological reflection, this investigation does not claim to be a full and exhaustive research of his writings. However, this preliminary work provides a springboard for further research among SDA scholars by documenting relevant research material for further exploration.

The research began with an introductory chapter which outlined the problem, purpose and relevance of this investigation, definitions of terms important to the study, delimitations, methodology and procedure. Two main purposes are fulfilled in this dissertation. First, it contributes to SDA understanding of DSDA apocalypticism by investigating the historical milieu and the foundational principles that may have influenced the formulation of VTH's eschatology.

Second, the study is a critical analyses and scholarly evaluation of VTH's core eschatological views providing an objective documentation of his apocalypticism, understanding of Scripture and use of the writings of EGW on these issues.

In chapter I, a survey of VTH's life, history of Davidianism and other millennial groups, and a comparison of selected eschatological views among premillennialists was conducted. Reconstructing this background is problematic because of the lack of biographical information provided by VTH. However, this process was deemed an essential task in order to understand the apocalypticism of VTH. His eschatology was based largely on the doctrine of the 144,000.

From this theological foundation, VTH developed the ideas of the Davidic Kingdom, the judgment of Ezek 9, and the harvest. His teachings were systematized into what he believed were genuine SDA eschatology. However, the influences of British and dispensationalist premillennialism was obvious in his works. He stressed miracles as a phenomena characteristic of the remnant and adopted consistent literalism in interpreting prophecy. In his works many OT prophecies were applied directly to the SDA Church.

In chapter II, the theological, ecclesiological and eschatological foundations of VTH were explored. He had a high view of the Scripture as the Word of God. He argued that such could only be understood by the mode of inspired interpretation. This in turn led to his belief that the SRod had a vital role in unraveling the meaning of Scripture. This meant that whatever the SRod interpreted of the OT or the NT was inspired revelations of God for the remnant.

VTH also had a high opinion of EGW's work. He condemned the SDA leadership for what he perceived to be their neglect in following her teachings. On many occasions He would cite E. G. White out of context and at times used a "cut and paste" method obscuring the primary meaning of her messages. This may be related to the fact that he purported himself as having the remanifestation of the prophetic gift starting in 1930.

Houteff used the analogical method to build his eschatology. He frequently used typology and adopted the biblicist method of historicism. However, his preoccupation with Israel (144,000) led him to overlook the importance of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation.

Houteff's view of the church influenced his apocalyptic interpretation. Although he viewed the SDA

Church as ordained by God, he postulated that because of its Laodicean state the church required a thorough purging. Thus, the SRod's mission to the SDA Church was to bring about a revival and reformation through a correct understanding of the 144,000. The Laodicean state of the SDA Church was used to justify the use of tithes and offerings to support the SRod movement. This was based on the presupposition that his movement was ordained by God for a special task within the SDA Church. He maintained that the DSDA movement was the "eleventh hour movement" which would bring to a climactic end the work of the gospel on earth; and was an "upshoot" from the dying SDA Church. As the result of a spiritual sifting, a remnant 144,000 would emerge from within Adventism as God's servants during the loud cry.

VTH's apocalypticism was deeply rooted in his understanding of the 144,000. The 144,000 who were sealed from within the SDA Church were to become "living saints." As the "remnant" people, the 144,000 are those who remain after the mighty sifting to take place within the church. The remnant were those to be used as instruments to bring in the great multitude which no one can number. The 144,000 imbued by the "miracle-working" power of the "latter rain" will finish the work on earth. The great multitudes of

people who join the SDA Church during the loud cry are distinct from the 144,000 yet are also part of the translated group of believers when Jesus returns the second time.

Chapter III dealt specifically with VTH's apocalypticism which grew out of his understanding of the 144,000. These were the concepts of the Davidic kingdom, the sealing in Ezek 9, the judgment for the living, and the harvest of Matt 13. VTH's views of the Davidic Kingdom closely resembled the teachings held by the dispensationalist movement.

VTH taught that the OT prophecies regarding the establishment of the Davidic kingdom will be fulfilled in the remnant 144,000 before the second coming of Christ. This meant that the 144,000 would literally return to Palestine, where Christ would establish His throne, upon which VTH would reign. The return of the 144,000 must precede the mass migration of the multitudes of people from all nations to the mountain of the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, will not only become the center for world evangelism but also the central place of refuge for the nations of the world. VTH used OT passages such as Dan 2, Isa 2, 4, Joel 2, and many others to support his notion of

the missionary expansion of the Kingdom in the time of the end.

VTH's understanding of Ezek 9 and the judgment of the living intertwined with his understanding of the 144,000. Thus Ezek 9 and Rev 7 were integrated in the writings of VTH. They alluded to judgment for those in Adventism who become the "firstfruits" of the harvest. Only the faithful within the SDA Church, namely, those who "sigh and cried" (Ezek 9:4) against the evils in Adventism will receive the seal of God. This means that the only SDAs who receive the seal will be those who heed the message taught by the SRod movement.

The sealing was to be a time of "judgment" (cf. Dan 7:10), a "cleansing of the sanctuary" (Dan 8:14), or the "purifying of His temple" (Mal 3:1-3), used synonymously by VTH with a mighty sifting to take place within the SDA Church. Those who fail to receive the seal of protection within the SDA Church will be separated from God's people and slain (Ezek 9:5,6).

Houteff's interpretation of the slaughtering among SDAs (Ezek 9), of persecution, of confrontation with government over obedience to God's law and potential martyrdom (Rev 13), and of final deliverance for God's people (Dan 12:1) was a notion that no doubt influenced

David Koresh.[1] This may explain why Koresh had a stock pile of weapons at Mt. Carmel in preparation for a final showdown with the forces of evil.[2] Perhaps an event of this nature was God's way of helping them spread His truth.[3] The type of literalism adopted by dispensationalists, when applied to nonapocalyptic literature as VTH did, may lead to a disastrous ending, as was the case in the Waco fiasco of 1993.[4]

Prophetic aspirations were a common characteristic in the Davidian tradition beginning with Houteff and continuing with Florence, Ben Roden, George and then Koresh.[5] But whereas Houteff saw himself as the antitypical David, by the time Koresh took leadership at Mt Carmel, he identified himself with Christ the "Lamb of God."

The eschatological views of VTH were tied to his understanding of the 144,000. This was true of his concept

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[1]Haus and Hamblin, 148.

[2]Tabor and Gallagher, 100-03. Hibbert, 186, notes that some have even suggested that Koresh was expecting a showdown from the government hence he was preparing for it. However, as Carol Moore has pointed out, the arms were only for self-defense against an attack. See Carol Moore, *The Davidian Massacre: Disturbing Questions About Waco Which Must Be Asked* (Franklin, TN: Legacy Communications, 1995), 26.

[3]Carol Moore, 3.

[4]See "Methods of Bible Study," in Appendix 3.

[5]Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium*, 204-06.

of the harvest. According to VTH, the harvest was to take place in two phases. First, the harvest of the 144,000 resulting in the idea of a "purified church" prior to the loud cry. Second, was the harvest of great multitudes of people. These redeemed saints would join God's purified church in preparation for translation to heaven. Support for this ingathering was drawn from the OT (Isa 60:11,13,14; Mic 4:2; Ezek 37:23) and the NT (Rev 7:9). The harvest (Matt 13:30) was an event that was not to take place at the second coming of Jesus but rather to be fulfilled in the SDA Church prior to the close of probation. This promoted the idea of a dual probationary period, one for SDAs and a later one for the rest of the world. From the foregoing analysis and discussion, the lack of biblical and EGW support for VTH's views on the 144,000 appears to have resulted in the conclusions VTH had reached on other issues discussed here.

