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The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse by Ellen G. White and her Contemporaries

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THE INTERPRETATION OF
THE OLIVET DISCOURSE BY
ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER CONTEMPORARIES

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THE INTERPRETATION OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE
BY ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER CONTEMPORARIES

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion



~~NOT FOR CIRCULATION~~

by

Raymond H. Sills

November, 1981

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



Scope and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to define the methods Ellen White employed in interpreting the Olivet Discourse; and further to review the exposition that grew out of these methods. Once these methods have been identified and the exposition defined, these will then be contrasted and compared with other writers. These writers have been classified under four headings.

Firstly, the Millerite lecturers; that is, those preachers and writers who from various denominational backgrounds supported William Miller in his proclamation of a soon coming Saviour, sometime in the mid 1840's. It was from this group that the young Ellen Harmon emerged and, as a teenage girl, she was profoundly influenced by them.

Secondly, a review of Seventh-day Adventist writers who published during Ellen White's own lifetime. This section will terminate in 1915, the year of White's death. Though writers will be reviewed who wrote up to 1915, it is recognized that any writer who may have influenced her thinking on the Olivet Discourse would have had to publish before 1900, by which time White's major work on this subject had been completed. In a sense, for the purposes of this study, the date is arbitrary.

The third group which will be examined will be those non-Seventh-day Adventist authors who wrote on the subject of Matthew twenty-four

whose books were in her libraries. The assumption is, in this section, that she may have been more familiar with authors to whom she was known to have had access.

The last group will be a selection of non-Seventh-day Adventist authors not in her libraries, but who were well known generally in theological Protestant circles of her time. Most of these will be her contemporaries, but some wrote before her time and remained significant in the area under examination. This last section is not exhaustive as the full literature is not available to the researcher. The selection reviewed, however, does present adequate information to adopt viable conclusions for the purposes of this study.

Sections of the bibliography are annotated to indicate writers who were examined, but who added nothing in substance to the present study. These writers provided material that was a matter of duplicate content, no comment at all, or nothing relevant to include in the body of the paper.

The purpose of the study then, is twofold: firstly, to ascertain in what way other writers influenced (or did not influence) Ellen White's interpretation of the chapter; and secondly to assess the implications of White's interpretation for the Seventh-day Adventist Church today.

Importance of the Study

The Olivet Discourse has been seen for centuries as a chapter of significant importance to the Christian Church. Even a cursory examination of writers who have written on the chapter reveals, along with their

acknowledgement of its importance, a testimony as to its difficulties. Both the Millerite lecturers and Seventh-day Adventist writers recognized the significant contribution this discourse made in their eschatological conclusions. Ellen White's wide use of the chapter also underlined its importance in her thinking.

The sermon Christ gave on the Mount of Olives has received as much attention from Bible interpreters as his 'Sermon on the Mount' in Galilee. What the 'Sermon on the Mount' is to practical theology, the Olivet Discourse is to eschatology.

Seventh-day Adventist evangelists in recent decades have primarily used this chapter to present to public audiences an historical sequence of events stretching from the destruction of Jerusalem to the Second Advent. This factor alone highlights the importance of the chapter to the Church's eschatological emphasis. If the interpretative assessment of White's use of the discourse in the following chapters is valid, then the present evangelistic presentation also needs reassessment.

Problems and Methods

The following chapter will reveal that Ellen White, in her exposition of the Olivet Discourse, authenticates three approaches of interpretation. Two of these approaches are complementary, one ostensibly is contradictory to the other two. Part of our task in the conclusion is to postulate a solution that will not only preserve the validity of the one but highlight the significance of the other two interpretations.

Definition of Terms

The footnotes should be carefully noted when the following terms are encountered: 'Millerite', 'Universalist', 'historical-continuous' and 'dual fulfillment'.

Basic Assumptions

In a review of the writings authored by Ellen White, the paper proceeds with the following presuppositions:

1. That Ellen White was a 'messenger of the Lord' to the Seventh-day Adventist Church
2. That her writings are inspired in a way that no other Seventh-day Adventist writer has been; to this point in time
3. These writings primarily reveal a pastoral concern for the church. However, she also exhibits Biblical insights in her exposition
4. Ellen White showed a developing understanding of scripture, though she was not exhaustive in her understanding and comments. Further, she was to a degree influenced both by time and other writers of the period in what she wrote

Significance of the Study

The way Ellen White used contemporary sources will expand and clarify our understanding of the concept of inspiration. It will also enhance our understanding of her contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It may also demonstrate that even an authority in an established church has difficulty modifying entrenched views.

CHAPTER II

ELLEN G. WHITE'S USE OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

As a student of the Bible, Ellen White, like many before her, sees the 'Olivet Discourse' as a passage of vital importance. On one occasion in counselling ministers, she suggested that they leave out of their discourses matters of minor importance and bring before people subjects that will decide the destiny of souls. The prophecy of Matthew twenty-four is one such subject, she concluded.¹

It appears on examination of her writings that she endeavoured to follow this counsel herself. It was not infrequently a topic in her articles, sometimes even a series in denominational periodicals.²

The same emphasis can be seen in the frequency with which she drew upon these chapters to emphasise the times in which she lived and the necessity for the church to be prepared to meet this climactic event.³

¹Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), p. 148.

²E.g., Ellen G. White, "Words of Warning," Review & Herald 75 (December 1898): 793-94, 809-10, 825-26. (Hereafter cited as RH).

³Of the two indexes available currently on the scriptural references White used in her writings, both show the same pattern. The areas that are used numerically most frequently are the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17); The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25). Cf. Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 1:90-94, 100-102, 121-24 and Martha Montgomery Odom, ed., A Scripture Index to Review & Herald Articles by Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1978).

The reason for this frequent usage appears to be the historical milieu from which the Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged. The central motif of the religious awakening of the nineteenth century was the expected imminent kingdom of glory. The Millerite preachers found much of their prophetic data from Christ's apocalyptic discourse. This same imminence, even urgency, is woven throughout White's writings. It was this background and these chapters of scripture which not only nurtured her early experience but also provided the goal to which her prophetic ministry was directed.

It would appear that she regarded Matthew's account of the discourse more complete than that of either Luke or Mark for she made more frequent use of Matthew. It should be remembered that any discussion of 'sources' and 'dependency' in the synoptic gospels was not an issue with her.

Homiletic Use

An important distinction needs to be recognized at this point. Ellen White was primarily a minister to the church and the bulk of her writings were directed at guiding its development corporately and, frequently, individually.¹

Because of this emphasis the bulk of her writings use scripture with the intent to encourage, exhort, and confront. Current problems are attacked using the spiritual framework from the biblical past. Much

¹E.G., see such books as Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1969) and The Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1960).

of her writing, even that which deals with scripture in a chronological sequence, is not so much an interpretation of the Bible time, but an interpretation directed at providing solutions for her generation.¹ The Olivet Discourse is no exception in this exhortatory methodology, particularly from verse thirty-seven of chapter twenty-four to the end of chapter twenty-five.

However, distinct from this approach is her attempt, at times, to interpret the scripture in a way which could be classified as exposition, if not exegesis.² The writer is aware that in places it is difficult to distinguish between these approaches, so a deliberate stratagem has been employed. In assessing her exposition of the Olivet Discourse only those passages which clearly are intended as exposition will be examined. This will be further safeguarded by referring primarily to those areas where the contextual emphasis is on exposition.

White interpreted the predictions of Jesus in this prophecy as applying primarily to two distinct periods of time in the Christian era.³

¹Ellen G. White, "Conflict of the Ages" Series; (see Bibliography for the five volumes in this series).

²The problem of Ellen White's role of authority in interpretation of scripture is not new; failure to define it's relationship, (or failure to recognize that it's relationship is indefinable) has continued to be a source of concern. "1919 Bible Conference," Spectrum 10(May 1979): 23-57; Raymond F. Cottrell, "Ellen G. White's Evaluation and Use of the Bible," in A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1974), pp. 143-61; "General Conference Bulletin," Adventist Review, 157(25 April 1980):22.

³The issue of whether the advent could have followed closely the destruction of Jerusalem is not being investigated here. White was writing centuries later than the destruction and therefore interprets the chapter accordingly.

Firstly, as applying to the events that led up to and followed the destruction of Jerusalem, and secondly, to the events that will lead up to and culminate in the second advent of Christ.

The Mode of Prediction

Before the specific interpretation of the first of these events is given it is imperative that we recognize the mode that White reveals is operative here in these predictions.

Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. . . . In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. . . . This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history.¹

The concept of one prophetic statement being relevant for more than one occasion is represented in all the major areas where she makes expository comments on this passage.

The ruin of Jerusalem was a symbol of the final ruin that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a partial fulfillment in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a more direct application to the last days.²

The scenes that transpired at the destruction Jerusalem will be repeated at the great and terrible day of the Lord.³

¹ Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 628; cf. White, Great Controversy (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1888), pp. 22-29, 37; White, "Words of Warning," RH 74(7 December 1897): 769-70; 75(13 December 1898): 793-94.

² Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1956), pp. 120-21; cf. White, Great Controversy p. 37; Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1858-1909), 5:753.

³ Ellen G. White, MS 40, 1897, Ellen G. White Research Centre.