## Conclusions and Contributions Attempted in this Study

This dissertation attempts to contribute to SDA scholarship and understanding of the DSDA movement in three specific areas: (1) the historical milieu and millennial influences on VTH's apocalyptic formulation; (2) The foundational theological, ecclesiological, and

eschatological principles of Houteff; and, (3) analysis and theological critique of Houteff's apocalyptic eschatology.

## The Historical Milieu and Millennial Influences on VTH's Apocalyptic Formulation

This study places VTH's life sketch against a historical milieu prior to his becoming an Adventist and his subsequent rejection of the SDA Church. It reveals that Houteff may have been influenced by his upbringing in the Orthodox church. While no clear evidence is available to provide an explicit connection with the Orthodox theology of apophaticism, VTH's ideas of inspiration and self-infallibility may seem to have originated from this early religious affiliation.

The study suggests that the idea of infallibility was not unique to VTH, but became characteristic of all the subsequent leaders of the Davidian tradition. All Davidian leaders claimed the prophetic office and held to the belief of their own inspiration and infallibility. Florence predicted that April 22, 1959, would be the time when judgment would begin in the SDA Church. Roden declared himself to be the new voice of inspiration. Both Lois and George Roden perceived themselves to be divinely ordained by God. David Koresh saw himself as Christ reincarnated in sinful form. This study alluded to the theological thread

from Orthodoxy, through VTH and the Davidian tradition. Both the ideas of infallibility and the succession of David on the earthly throne were inherent throughout the history of Davidianism. This finding may provide some answers to the tragic events of Waco in 1993.

The comparison of millennial expectations among selected premillennialists may also be significant for the SDA understanding of DSDAs. The results suggest that the core millennial concepts of VTH seem related to certain views that were prevalent among British literalists and dispensational premillennialists. Certain aspects such as "consistent literalism" and insistence of OT prophecies being fulfilled literally in Palestine were indicative of the teachings of these groups.

From the comparative tables of selected eschatological views among premillennial groups, the areas of similarity and difference became apparent. The tables show that while the views of VTH developed from his SDA affiliation, his apocalypticism also reflected the views of British literalism and dispensationlists, particularly in his understanding of the 144,000 and the Davidic kingdom.

## The Foundational Principles of Houteff: Theological, Ecclesiological, and Eschatological

While VTH did not make any explicit claim to any method of doing theology, his regard for Scripture and the writings of EGW, and the way in which he understood them, help one to understand his methods and principles of exegesis. The analysis of VTH's theological, ecclesiological, and eschatological perspectives are meant as contributions to SDA scholarship.

### Theological Observations

First, the analysis of the role of Scripture in the writings of VTH suggests (1) that he assumed that the correct interpretation of certain portions of the Scripture was made known only to him. This appears to have led him into many areas of scriptural speculation. (2) That VTH lacked any formal theological training and may have unintentionally ignored the basic rules of prophetic interpretation. And, (3) that VTH also appears to have made the mistake of treating both classical and apocalyptic literature alike. This resulted in his insistence on the fulfillment of classical prophecies in the same manner as apocalyptic literature.

Second, although VTH insisted on upholding the Scripture as the ultimate test of truth, he nevertheless,

interpreted the Bible through the lense of his understanding of EGW's writing. The writings of EGW, in that sense, became the predominant source of his theological reflection. His criticism and call for reformation within the SDA Church grew largely from his understanding of EGW. The study cites statements in which VTH was at variance with EGW, where he used the "cut and paste" method, and where he ignored contextual factors provided in the writings of EGW. The study noted that this attitude may be accredited to VTH's opinion of himself as an inspired interpreter of Scripture and EGW.

Third, this study describes the theological approaches used by VTH. Although a variety of approaches may be observed in his works, three main methods are identified. VTH used the analogical method whereby scripture is used to harmonize his theory of the 144,000. In like manner, this study identified VTH's heavy dependence on typology and a modified historicist premillennialism. Unfortunately, as this study confirms, VTH did not use these time honored methods in a faultless manner.

**Ecclesiological Observations**

Two main areas of discussion in this section of the study are meant as a contribution to DSDA studies: the analysis of VTH's views on mission and organizational

structures, and the issues of revival and reformation. Concerning the former, this study confirms that the views of VTH on reform, the use of tithe, and the SRod movement as God's instrument in the last days are not in harmony with the teachings of Scripture and the writings of EGW. This study also finds the teachings of VTH and the SRod to be in disagreement with the SDA Church and with EGW, and the SRod to be as an "offshoot" movement of the SDA Church.

**Eschatological Observations**

The historical biblical and theological approach adopted in this section of the study in analyzing VTH's eschatological foundation is meant as another basic contribution to DSDA studies. Previous SDA literature on DSDAs took a rather confined comparative approach between VTH and EGW. This study suggests (1) that certain claims of VTH regarding the 144,000 of Rev 7, such as, that the sealing which began in 1929, his de-emphasizing of the Sabbath seal, and claiming that the 144,000 are sealed before the loud cry, lack biblical and theological validity. (2) The preliminary findings of this study concerning the "remnant" concept in the OT and the NT stands in contrast to VTH's view of the 144,000 as a remnant from among SDAs. And, (3), the same holds true of the treatment of the 144,000 in relation to the latter rain, the loud cry, and

the great multitude. The study shows that VTH's position regarding these issues may be problematic from a Scriptural and theological viewpoint.

## Analysis and Theological Critique of Houteff's Apocalyptic Eschatology

The major contribution of this section is an analysis of the nature and theological core of the views of VTH. This study attempted to fill a gap in theological reflection in SDA theological investigation. This critique affects three core areas of VTH's eschatology discussed in chapter III of this dissertation: (1) The Apocalyptic Kingdom of David; (2) Ezek 9 and Judgment of the Living; and, (3) the Wheat and Tares.

### The Apocalyptic Kingdom of David

This section attempted to contribute by exploring the teachings of VTH regarding the kingdom of David in comparison with SDA teachings. From this analysis several conclusions have been reached.

First, in contrast to the notion portrayed by VTH that the time for the setting up of the Kingdom takes place prior to the loud cry of the third angel of Revelation 14, when the 144,000 are sealed and become the first inhabitants of the Kingdom of David. This study shows that, according to SDA beliefs, the Kingdom referred to in OT prophecy will

meet its ultimate fulfillment at the end of the millennium in the earth made new.

SDAs have a high regard for Scripture and legitimate hermeneutical procedures in understanding the messages of the prophets.[1] Using this basic approach to the understanding of Scripture and EGW, it has been argued that although God's promises to ancient Israel in the OT will be fulfilled in spiritual Israel (His church) today, not every element of OT prophecy will be realized until its ultimate fulfillment in the new heavens and the new earth.