The prophecy which He uttered was twofold in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem it prefigured also the terrors of the last great day.¹

When Christ predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, He predicted also the destruction of the world.²

The recognition of the principle that White is using here is essential if we are rightly to represent her interpretation. To summarize the use of the material presented above, it can be concluded that the words of the prophecy applied both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ the second time. It will apply more fully to the latter than the former.

Matthew Chapter Twenty-four As Related To

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Verse 5

Christ's words were fulfilled. Between His death and the siege of Jerusalem many false messiahs appeared.³

Verses 6-8

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, men wrestled for the supremacy. Emperors were murdered There were wars and rumors of wars. "All these things must come to pass," said Christ, "but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences,

¹ White, Great Controversy, p. 25.

² White, "A Blessing and a Curse," RH 78 (8 October 1901):649. See also White, "God Warns Men of His Coming Judgement," RH 66 (5 November 1889): 689-90; White, MS 20, 1901, Ellen G. White Research Centre; White, Story of Redemption (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1947), pp. 320-22; White, Great Controversy p. 39; White, Counsels to Writers and Editors (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), pp. 23-24.

³ White, Desire of Ages, p. 628.

and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Christ said, As the rabbis see these signs they will declare them to be God's judgements upon the nations for holding in bondage His chosen people . 1 . . Be not deceived; they are the beginning of His judgements.

Verses 9-10

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." All this the Christians suffered.²

Verses 12-14

In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, [vv. 12-14 quoted] So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declared that the gospel was preached to "every creature which is under heaven." Col 1:23.³

Verses 15-20

Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned His followers: . . . [vv. 15,16 quoted]. . . . When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight.⁴

Verses 21-22

It is not generally recognized, but White uses the term "the great tribulation" of verse 21 to refer to the pagan persecution as well as the Papal persecution.⁵ She further identifies this as "beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul."⁶

¹ Ibid., pp. 628-29. See also White, Great Controversy, p. 39.

² White, Desire of Ages, p. 629.

³ Ibid., p. 633. See also Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 473.

⁴ White, Great Controversy, p. 25-26. See also White, Desire of Ages, p. 630.

⁵ White, Great Controversy, p. 393.

⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

Verses 23-28

These verses have been recognised as a parenthesis and though located here, in actual fact refer back to events that occur prior to the destruction. White assumes a similar stance.

As one of the signs of Jerusalem's destruction, Christ had said, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." False prophets did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert.¹

From verse 28 White makes no further expositional use of the chapter relating to the destruction of Jerusalem.²

Matthew Chapter Twenty-four As Related To The Second Advent

In answer to the disciples question of when would the temple be destroyed and how would they recognize Christ's return, White indicates that His answer was given to suit both events. Such terms as "blended,"³ "mingled,"⁴ "merged into one,"⁵ are used to describe this method of presentation. The principle of 'dual fulfillment'⁶ is clearly advocated by

¹ White, Desire of Ages, p. 631.

² Other commentators have moved further in this initial application, even seeing the coming of the 'Son of man' in v. 30 as having reference to the coming of the judgements upon Jerusalem. See Thomas Newton, Dissertations on the Prophecies (London: T. Tegg and Son, 1835), pp. 34-35.

³ White, Desire of Ages, p. 628; White, RH 75(27 December 1898):825.

⁴ White, Desire of Ages, p. 628; White, RH 74(7 December 1897):523.

⁵ White, RH 75(27 December 1898):825.

⁶ The validity of such a principle has been recognized. E.g. "Statement on Desmond Ford Document," Ministry 53(October 1980):22; Hans K. La Rondelle, "Interpretation of Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology," in A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1974), p. 228.

White to give this prophecy the depth of its original utterance. In referring to the way in which its meaning was not exhausted by being applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, she uses such phrases as "a more direct application,"¹ "another fulfillment,"² "will be repeated,"³ "twofold in its meaning,"⁴ "He predicted also . . ."⁵

While it is true that all the predictions given by Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were fulfilled to the letter,⁶ it is also true that the "entire discourse" was given not for the disciples only but for those who would live in the last scenes of this earth's history. In harmony with her own counsel she also applied the "entire discourse" as having meaning to the last generation.⁷

Verse 5

After quoting verse 5, White says, "The same deceptions practiced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have been practiced through the ages, and will be practiced again."⁸

Verses 6-8

Christ, upon the Mount of Olives, rehearsed the fearful judgements that were to precede His second coming: [vv. 6-8 quoted]. While these

¹ White, Mount of Blessing, pp. 120-21. See also White, RH 64(11 January 1887):105.

² White, Great Controversy, p. 36.

³ White, MS 40, 1897.

⁴ White, Great Controversy, p. 25.

⁵ White, RH 78(9 October 1901):649.

⁶ White, Great Controversy, p. 29.

⁷ White, Desire of Ages, p. 628.

⁸ Ibid.

prophecies received a partial fulfillment at the destruction of Jerusalem, they have a more direct application to the last days.¹

Verses 9-10

From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church The fires of persecution were kindled These persecutions, beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul, continued with greater or less fury for centuries.²

Those who are true to God will be menaced, denounced, proscribed. They will be "betrayed both by³ parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends," even unto death.

Verse 11

On these days of peril we are not to accept everything that men bring to us as truth Jesus has told us that "false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."⁴

Verses 12-14

In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, [vv. 12-14 quoted]. . . . This prophecy will again be fulfilled. The abounding iniquity of that day finds its counterpart in this generation. So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel.⁵

Verses 15-20

"The abomination of desolation," or the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies, is clearly seen as the central sign in this chapter, the sign on which most of the others are contingent. White uses it as a picture

¹ White, Testimonies 5:753; Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1917), pp. 536-37.

² White, Great Controversy, p. 39-40.

³ White, Prophets and Kings, p. 588. (This text is from Luke 21:16, the parallel text to Matt 24:9-10).

⁴ Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, 3 bks, (Washington: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:99.

⁵ White, Desire of Ages, p. 633.

of what is to come more in an illustrative sense, or even perhaps typologically, but nevertheless clearly as having relevant meaning.

As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached¹

There appears to be sound reason in White using this passage as a type of what is to occur. It is not in the scope of this paper to present the data for such conclusions, but it is usually acceded that the Old Testament picture of Jerusalem being surrounded by her enemies is also taken over into New Testament eschatology but with an ecclesiastical and Christocentric focus.²

Verses 21-22

Earlier references have shown how White applied the time of 'great tribulation' to the pagan persecutions. Her use as pertaining to the papal persecutions is well attested and will be examined later in the chapter. What is not usually recognized is her viewing this time as reaching its fullest extremity at the end time. In reference to time, corresponding to the "time of trouble" in Daniel 12:1.

We are to realize that the judgements of God are about to fall upon the earth, and we should most earnestly present before the people the warning that the Lord has commissioned us to give: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."³

¹ White, Testimonies, 5:451, 464-65. See also White, Great Controversy, p. 37; White, RH 66(12 November 1889):690.

² La Rondelle, p. 228; cf. Rév 14:20; 20:9.

³ White, RH 69(22 November 1892):722.

Yet for the elect's sake the time of trouble will be shortened.¹

Between these two events, [the destruction of Jerusalem and the second advent] there lay open to Christ's view long centuries of darkness, centuries for His church marked with blood and tears and agony.

Verses 23-27

[Matt 24:23-27 quoted]. As one of the signs of Jerusalem's destruction, Christ had said, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." False prophets did arise, deceiving the people and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days. This sign is given as a sign of the second advent.³

Verse 29

December 16, 1848. The Lord gave me a view of the shaking of the powers of the heavens. I saw that when the Lord said "heaven," in giving the signs recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, He meant heaven, and when He said "earth," He meant earth. The powers of heaven are the sun, moon, and stars The powers of heaven will be shaken at the voice of God. Then the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the voice of God.⁴

Matthew Chapter Twenty-four As Related To

The 'Historical-continuous' Interpretation

In examining the discourse, White uses another approach that

¹White, Great Controversy, p. 631. White appears to combine phrases of Daniel 12:1 and Matt 24:22. See also White, Testimonies, 9:17, 210-11. White, RH, 66(5 November 1889):689.

²White, Desire of Ages, pp. 630-31.

³Ibid., p. 631. See also White, Great Controversy, p. 625; White, Selected Messages, 2:87-88.

⁴Ellen G. White, Early Writings (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1882), p. 41.

may be called the historical-continuous¹ method of interpretation. Her possible presuppositions in using this have been suggested in the Introduction. It cannot be classified as her primary method of exegeting the chapter, but it could well be the best known to many. It should not be assumed that because it is the best known, it is therefore normative.

As concerning the question of doing justice to the Biblical text, it would be the least favoured (of the three approaches) by most Bible students endeavouring to exegete the passage.

In this approach, the passage under discussion is seen as revealing high points of an historical sequence.

In Matthew 24, in answer to the question of His disciples concerning the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, Christ had pointed out some of the most important events in the history of the world and of the church from His first to His second advent; namely the destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulation of the church under the pagan and papal persecutions, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars.²

Apart from Desire of Ages, pp. 631-32, and two periodical articles,³ White's major comments (on Matt 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25) are all in Great Controversy. For finding prophetic sources to add to Matthew's account for the 'dark day' May 19, 1780, she also drew upon Rev 6:12 and Joel 2:31. She also linked the Lisbon earthquake of 1755

¹The term as it is used in this paper, means taking highlights from Matthew twenty-four to show a chronological succession of events. Commencing with the times of the disciples, then the destruction of Jerusalem, the 1260 years of Papal persecution, the cosmic signs of the Advent Awakening, and then the Parousia.