Second, this study also disagreed with the conclusion reached by VTH that the Kingdom of David would first be established as a literal kingdom on earth in Palestine, from which the 144,000 would launch the loud cry of the third angel and harvest a great multitude of people who gather in Jerusalem to anticipate the second coming of Christ. The arguments used by VTH based upon his understanding of OT prophecies (such as Jer 30:3 and Zech 14:4,5), are seen by SDAs as a direct contradiction of the teachings of EGW. EGW pointed to the danger of a literal return to Palestine as the work of Satan.

Third, the opinion of VTH that the OT prophecies relating to Israel teach a terrestrial Kindom is not favored

[1]See "Methods of Bible Study," in Appendix 3.

in this study. The basic reason for his misunderstanding of OT prophecy may have been rooted in his hermeneutical procedures. VTH, seems to have overlook that OT promises that were applicable to the Christian church were "to be fulfilled *in principle* but not necessarily in every detail."[1]

This essential principle of interpretation, applied by SDA scholars and EGW herself, was neglected by VTH. For that reason, familiar passages in the OT, such as Isa 52:2; Ezek 33:11-16; 34:22-24; 36:23-38; Joel 3:1,2; and Mic 4:1-4, were used by VTH in such a way as to support his philosophical understanding of eschatology. Such an approach to the understanding of OT prophecy and EGW, as pointed out in this study, fails to account for the primary intention of the biblical writings and EGW.

Fourth, this study took issue with the opinion promoted by VTH concerning an antitypical David to rule an earthly kingdom in Palestine. This teaching of VTH was later adopted by later Davidian generations and may have provided the theoretical basis upon which David Koresh built his theory of himself as the "sinful messiah" of the world. This study suggests that the OT promises regarding the Davidic throne (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 132:11; Isa 7:13,14; Mic 5:2;

[1]"Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *SDABC*, 4:37. (Italics supplied)

cf. Luke 1:32; John 7:42, etc.) will meet their ultimate fulfillment in Christ Himself. This means, in contrast to the teachings of VTH, that there will be no human substitute to rule the Davidic throne until Christ Himself returns as the long awaited King of the universe.

Fifth, although VTH may seem to have succeeded in presenting his apocalypticism in a systematic fashion by incorporating elements of SDA eschatology into his theory of the 144,000, the crux of his overall message does not fit into the SDA understanding of the biblical scenario of end-time events. This is true in particular with his teaching on the expansion of the earthly kingdom. In order to justify his eschatology, VTH interpreted the prophecies of Dan 2:35,44-45; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 14:6,7; Joel 2, to infer that the OT prophecies predicted the phase of the expansion of the Palestinian Kingdom during the time of the loud cry.

This study finds Houteff's views wanting for two reasons: (1) VTH seems to confuse the apocalyptic prophecy of Daniel 2 specifically relating to the catastrophic coming of Christ and the end of this world, with classical prophecies relating to the restoration of ancient Israel. On the one hand, the apocalyptic insistence of Dan 2 based upon the internal evidence of the writer strongly suggests that the Kingdom that overthrows all other kingdoms is not

of this earth (v. 44). The partial fulfillment of classical prophecies based upon their conditional nature, indicates that they still need to find their ultimate consummation. This study upholds belief in the climactic consummation of these prophecies when Christ returns the second time to establish the eternal kingdom. And, (2), VTH disturbed the chronology of SDA eschatology by inserting into it his own theory of the kingdom. VTH's kingdom theory has some similarities with dispensationalism though they are not indentical. This study attempts to show the way of both dispensationalism and the teachings of VTH on the establishment of the kingdom in Palestine are contrary to SDA views and to EGW.

**Ezekiel 9 and Judgment of the Living**

The theological assessment of Ezek 9 and judgment of the living in this study attempted another contribution to DSDA studies. It was found that the major points of emphasis by VTH could not be supported by SDAs. Several conclusions have been reached in this section of the study.

While SDAs agree with VTH that both Ezek 9 and Rev 7 refer to the sealing of the servants of God, the position taken by VTH that there is a twofold cleansing work, first of the 144,000 then of the great multitudes of Rev 7, may be

hard to justify. SDAs currently believe that the 144,000 represent the end-time saints who triumph over the image of the beast (Rev 13:11-18) while the great multitude is proleptic symbolizing the remaining triumphant saints of all ages.

This study concurs with VTH on certain conditions necessary for obtaining the seal of Ezek 9, as they were drawn chiefly from EGW statements regarding Ezek 9. VTH did not seem to understand EGW's application of certain aspects of OT prophecy. E. G. White was always careful in her application of Scripture and would often take into account the biblical writers' intended meaning when the prophecy was first given. Her application of certain aspects of Ezek 9 were no doubt applied to the conditions of the church and the need for reform. However, other aspects of her application were specifically placed within the context of the future.

VTH did not seem to distinguish between the various ways which EGW applied the OT prophecies. Houteff's direct application and insistence of a literal fulfillment of every aspect of Ezek 9 to the SDA Church is not supported in this study. While the call for reformation is an essential element of the remnant church of the end time, one must at the same time be wary of reform movements that discredit the

workings of God in His church by labeling it as a doomed denomination. Such a position of extremity places the SRod as an offshoot of Adventism.

While VTH has accomplished much in trying to reconcile other facets of SDA beliefs into his core presuppositions, this study has not been able to establish his teachings to be consistent with SDA beliefs or with EGW. His views on two future comings of Christ, first in an invisible manner for judgment (Ezek 9; Mal 3:1-3) within Adventism, the second in a visible form for judgment of the living wicked (Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:16) may appeal, particularly to Reformist Adventists, who like VTH may see little good within the SDA Church. Yet, this contradicts EGW regarding the premillennial return of Christ as a single event that takes place at the end of world history.

In like manner, the insistence by VTH on a literal slaying or separation of the unfaithful SDAs before the close of probation is shown in this chapter to be in disagreement with SDA beliefs. This study alluded to the danger of this view and the possibility of it being the undergirding principle which resulted in the fatal events of Waco in 1993. The position taken here is that the sifting within the SDAs will take place prior to the close of human probation and that the slaughter symbolized in Ezek 9 is an

event that takes place after probation is closed leading up to and climaxing at the second coming of Christ.

**Wheat and Tares**

Finally, VTH's teaching on the parable of the wheat and the tares directs attention to the importance of parable interpretation. The preliminary discussion on issues relating to parables and the principles necessary for good parable interpretation was meant as a contribution to DSDA studies. Through inference from VTH's understanding of the harvest in this parable, several conclusions have been reached in this chapter.

VTH's proposition that the "harvest" referred to the purification and the sealing of the 144,000 prior to the close of probation is not convincing. Both Scripture and EGW refer to the harvest as an event to transpire at the end of the world when Christ returns. This study also identified VTH's failure to recognize the different uses of the term "harvest" in Scripture. The term is used both missiologically and of the final judgment at the advent of Christ. Therefore, VTH's interchangeable use of the term in different contexts ignored the principles of parable interpretation and resulted in him misunderstanding the harvest parable.

The idea of two separate harvests, one for the 144,000 and another for the great multitudes, negates the idea of a general close of probation for everyone on earth. It implies that the door of probation closes first for the SDA Church and later for the rest of the world. This investigation affirms the consistent teaching of both Scripture and EGW that the harvest is a single event that takes place at the second advent and not prior to and during the loud cry as postulated by VTH.