²White, Great Controversy, p. 393. See also pp. 37. 304-9. 333.

³White, RH 75(27 December 1898):825; 83(22 November 1906):19.

with Rev 6:12.

The major comments of White on Matthew 24 in Great Controversy occur in the historical section of the book and are therefore controlled by the sequence of contemporary phenomena which she deemed to be a fulfillment of the prophecy. The chapter before the discussion is "The Pilgrim Fathers" followed by "Heralds of the Morning" in which the discussion of the 'great earthquake' and the 'dark day' occur, and then "An American Reformer." In this chapter a brief review of William Miller's ministry is given, and the impetus that this was given in 1833 by the falling of the stars on November 13.

There is little doubt that she viewed these cosmic signs as a fulfillment of prophecy.¹ To the Advent believers of that time they were significant links in a chain that was not endless but was to terminate in 1844. Their whole mission, as viewed through the Olivet Discourse, climaxed in the "midnight cry," one of the parabolic illustrations designed to teach preparedness for the earlier portions of Christ's sermon.

The expectations of the nineteenth century Advent believers had led them to within one line of the actual "appearance," (Matt 24:29 "and the stars shall fall from heaven.") The remainder of verse 29 ("the powers of heaven will be shaken") they believed would take place in conjunction with the "appearance."²

Exegetically this is where the advent people peaked in their

¹White, Great Controversy, p. 306. See also RH 83(22 November 1906):19.

²White, Early Writings, p. 41, 285.

interpretation of Christ's second advent sermon. If the parousia had eventuated in the years following 1844, it could have remained unchallenged. Indeed it would have been gloriously vindicated. White's exposition that the "entire discourse" had meaning for the last generation would not have been written or needed.

White's Approach to the Sequence in the Discourse

There is a discernable sequence in the discourse. It is inherent in each of the three accounts.

While it is true that Christ gave a multiplicity of signs which corporately were to announce His approach, a chronological progression can be seen in the chapter.

1. There are the preliminary signs from vv. 5-8. These are not necessarily single occurrences but distinguishable events. They may continue from their point of commencement and run concurrently with others, or occur spasmodically. They are preliminary because by nature they are precursors and not terminators. This the text indicates. At the end of the first combination, it distinctly says "the end is not yet" (v. 6). At the end of the next combination it states "these are the beginning of the birth pangs" (v. 8). The new age is evidently to be thrust upon the cosmic scene with pangs increasing in intensity and frequency.

2. The result of the gospel being presented brings persecution (vv. 9-10), apostasy and international hatred and death. The abundant iniquity and the false prophets take their toll (vv. 11-13).

3. Connected with the completion of the gospel to all the world is the "abomination of desolation," ie. the surrounding of Jerusalem by hostile forces. This is the key sign of the chapter, not for the sign of "the Son of Man" but for the sign of "flight" (vv. 15-20), to escape the "tribulation" that inevitably follows.

4. v. 29 indicates that immediately after the tribulation of those days (v. 21) there will be supernatural signs in the sun, moon, and stars, then the actual "appearance" (v. 30).

The sequence is, the "abomination of desolation" which is preceded by the preliminary signs and persecution, followed by the tribulation, at the end of which are the heavenly signs and "the sign of the Son of Man."

A careful comparison of White's position in the earlier sections of this chapter shows that she follows this natural sequence in her application to the destruction of Jerusalem¹ and as it relates to the Second Advent.

However, in the interpretation of the chapter in the way just described (ie. White's historical-continuous interpretation), this sequence is not followed so as to fit contextually with the whole chapter. The exposition becomes open to a tendency of seizing on certain highlights as they become apparent and basing our belief around them. It has occurred, therefore, it is correct.

A Harmony of Approach

As stated at the beginning of this chapter there is a wide

¹See footnote 2, p. 9.

homiletic use that White makes of this discourse which is not examined in this thesis. This 'devotional' use does not necessarily have to satisfy any rigorous criteria. But as White applied it to the destruction of Jerusalem and the second Advent it does satisfy the criterion of 'dual fulfillment' and represents a faithful attempt to remain within the context and sequence of the chapter.¹

When, however, the 'historical-continuous' approach is maintained, there is an appreciable difference from the view that sees the "entire discourse" as having meaning to the last generation. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples to highlight these tensions.

1. The 'historical-continuous' method finds us poised in the middle of v. 29 waiting for the "shaking of the powers of heaven." We have already a 201 year gap from the 'dark day' and 137 year gap from the "falling of the stars." This ever increasing gap is restricting the connecting movement in the verse and the natural expectation of verse 30 and 'then shall appear . . .'