The idea of two separations in the harvest is part and parcel of VTH's teaching on the 144,000. Accordingly Houteff tied this teaching neatly into his understanding of Dan 2, Rev 7, Ezek 9 and other OT prophecies relating to the sifting among God's people. However, it has been concluded that the selected biblical references used by VTH were either taken out of context or literally applied to fit into VTH's preconceived ideas. This study has shown the lack of EGW support for these views of VTH. In fact, in spite of VTH's allegations of supporting evidence in EGW's writings, she spoke quite clearly upholding the opposite views. She consistently taught that the harvest was left to the angels at the end of the world.

The reasons given by VTH for the close of probation and the harvest, namely, the support of Ezek 9, Matt 13, and

Matt 25, illustrate how VTH construed these references to support his theory. Again, the references used by VTH clearly support the view held in this paper that the events they prefigured (the slaughtering, harvest, and separation) take place after the close of probation and not prior to its closure. Clearly the views of VTH are incompatible with SDA beliefs.

Finally, the fact that Houteff used the Bible and the writings of EGW freely does not by itself garantee that he was entirely faithful to SDA theology. Therefore, the SRod movement may be correctly seen as an offshoot from Adventism and sometimes in direct opposition to the teachings of Scripture, and the writings of EGW, as understood by SDAs.

As earlier indicated, the writings of VTH are a rich mine for continued research. Several suggestions may include a detailed and separate investigation of each of the core eschatological issues of VTH, the role of inspiration in the writings of VTH, and the theological connections between VTH and David Koresh which may have triggered the events of Waco.

# APPENDIX 1

# FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF DSDAs

[Exhibit A: Fundamental Beliefs of DSDAs]

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF
DAVIDIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS[1]

Emerging in 1930 from within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination ("the church of the Laodiceans"), the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Association has ever been committed to the prophetic work (predicted in Isaiah 52:1) of preparing the Laodicean church, the last with the "tares among the wheat," for the final proclamation of the gospel "in all the world." Matt. 24:14.

This Association, in common with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, holds "certain fundamental beliefs, the principal features of which, together with a portion of the Scriptural references upon which they are based," are originally summarized as follows:

"1. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain any all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice. 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

"2. That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19.

"3. That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on the earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our Example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, died for our sins on the cross, was raised

[1]The *Fundamental Beliefs of Davidian Seventh-day Adventists* is taken from Houteff, *TG* 2, no. 10 (Reprint, 2001): 21-31.

from the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us. John 1:1, 14; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2; 4:14-16, 7:25.

"4. That every person in order to obtain salvation must experience the new birth; that this comprises an entire transformation of life and character by the recreative power of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 3:16; Matt. 18:3; Acts 2:37-39.

"5. That baptism is an ordinance of the Christian Church and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins. By its observance faith is shown in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That the proper form of baptism is by immersion. Rom. 6:1-6; Acts 16:30-33.

"6. That the will of God as it relates to moral conduct is comprehended in His law the ten commandments; that these are great moral, unchangeable precepts, binding upon all men, in every age. Ex. 20:1-17.

"7. That the fourth commandment of this unchangeable law requires the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. This holy institution is at the same time a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification, a sign of the believer's rest from his own works of sin, and his entrance into the rest of soul which Jesus promises to those who come to Him. Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Heb. 4:1-10.

"8. That the law of ten commandments points out sin, the penalty of which is death. The law cannot save the transgressor from his sin, nor impart power to keep him from sinning. In infinite love and mercy, God provides a way whereby this may be done. He furnishes a substitute, even Christ the Righteous One, to die in man's stead, making 'Him to sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' 2 Cor. 5:21. That one is justified, not by obedience to the law, but by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. By accepting Christ, man is reconciled to God, justified by His blood for the sins of the past, and saved from the power of sin by his indwelling life. Thus the gospel becomes 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Rom. 1:16. This experience is wrought by the divine agency of the Holy Spirit, who convinces of sin and leads to the Sin-Bearer, inducting the believer into the new covenant relationship, where the law of God is written on his heart, and through the enabling power of the indwelling Christ, his life is

brought into conformity to the divine precepts. The honor and merit of this wonderful transformation belong wholly to Christ. 1 John 2:1, 2; 3:4; Rom. 3:20; 5:8-10; 7:7; Eph. 2:8-10; 3:17; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 8:8-12.

"9. That God 'only hath immortality.' 1 Tim. 6:16. Mortal man possesses a nature inherently sinful and dying. Eternal life is the gift of God through faith in Christ. Rom. 6:23. 'He that hath the Son hath life.' 1 John 5:12. Immortality is bestowed upon the righteous at the second coming of Christ, when the righteous dead are raised from the grave and the living righteous are translated to meet the Lord. Then it is that those accounted faithful 'put on immortality.' 1 Cor. 15:51-55.

"10. That the condition of man in death is one of unconsciousness. That all men, good and evil alike, remain in the grave from death to the resurrection. Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 5:28, 29.

"11. That there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a thousand years later, at the close of the millennium. John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:5-10.

"12. That the finally impenitent, including Satan, the author of sin, will, by the fires of the last day, be reduced to a state of non-existence, becoming as though they had not been, thus purging God's universe of sin and sinners. Rom. 6:23; Mal. 4:1-3; Rev. 20:9, 10; Obadiah 16.

"13. That no prophetic period [meaning prophetic time-setting of the exact date of Christ's coming] is given in the Bible to reach to the second advent, but that the longest one, the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14, terminated in 1844, and brought us to an event called the cleansing of the sanctuary.

"14. That the true sanctuary, of which the tabernacle on earth was a type, is the temple of God in Heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8 and onward, and of which the Lord Jesus, as our great high priest, is minister; and that the priestly work of our Lord is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priest of the former dispensation; that this heavenly sanctuary is the one to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14; its cleansing being, as in the type, a work of judgment, beginning with the

entrance of Christ as the high priest upon the judgment phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary foreshadowed in the earthly service of cleansing the sanctuary on the day of atonement. This work of judgment in the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844. Its completion will close human probation.

"15. That God, in the time of the judgment and in accordance with His uniform dealing with the human family in warning them of coming events vitally affecting their destiny (Amos 3:6, 7), sends forth a proclamation of the approach of the second advent of Christ; that this work is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; and that their three-fold message brings to view a work of reform to prepare a people to meet Him at His coming.

"16. That the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, synchronizing with the period of the proclamation of the message of Revelation 14, is a time of investigative judgment, first with reference to the dead, and secondly, with reference to the living. This investigative judgment determines who of the myriads sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation. 1 Peter 4:17, 18; Dan 7:9, 10; Rev 14:6, 7; Luke 20:35.

"17. That the followers of Christ should be a godly people, not adopting the unholy maxims nor conforming to the unrighteous ways of the world, not loving its sinful pleasures nor countenancing its follies. That the believer should recognize his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore he should clothe that body in neat, modest, dignified apparel. Further, that in eating and drinking and in his entire course of conduct he should shape his life as becomes a follower of the meek and lowly Master. Thus the believer will be led to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, tobacco, and other narcotics, and the avoidance of every body and soul defiling habit and practice. 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 9:25; 10:31; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 John 2:6.