2. It does not answer the summary statement in vv. 33-34 which indicate that the generation that sees all the signs of this chapter corporately will witness the parousia.

3. It makes no allowance for her saying that the "great tribulation" is also yet future.²

4. The natural sequence of the discourse is violated when we

¹The discussion of whether the hermeneutic she uses is adequate or not is not the scope of this paper. It will, however, be shown that she is not unique in the method she does use.

²White, RH 66(5 November 1898):689.

go back and take the preliminary signs (eg. wars, earthquakes) and bring them forward and make them fit in the midst of v. 29.

5. This interpretation says nothing about the final conflict of the church, when it is surrounded by the forces of evil, bent on her destruction, and the miraculous, divine intervention of Christ to redeem her and destroy her enemies. Most of the Old Testament prophets (Joel 2-3; Ezek 38-39; Dan 11; Zech 14) ended with this schema of Jerusalem surrounded by her enemies and Yahweh intervening for deliverance. The New Testament-Christocentric-Church interpretation also ends in this way (Rev 14:20; 16:19; 20:9). It should be noted that in White's previous application of the "entire discourse," to the second advent this very schema is highlighted using 24:15-20 as the base.

Conclusion

White gave definite support to the view that the "dark day" of 1780 and the "falling of the stars" in 1833 were fulfillments of prophecy. Among other texts to support this were Matt 24:29 and Mark 13:24.

It is to be carefully noted that she uses only three texts in exposition from the discourse to give support to the events between A.D. 538 and 1833 (ie. vv. 21, 22, 29). By using these three verses we could not conclude that she is herein exegeting the whole chapter in the manner of her earlier attempts.¹ If we do conclude this, then we place her various uses in opposition. By applying these verses to the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833, she was right and authoritative; the only change

¹That is, when she applied the chapter to the destruction of Jerusalem, and secondly to the end of the age.

is one of relative importance because of the ensuing years.

It seems right to conclude that she preferred to be in harmony with the expositors of the religious awakening from which she emerged, and that this stance was maintained among the Seventh-day Adventist ministers with whom she laboured. In this area it can be said that she was 'time-associate' dependent.¹ This needs to be held tentatively in tension with the data presented earlier in this chapter on the major thrust of her exposition. This tension will be examined in the conclusion, within the broader context of later chapters.

Our next task is to examine the literature of the Millerite preachers, from whom the young girl, Ellen Harmon, gained a religious sensitivity and impetus that was to mould her thinking for life.

¹By 'time-associate' dependent, is meant that she had to write at a certain time in history, and among certain other associates, consequently she was influenced by both these factors. The degree of this dependence will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE MILLERITE EXPOSITION

Much of the Millerite literature,¹ even primary source material, is readily available and an accurate assessment can be made of the Millerite's positions on the Olivet Discourse. It is well recognized that the preaching of the Millerites was centred in proclaiming the second advent of Christ. This was particularly true as the year 1844 approached.

In their popular presentation of Biblical topics, they did not always follow an exposition verse by verse, or chapter by chapter. They often preferred a method of drawing from various parts of scripture, assembling isolated texts to give a topical Biblical view. To make the assessment as objective as possible nine writers have been selected who appear to make a serious attempt to exegete the passage. The exegesis must be seen within the climate of evangelistic outreach from which it emerged.

For the purposes of this study the material is sufficient to discover what influence Millerite views had on Ellen G. White. The following writers will be examined:

¹ Damsteegt's definition of Millerite has been accepted here. "The name Millerites has been used to designate Adventists in the U.S.A. who accepted many of Miller's expositions on the imminence of the Second Advent." P. Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1977), p. xv.

1. William Miller
2. Sylvester Bliss
3. Hiram Carleton
4. H. K. Flagg
5. George C. Needham
6. E. R. Pinney
7. S. C. Kapff
8. Issac C. Wellcome
9. Horace Winchall

Before the individual views are canvassed, one important doctrinal stance of Millerite times needs to be recalled. Sylvester Bliss outlined it succinctly in the following words:

Universalists and others, to avoid the natural and necessary conclusions which must inevitably follow a plain and literal interpretation of this chapter, have uniformly applied it to the destruction of Jerusalem; affecting to discern in that event a complete accomplishment of all its prophetic predictions.¹

Bliss was not the only Millerite writer who mentioned the contemporary debate that was being engaged in at the time with the Universalists.² It was also obviously a time in which polemical skills and literary boldness were used with great freedom, as the following statement from Bliss reveals.