"18. That the divine principle of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel is an acknowledgment of God's ownership in our lives, and that we are stewards who must render account to Him of all that He has committed to our possession. Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 9:6-15.

"19. That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ. Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 1 Cor. 1:5-7.

"20. That the second coming of Christ is the great hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel and plan of salvation. His coming will be literal, personal, and visible. Many important events will be associated with His return, such as the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of the wicked, the purification of the earth, the reward of the righteous, the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. The almost complete fulfillment of various lines of prophecy, particularly those found in the books of Daniel and Revelation, with existing conditions in the physical, social, industrial, political, and religious worlds, indicates that Christ's coming 'is near, even at the door.' Matt. 24:33. The exact time of that event has not been foretold. Believers are exhorted to be ready, for 'in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man' (Matt. 24:44) will be revealed. Luke 21:25-27; 17:26-30; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; James 5:1-8; Joel 39-16; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Dan. 7:27; Matt. 24:36, 44.

"21. That the millennial reign of Christ covers the period between the first and the second resurrections, during which time the saints of all ages will live with their blessed Redeemer in Heaven. At the end of the millennium, the Holy City with all the saints will descend to the earth. The wicked, raised in the second resurrection, will go up on the breath of the earth with Satan at their head to compass the camp of the saints, when fire will come down from God out of Heaven and devour them. In the conflagration which destroys Satan and his host, the earth itself will be regenerated and cleansed from the effects of the curse. Thus the universe of God will be purified from the foul blot of sin. Rev. 20; Zech. 14:1-4; 2 Peter 3:7-10.

"22. That God will make all things new. The earth, restored to its pristine beauty, will become forever the abode of the saints of the Lord. The promise to Abraham, that through Christ he and his seed should possess the earth throughout the endless ages of eternity, will be fulfilled. 'The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the

saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' Dan. 7:27. Christ, the Lord, will reign supreme and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea will ascribe 'blessing, and honor, and glory, and power,' unto 'Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.' Gen. 13:14-17: Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:6-16; Matt. 5:5; Isaiah 35; Rev. 21:1-7; 5:13; Dan. 7:27." *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination,* 1947 Edition, pp. 4-6.

IN ADDITION to these fundamental tenets of faith held in common with the Seventh-day Adventists, the Davidian Association holds:

1. That the prophetic gift in the Seventh-day Adventist church (through the medium of which the church was brought forth in 1844 and nurtured and preserved for seven decades) ceased its manifestation in 1915 and was not remanifested until 1930; and that this cessation and this remanifestation are paralleled by the cessation of the prophetic gift in the Old Testament and the remanifestation of it in the New.

2. That the present manifestation was timed to the 430-year prophecy of Ezekiel 4, and that it is the "addition" anticipated in *Early Writings*, pg. 277.

3. That it was manifested anew in the closing work for the church to effect the sealing of the 144,000 servants of God (*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pg. 266), and to give power and force (*Early Writings*, pg. 277) to the Third Angel's Message (Rev. 14:6-11) so that the 144,000 might be empowered to accomplish the closing work for the world, and to gather all their brethren out of all nations (Isa. 66:19, 20; Rev. 18:4).

4. That the destruction of the tares from among the first fruits of the living (Matt. 13:30, 48, 49; Ezek. 9:6, 7) results in the purification of the church.

5. That immediately thereafter, the angels let loose the four winds (Rev. 7:1-3), whereupon ensues the time of trouble and Michael's standing up to deliver from it, all whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Dan. 12:1).

6. That the angel's letting loose the four winds to blow over the four corners of the earth (Rev. 7:1), does not anticipate a world war but rather a world-wide decree

enforced throughout Babylon by the image-beast, and that then no one may buy or sell save he who worships "the image." Rev. 13:15-17.

7. That subsequently, the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) for the 144,000, the sons of Jacob, logically develops on their way home (Gen. 32:1, 24) to the land of their fathers (Ezek. 36:28; 37:21, 25).

8. That the foregoing epochal event shall cause the 144,000 to have their names changed as did their father, Jacob (Gen. 32:28), and as a body receive a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name (Isa. 62:2).

9. That these events shall ultimate in the setting up of the Kingdom (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4: Ezek. 37), wherein the 144,000, those who follow the Lamb "whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4), shall stand with Him on Mt. Zion (Rev. 14:1), and there "receive the forces of the Gentiles." Isa. 60:5, 11.

10. That with this sequence of events will ensue the Loud Cry of the angel that lightens the earth with his glory (Rev. 18:1), as that other Voice cries, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. 18:4.

11. That is response to this call, many nations will say: "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Mic. 4:2.

12. That the Voice will cease to cry when all the saints shall have been gathered out of all nations. Then shall "the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Amos 8:11, 12.

13. That then will follow the dissolution of the world-wide organization of the image of the beast (Rev. 19:1-3), the close of the investigative judgment of the living (Rev. 15:5-8), the end of probationary time (Rev.

22:11), and the pouring out of the seven last plagues upon the wicked. (Rev. 16).

14. That under the seventh plague, the hosts arrayed for the battle of Armageddon will fight with, and will be decimated by, the armies of Heaven (*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pg. 406), and that Christ shall appear in all His glory, destroy the remaining wicked, resurrect the righteous dead (1 Thess. 4:15-16), and usher in the millennium (Rev. 20:5).

15. That for a little season (Rev. 20:3), a hundred years (Isa. 65:20), after the millennium, the wicked shall live again and then finally be destroyed by fire (Rev. 20:9), whereupon all things shall be renewed, and God's original plan shall proceed to perfect fulfillment in an uninterrupted eternity of heavenly joy (Rev. 21:4).

# APPENDIX 2

# WARNINGS AGAINST ERROR

[Exhibit B: Warnings Against Error]

WARNINGS AGAINST ERROR[1]

During the history of Seventh-day Adventists both individuals and offshoot groups have risen from time to time and have persisted in propagating on their own responsibility opinions that they urged God's people to accept as new light, in some cases purporting to have received these views by the prophetic gift. Their opinions have been examined carefully and prayerfully, and found to be unsound. The case of the Shepherd's Rod teaching is but one instance of several in which unsound doctrines have been presented to us as new light. Some other individuals and small dissident groups are doing a similar thing. And as the end draws nearer and nearer, we shall see more of the same. Therefore, we present the following paragraphs of timely counsels and warnings given to us by the pen of E. G. White regarding the need of ever being alert and on guard against error arrayed in the garb of truth.

**Be Watchful for New Light**

"We shall never reach a period when there is no increased light for us." "'The Darkness Comprehended It Not,'" in *The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1890, p. 337. "Whatever may be man's intellectual advancement, let him not for a moment think that there is no need of thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. As a people we are called individually to be students of prophecy. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others." - *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 708.

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[1]This document is a supplemented material provided by the Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Com on DLit*, *SR-Examined* (March, 1956), 58-63. The entire text is included in this appendix.

## Be Careful as to What Is Presented as New Light

"Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming upon the earth. As the coming of Christ draws nigh, he will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them. Men and women will arise professing to have some new light or some new revelation whose tendency is to unsettle faith in the old landmarks. Their doctrines will not bear the test of God's word, yet souls will be deceived. False reports will be circulated, and some will be taken in this snare. They will believe these rumors and in their turn will repeat them, and thus a link will be formed connecting them with the archdeceiver." - *Ibid.*, p. 295.

"Let none seek to tear away the foundations of our faith,-the foundations that were laid at the beginning of our work, by prayerful study of the word and by revelation. Upon these foundations we have been building for more than fifty years. Men may suppose that they have found a new way, that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid; but this is a great deception." - *Gospel Workers*, p. 30.

"Let not erroneous theories receive countenance from the people who ought to be standing firm on the platform of eternal truth. God calls upon us to hold firmly to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority." -*Ibid.*, p. 308.

## Beware of Those Who Misuse the Testimonies

"Those who start up to proclaim a message on their own individual responsibility, who, while claiming to be taught and led of God, still make it their special work to tear down that which God has been for years building up, are not doing the will of God. Be it known that these men are on the side of the great deceiver. Believe them not. They are allying themselves with the enemies of God and the truth. They will deride the order of the ministry as a system of priestcraft. From such turn away, have no fellowship with their message, however much they may quote the 'Testimonies' and seek to intrench themselves behind them. Receive them not; for God has not given them this work to do. The result of such work will be unbelief in the 'Testimonies,' and as far as possible, they will make of none effect the work that I have for years been doing." - *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 51.

"Do not, when referring to the *Testimonies*, feel it your duty to drive them home. In reading the *Testimonies* be sure not to mix in your filling of words, for this makes it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words. Be sure that you do not make the word of the Lord offensive. We long to see reforms, and because we do not see that which we desire, an evil spirit is too often allowed to cast drops of gall into our cup, and thus others are embittered. By our ill-advised words their spirit is chafed, and they are stirred to rebellion." - *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 122, 123.

**Beware of Unauthenticated Testimonies**

"And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said."-*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 696. (Read the whole testimony, pp. 692-696.)

"There will be those who will claim to have visions. When God gives you *clear evidence* that the vision is from Him, you may accept it, but do not accept it on any other evidence; for people are going to be led more and more astray in foreign countries and in America."-"'The Work for This Time,'" *The Review and Herald*, May 25, 1905, p. 17.

"Various things will appear claiming to be revelations from God, but which flow from the imagination of a conceited and deceived mind. We had to meet these things in our early experience. There were youth and children as well as those of mature age who claimed to be led and taught of God, having a special message to declare. They were springing up on every side, having the truth on some points, and error upon other points. For years the message from God came to me, 'Believe them not, for they lead into false paths. God hath, not sent them.' There were false dreams and false visions in abundance."-Letter 4, 1893.

**Beware of Offshoots**

"'God has a church upon the earth, who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people.'"-*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 61.

"God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church-Christ's body-is left in darkness. In His providence, He places His servants in close connection with His church, in order that they may have less confidence in themselves, and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work."-*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 163.

"There are little companies continually rising who believe that God is only with the very few, the very scattered, and their influence is to tear down and scatter that which God's servants build up. Restless minds who want to be seeing and believing something new continually are constantly rising, some in one place and some in another, all doing a special work for the enemy, yet claiming to have the truth. They stand separate from the people whom God is leading out and prospering, and through whom He is to do His great work. They are continually expressing their fears that the body of Sabbathkeepers are becoming like the world, but there are scarcely two of these whose views are in harmony. They are scattered and confused, and yet deceived themselves so much as to think that God is especially with them. Some of these profess to have the gifts among them; but are led by the influence and teachings of these gifts to hold in doubt those upon whom God has laid special burden of His work, and to lead off a class from the body."-*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 417, 418.

**Be Mindful of Past Perils**

In a letter to a church member who was energetically promoting certain erroneous views, Mrs. White recounted how at different times offshoot movements had sprung up in the history of the Advent people to lead souls astray.
"As this matter has been brought before my mind, in other cases, where individuals have claimed to have messages for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of a similar character, the word has been given me, 'Believe them not.' 'I have not sent them, yet they ran.'

"Elder A, a dying man, had his room filed with interested people, while he was at the hospital at Battle Creek. Many were deceived. The man seemed to be inspired.

But the light that was given me was, 'This work is not of God. Believe not the message.'

"A few years since, a man named B, of Red Bluff, California, came to me to deliver his message. He said it was the loud cry of the third angel which was to lighten the earth with his glory. He thought God had passed all the leading workers and given him the message. I attempted to show him that he was mistaken. He said Seventh-day Adventists were Babylon, and when we told him our reasons and set the matter before him, that he was in error, he had great power proclaiming the loud cry of the third angel's message, swelling louder and louder. We had much trouble with him; his mind became unbalanced, and he had to be placed in the insane asylum.

"One C advocated and published a message in regard to the loud cry of the third angel; he accused the church in a similar manner to what you are now doing. He said the leaders in the church would all fall through self-exaltation, and another class of humble men would come to the front, who would do wonderful things. This man had daughters who claimed to have visions.

"This delusion was opened to me. This C is an intelligent man, of an acceptable address, and self-denying and full of zeal and earnestness, and carrying an appearance of consecration and devotion. But the word of God came from God to me, 'Believe them not, I have not sent them!'
"He claimed to believe the testimonies. He claimed them to be true, and used them in the same manner you have used them to give force and appearance of truth of his claims. I told them this message was not of God; but it was deceiving the unwary. He would not be convinced. I told them the visions of his daughter were spurious, yet these visions, he claimed, were like the visions of Sister White, testifying to the same things. This daughter was deceiving the family, and several others who believed these false messages. I was shown that the young girl was not virtuous; but was corrupt . . . .

"If ever a man that I looked upon was inspired, this man certainly was; but I told him plainly his inspiration was of Satan, not of God. His message bore not the divine credentials.

"In order for him to give this message broadcast to the world, he made an honest, conscientious young man

believe it to be his duty to steal the *Review and Herald* list. This is a state prison crime, and the young man ran away from Battle Creek. He did not dare return to Battle Creek for some time. The time was set for probation to close, and as every prediction failed, the young man saw he had been deceived, and he confessed his sin and is now an honorable member of the Battle Creek church.

"Only two years since another man, by the name of D, from____, came out with a message which he called new light in regard to the message of the third angel. This intelligent family have, through this delusion, separated from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because I had borne a decided testimony against this new light, so called, in _____, where he lived, he opposed me, and my work and testimonies.

"The father of the D children attended the conference, and Ministers' Bible Institute held in Battle Creek; but he held himself aloof, and did not harmonize with the spirit of the meeting. He left for his home, and began to leaven the little church in _____. If I had not labored in that place they might have broken up the whole church with their repudiating the truth and position of Seventh-day Adventists, and Mrs. White in particular.

"At this time one Mrs. E came from Washington, D.C., claiming to be wholly sanctified, and to have the power of healing. This spirit led many to become bewildered. The same accusing spirit was with them; that is, that the church was all wrong, and God was calling out a people who would work miracles. A large class of our people in Battle Creek were being severed. I was moved upon by the Spirit of God, in the night season, to write to our people in Battle Creek."-Letter 16, 1893.

**Beware of Those Who Denounce the Church**

"There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren."-*The Remnant Church*, p. 39.

"God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the

depositories of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them. The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth, unless they repent. This message to pronounce the Seventh-day Adventist Church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God."-*Ibid.*, pp. 51, 52.

**Beware of Those Who Abuse the Laodicean Message**

"In the spring of 1857, I accompanied my husband on a tour East. His principal business was to purchase the Power Press. We held conferences on our way to Boston, and on our return. This was a discouraging tour. The testimony to the Laodicean church was generally received; but some in the East were making bad use of it. Instead of applying it to their own hearts, so as to be benefitted by it themselves, they were using the testimony to oppress others. A few taught that the brethren must sell all out before they could be free, while some others dwelt much upon dress, carrying the subject to an extreme, and with a few others there was a narrowing up of the work of the third message, and following of impressions, and casting fear upon the conscientious. These things have had a blighting influence, and have caused us to lay down our testimony on the subject almost entirely.

"The design of the message to the Laodiceans was to rid the church of just such fanatical influences; but the effort of Satan has been to corrupt the message, and destroy its influence. He would be better pleased to have fanatical persons embrace the testimony, and use it in his cause, than to have them remain in a lukewarm state. I have seen that it was not the design of the message to lead brother to sit in judgment over his brother, to tell him what to do, and just how far to go; but for each individual to search his own heart, and attend to his own individual work. It is the work of the angels to watch the development of character, and weigh moral worth."-*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 223.

"When men arise, claiming to have a message from God, but instead of warring against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, they form a hollow square, and turn the weapons of warfare

against the church militant, be afraid of them. They do not bear the divine credentials. God has not given them any such burden of labor. They would tear down that upon which God would restore by the Laodicean message. He wounds only that He may heal, not cause to perish. The Lord lays upon no man a message that will discourage and dishearten the church. He reproves, He rebukes, He chastens; but it is only that He may restore and approve at last."-*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 22, 23.

## Beware of Those Who Advocate a New Organization

After the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization was improved and strengthened during the years 1901-1904, as called for by the Spirit of prophecy, Mrs. White wrote:

"The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth."-*The Remnant Church*, p. 60.

## Beware of Those Who Would Do Away With the Seventh-day Adventist Church

"No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession and expresses our faith and marks us a peculiar people. The name Seventh-day Adventists is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. Here is the line of distinction between the worshipers of God and those who worship the beast and receive his mark."-*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 223.

# APPENDIX 3

# METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

[Exhibit C: Methods of Bible Study]

# METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY[1]

## Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods

### 1. Preamble

This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize and appreciate the contributions of those biblical scholars throughout history who have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. Adventists are committed to the acceptance of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with what Scripture says of itself. These are outlined in the presuppositions de—tailed below.

In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.

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[1]This document presented by the General Conference's Methods of Bible Study Committee (GCC-A), was approved at the 1986 Annual Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, by the SDA World Church represented by church leaders from the world fields of SDAs. The document was published in *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1987, 18-20. The entire text of "Methods of Bible Study" has been included in this appendix.

The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments. In addition, because such a method de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunder—stands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method.

In contrast with the historical-critical method and presuppositions, we believe it to be helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God. Such an approach will lead us into a satisfying and rewarding experience with God.

2. Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture

a. Origin

(1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.

(2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writ—ers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other (2Peter 1:21; cf. Great Controversy, v, vi).

(3) All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth (2Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1, 2; cf. Selected Messages, Book 1, 19, 20; Great Controversy, v, vi).

(4) Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible

transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages.

b. Authority

(1) The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (2Tim. 3:15, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 2Thess. 3:14; Heb. 4:12).

(2) Scripture is an authentic, reliable record of history and God's acts in history. It provides the normative theological interpretation of those acts. The supernatural acts revealed in Scripture are historically true. For example, chapters 1-11 of Genesis are a factual account of historical events.

(3) The Bible is not like other books. It is an indivisible blend of the divine and the human. Its record of many details of secular history is integral to its overall purpose to convey salvation history. While at times there may be parallel procedures employed by Bible students to determine historical data, the usual techniques of historical research, based as they are on human presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the Scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and human. Only a method that fully recognizes the indivisible nature of the Scriptures can avoid a distortion of its message.

(4) Human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it. Presuppositions regarding the Scriptures must be in harmony with the claims of the Scriptures and subject to correction by them (1Cor. 2:1-6). God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent, but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it.

(5) The revelation of God in all nature, when properly understood, is in harmony with the written Word, and is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture.

3. Principles for Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture

a. The Spirit enables the believer to accept, understand, and apply the Bible to one's own life as he seeks divine power to render obedience to all scriptural requirements and to appropriate personally all Bible promises. Only those following the light already received can hope to receive further illumination of the Spirit (John 16:13, 14; 1Cor. 2:10-14).

b. Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who enables the believer to understand and apply Scripture. Therefore, any study of the Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination.

c. Those who come to the study of the Word must do so with faith, in the humble spirit of a learner who seeks to hear what the Bible is saying. They must be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions, and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself. With this attitude the Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful study may come to an understanding of the essentials of salvation apart from any human explanations, however helpful. The biblical message becomes meaningful to such a person.

d. The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

4. Methods of Bible Study

a. Select a Bible version for study that is faithful to the meaning contained in languages in which the Bible originally was written, giving preference to translations done by a broad group of scholars and published by a general publisher above translations sponsored by a particular denomination or narrowly focused group.

Exercise care not to build major doctrinal points on one Bible translation or version. Trained biblical scholars will use the Greek and Hebrew texts, enabling them to examine variant readings of ancient Bible manuscripts as well.

b. Choose a definite plan of study, avoiding haphazard and aimless approaches. Study plans such as the following are suggested:

(1) Book-by-book analysis of the message

(2) Verse-by-verse method

(3) Study that seeks a biblical solution to a specific life problem, biblical satisfaction for a specific need, or a biblical answer to a specific question

(4) Topical study (faith, love, second coming, and others)

(5) Word study

(6) Biographical study

c. Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.

d. Seek to discover the underlying major themes of Scripture as found in individual texts, passages, and books. Two basic, related themes run throughout Scripture: (1)The person and work of Jesus Christ; and (2)the great controversy perspective involving the authority of God's Word, the fall of man, the first and second advents of Christ, the exoneration of God and His law, and the restoration of the divine plan for the universe. These themes are to be drawn from the totality of Scripture and not imposed on it.

e. Recognize that the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts, and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture.

f. Study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire Bible book.

g. As far as possible ascertain the historical circumstances in which the passage was written by the biblical writers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

h. Determine the literary type the author is using. Some biblical material is composed of parables, proverbs, allegories, psalms, and apocalyptic prophecies. Since many biblical writers presented much of their material as poetry, it is helpful to use a version of the Bible that presents

this material in poetic style, for passages employing imagery are not to be interpreted in the same manner as prose.

I. Recognize that a given biblical text may not conform in every detail to present-day literary categories. Be cautious not to force these categories in interpreting the meaning of the biblical text. It is a human tendency to find what one is looking for, even when the author did not intend such.

j. Take note of grammar and sentence construction in order to discover the author's meaning. Study the key words of the passage by comparing their use in other parts of the Bible by means of a concordance and with the help of biblical lexicons and dictionaries.

k. In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.

l. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God inspired Ellen G. White. Therefore, her expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis (for example, see Evangelism, 256; The Great Controversy, 193, 595; Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 665, 682, 707-708; Counsels to Writers and Editors, 33-35).

m. After studying as outlined above, turn to various commentaries and secondary helps such as scholarly works to see how others have dealt with the passage. Then carefully evaluate the different viewpoints expressed from the standpoint of Scripture as a whole.

n. In interpreting prophecy keep in mind that:

(1) The Bible claims God's power to pre—dict the future (Isa 46:10).

(2) Prophecy has a moral purpose. It was not written merely to satisfy curiosity about the future. Some of the purposes of prophecy are to strengthen faith (John 14:29) and to pro—mote holy living and readiness for the Advent (Matt 24:44; Rev 22:7, 10, 11).

(3) The focus of much prophecy is on Christ (both His first and second advents), the church, and the end-time.

(4) The norms for interpreting prophecy are found within the Bible itself: The Bible notes time prophecies and their historical fulfillments; the New Testament cites specific fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah; and the Old Testament itself presents individuals and events as types of the Messiah.

(5) In the New Testament application of Old Testament prophecies, some literal names become spiritual: for example, Israel represents the church, Babylon apostate religion, etc.

(6) There are two general types of prophetic writings: nonapocalyptic prophecy as found in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and apocalyptic prophecy as found in Daniel and the Revelation. These differing types have different characteristics:

(a) Nonapocalyptic prophecy addresses God's people; apocalyptic is more universal in scope.

(b) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often is conditional in nature, setting forth to God's people the alternatives of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience; apocalyptic emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His control over history.

(c) Nonapocalyptic prophecy often leaps from the local crisis to the end-time day of the Lord; apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world.

(d) Time prophecies in nonapocalyptic prophecy generally are long, for example, 400 years of Israel's servitude (Gen. 15:13) and 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Jer. 25:12). Time prophecies in apocalyptic prophecy generally are phrased in short terms, for example, 10 days (Rev. 2:10) or 42 months (Rev. 13:5). Apocalyptic time periods stand symbolically for longer periods of actual time.

(7) Apocalyptic prophecy is highly symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly. In interpreting symbols, the following methods may be used:

(a) Look for interpretations (explicit or implicit) within the passage itself (for example, Dan. 8:20, 21; Rev. 1:20).

(b) Look for interpretations elsewhere in the book or in other writings by the same author.

(c) Using a concordance, study the use of symbols in other parts of Scripture.

(d) A study of ancient Near Eastern documents may throw light on the meaning of symbols, although scriptural use may alter those meanings.

(8) The literary structure of a book often is an aid to interpreting it. The parallel nature of Daniel's prophecies is an example.

o. Parallel accounts in Scripture sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis (for example, cf. Matt 21:33, 34; Mark 12:1-11; and Luke 20:9-18; or 2Kings 18-20 with 2Chron. 32). When studying such passages, first examine them carefully to be sure that the parallels actually are referring to the same historical event. For example, many of Jesus' parables may have been given on different occasions to different audiences and with different wording.

In cases where there appear to be differences in parallel accounts, one should recognize that the total message of the Bible is the synthesis of all of its parts. Each book or writer communicates that which the Spirit has led him to write. Each makes his own special contribution to the richness, diversity, and variety of Scripture (The Great Controversy, v, vi). The reader must allow each Bible writer to emerge and be heard while at the same time recognizing the basic unity of the divine self-disclosure.

When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the underlying harmony. Keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 16), or may be the result of differing emphases and choice of materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for different audiences under different circum—stances (Selected Messages, Book 1, pp. 21, 22; The Great Controversy, vi).

It may prove impossible to reconcile minor dissimilarities in detail which may be irrelevant to the main and clear message of the passage. In some cases judgment may have to be suspended until more information and better evidence are available to resolve a seeming discrepancy.

p. The Scriptures were written for the practical purpose of revealing the will of God to the human family. However, in order not to misconstrue certain kinds of statements, it is important to recognize that they were addressed to peoples of Eastern cultures and expressed in their thought patterns.

Expressions such as "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 9:12) or "an evil spirit from God..." (1Sam 16:15), the imprecatory psalms, or the "three days and three nights" of Jonah as compared with Christ's death (Matt. 12:40), commonly are misunderstood because they are interpreted today from a different viewpoint.

A background knowledge of Near Eastern culture is indispensable for understanding such expressions. For example, Hebrew culture attributed responsibility to an individual for acts he did not commit but that he allowed to happen. Therefore the inspired writers of the Scriptures commonly credit God with doing actively that which in Western thought we would say He permits or does not prevent from happening, for example, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Another aspect of Scripture that troubles the modern mind is the divine command to Israel to engage in war and execute entire nations. Israel originally was organized as a theocracy, a civil government through which God ruled directly (Gen. 18:25). Such a theocratic state was unique. It no longer exists and cannot be regarded as a direct model for Christian practice.

The Scriptures record that God accepted persons whose experiences and statements were not in harmony with the spiritual principles of the Bible as a whole. For example, we may cite incidents relating to the use of alcohol, polygamy, divorce, and slavery. Although condemnation of such deeply ingrained social customs is not explicit, God did not necessarily endorse or approve all that He permitted and bore with in the lives of the

patriarchs and in Israel. Jesus made this clear in His statement with regard to divorce (Matt 19:4-6, 8).

The spirit of the Scriptures is one of restoration. God works patiently to elevate fallen humanity from the depths of sin to the divine ideal. Consequently, we must not accept as models the actions of sinful men as recorded in the Bible.

The Scriptures represent the unfolding of God's revelation to man. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, for example, enlarges and expands certain Old Testament concepts. Christ Himself is the ultimate revelation of God's character to humanity (Heb. 1:1-3).

While there is an overarching unity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and while all Scripture is equally inspired, God chose to reveal Himself to and through human individuals and to meet them where they were in terms of spiritual and intellectual endowments. God Himself does not change, but He progressively unfolded His revelation to men as they were able to grasp it (John 16:12; The SDA Bible Commentary, vol .7, p. 945; Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 21). Every experience or statement of Scripture is a divinely inspired record, but not every statement or experience is necessarily normative for Christian behavior today. Both the spirit and the letter of Scripture must be understood (1Cor. 10:6-13; *Desire of Ages*, 150; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 10-12).

q. As the final goal, make application of the text. Ask such questions as, "What is the message and purpose God intends to convey through Scripture?" "What meaning does this text have for me?" "How does it apply to my situation and circumstances today?" In doing so, recognize that although many biblical passages had local significance, nonetheless they contain timeless principles applicable to every age and culture.

5. Conclusion

In the "Introduction" to The Great Controversy Ellen G. White wrote:

The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the

Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. (p. vi)

As it is impossible for those who do not accept Christ's divinity to understand the purpose of His incarnation, it is also impossible for those who see the Bible merely as a human book to understand its message, however careful and rigorous their methods.

Even Christian scholars who accept the divine-human nature of Scripture, but whose methodological approaches cause them to dwell largely on its human aspects, risk emptying the biblical message of its power by relegating it to the background while concentrating on the medium. They forget that medium and message are inseparable and that the medium without the message is as an empty shell that cannot address the vital spiritual needs of humankind.

A committed Christian will use only those methods that are able to do full justice to the dual, inseparable nature of Scripture, enhance his ability to understand and apply its message, and strengthen faith.

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