This work most happily, as we conceive, wrests from their hands this sophisticated weapon, strips the specious covering of apparent reason from their flimsy arguments, and allows the language of the Savior to have its simple and obvious import; and to be regarded, not as a figurative or hyperbolic description of something to take place at the overthrow of Jerusalem, but a plain and positive statement of

¹Sylvester Bliss, An Exposition of the Twenty-fourth of Matthew (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1843) pp. 3-4. The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 2. R2:9).

²E. R. Pinney, Exposition of Matthew, Chapter XXIV (n.p.: n.p., 1846?). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R11:25), p. 3.

The term Universalist is used in this chapter not to highlight the doctrinal teaching of this church in the times of the Millerites, but to designate the doctrinal stance they had taken on the Olivet Discourse, which saw no meaning for the chapter except the destruction of Jerusalem.

coming events,¹

The Universalists were using the chapter to show that the events of the Olivet Discourse were past and fulfilled in the events that led up to and surrounded the destruction of Jerusalem. The Millerites were zealous in their attempts to show that the chapter had contemporary meaning to the events that were occurring in their time, and to the times of the advent which was about to eventuate.

The result was not unpredictable, a denial by many of the Millerites that the chapter had any meaning for the destruction of Jerusalem, apart from vv. 15-20. This polemical stance should be kept in mind as the pertinent literature is reviewed.

1. William Miller

The fact that William Miller's name was used to designate the main group of believers connected with the Advent awakening at least indicates that he was the leading proponent of their views. That he was highly regarded by his followers can be seen in many ways. One endearing term used by them was the designation "father Miller."²

His most comprehensive treatment of the Olivet Discourse, is found in an article he wrote combined with thoughts on Hosea chapter five and six.³

¹ Bliss. p. 4.

² Don F. Neufeld, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), s.v. "Miller, William." (Hereafter cited as SDAE).

³ William Miller, A Familiar Exposition of the Twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew and the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of Hosea (N.p.: n.p., 1842). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 2. R10:7a).

In his introduction Miller also shows some of the strong polemical bent of his times. He is aware that some feel he has no right to expound the scripture because of his lack of theological training.

I know that many will say, "Dost thou teach us, having never learned Hebrew or Greek?". . . I hope therefore to have none of that vain and silly sneering, while I endeavor to reason, out of the Scripture, . . .¹

His explanation of the chapter is just as clear and direct.

Verses 4-14

I will now remark, that the Savior, in answering the questions which these disciples had propounded to him, gives them a short prophetic history of the trials and afflictions of his people, (not of the Jews, as some suppose,) down to the end of the world, on the gospel period, from the fourth to the fourteenth verse.²

Miller is here using the term "short" to refer to the concise summary these verses give of the history of the Christian church ("his people") from the apostles time until the end of the gospel era. By categorically denying that this does not refer to "the Jews," he is also refuting that this passage has reference to the Jews prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. In other words he is also attacking the Universalist's position.

On pages 12-16 Miller then goes on to expand his position of verses 4-14 and their meaning to the Christian era.

Verses 15-28

Miller continues:

He then goes back, and begins at the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed, and tells his believing children what they must do when

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Ibid., pp. 10-11.

these things should begin to come to pass, and what they should pray for, and again brings them down to the end of time - beginning at the fifteenth verse, and ending with the twenty-eighth.

Verses 21-22

Miller quotes verse 21 and then says:

At that time, when Jerusalem is destroyed, shall be such a time of trouble as Jerusalem never experienced before, no, nor shall Jerusalem ever again experience such a time of trouble But it is evident, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, more people were gathered into the city than ever was known before, or ever will be gathered again.²

It is obvious that Miller sees this verse as having complete reference to Jerusalem's downfall and its devastating effect on the Jews. Verse 22 he also sees fulfilled at this time. "This verse has had its fulfillment in the siege of Jerusalem, which was shortened by a providential circumstance" ³ He does, however, conclude that though the meaning must apply to the Jewish people, the end of the world is "typified" by the destruction. ⁴

Verses 29-31

Miller's position on these verses should be carefully noted as it is unique among all Millerite expositors:

He then goes back to the time when the persecutions under the Roman emperors should cease; and then gives them the signs of his second coming, and the end of the world, from the twenty-ninth to the thirty-first verse.⁵

Later in his defence Miller dates the end of the Roman emperors' persecution at A.D. 312.⁶ Herein lies his reasons for taking verse 29 back to the shortening of the time of tribulation.

¹ Ibid., p. 113.

² Ibid., pp. 18,19.

³ Ibid., pp. 19,20.

⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

Now it will be perceived that Christ has gone back again to the time of the tribulation spoken of in verse 21, and now says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days;" that is, after they flee from Jerusalem, and after the great persecutions which followed the church in the days of the Roman emperors, . . .¹

Miller sees verses 23-28 as a parenthesis, the chronological sequence of these verses is verse 29 following verse 22. He does this because verse 29 gives events that immediately follow the tribulation of verse 22. Because Miller sees the "tribulation" and the "shortening" in verse 21 and 22 as applying to events of A.D. 70, (and immediately following) he must consistently apply verse 29 to those times.² To Miller's meaning of the cosmic signs we now turn.

Then "shall the sun be darkened;" that is, the moral sun - the gospel - which is the means of light to the church, should become obscured; the same as the two witnesses being clothed in sackcloth. This would follow the tribulation of the church . . . when Constantine put a stop to persecution, and began to bring in those abominable heresies, which finally ended in the rise of Antichrist, . . . "And the moon shall not give her light;" that is, the church should not spread her light . . . "And the stars shall fall from heaven." This has reference to the ministers of the gospel (lesser lights in the moral heavens) falling from the purity of the gospel into antichristian abominations.³

Miller also identified "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" in a figurative manner. Identifying them with the loss of the true Bible principles and "our holy religion."⁴ Miller did not use the cosmic signs in this chapter and identify them with the darkening of the sun and moon in 1780 or the falling of the stars in 1833.

Verse 34

Miller spends six pages endeavouring to define "this generation."⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 24.

² The recognition that verse 29 follows vv. 21-22 sequentially is significant also for those who see these verses as having wider meaning.

³ Miller, p. 25.

⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 31-37.

He concludes it means the generation of believers, his children, who would see the fulfillment of the signs Jesus gave, and would pass into heaven at the time of the resurrection or translation.¹

In summary it can be said then, that Miller saw the chapter as covering three sweeps of Christian history.

1. Verses 4-14 - From the apostles times to the Second Advent
2. Verses 15-28 - From Jerusalem's destruction until the Second Advent
3. Verses 29-31 - From about A.D. 312 until the Second Advent

We will now examine the other Millerite expositors, using Miller's position for contrast and comparison.

2. Sylvester Bliss

Bliss has been called the "ablest of the Millerite editors."²

Verses 4-14

On these verses Bliss takes a position similar to Miller. After quoting the entire passage he says, "The events here alluded to, seem to carry us down to the end of the world."³

It will be noted here that this is the same position as Miller: The first broad sweep to the advent. In commenting on verse 14, Bliss concludes what can be cited as a representative Millerite view on the progress of the gospel he says:

¹ Ibid., p. 37.

² SDAE, s.v. "Bliss, Sylvester."

³ Bliss, p. 15.

That the gospel has thus been preached in all the world, and we have reason to believe that it has been a witness to all nations, so as nearly to fulfil this prediction, the present state of the church and condition of missionary operations fully indicate. The gospel was preached in Asia in the first century, and in Africa in the fourth; since then it has been preached in Europe, America, and in the isles of the Pacific; and at the present time it would be difficult to find a nation on the earth, where the gospel is not now being preached.¹

It appears that the Millerites did not see their particular message as having international implications. This had been done in stages during the Christian era, and their emphasis was part of a wider thrust, of the Christian church in general.

Perhaps Miller's similar approach should be included here:

But some will inquire, Has the gospel been preached in all the world? I answer, I know of no place or nation that has not received the word of life, either in the days of the apostles, or since The text does not tell us that the gospel shall be preached in all the world at one time; . . . I am of the opinion, that the literal meaning of the Savior was, that the gospel - the moral light - would go over the world from east to west during the gospel day; . . .²

Verses 15-28

Bliss now saw that the prophecy returned to cover the same events, this time commencing with the destruction of Jerusalem. "After our Savior has glanced down to the end of time, he begins with the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives a more minute prediction of the same events."³ Bliss like Miller, saw verses 15-28 as another scan of the Christian era, but unlike Miller, some of the individual verses in this block he interprets differently.

¹ Ibid.

² Miller, pp. 15,16.

³ Bliss, p. 16.

Verses 15-20 he saw as centred in the desolation of Jerusalem, but verse 15 he saw as also reaching further. "The desolations here predicted were to begin with the desolations of Jerusalem, and extend to the end of the world."¹ Explaining the "great tribulation" of verse 21, he said: "When shall be great tribulation? Ans. During the over-spreading of abominations which were to desolate Jerusalem till the consummation."² Bliss, with great care, builds his conclusions of the continuing desolation from the book of Daniel. Particularly is this so of Daniel 9:24-27.

According to Daniel 9th, it was to begin with the destruction of the city and sanctuary, and to end with the consummation, . . . And according to our Savior, it was to begin when Jerusalem should be compassed with armies, and³ to end when the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled, . . .

In explaining the shortening of this tribulation, Bliss said that it was not shortened for the wicked, but only for the elect. For the wicked it continues until the consummation, but for the elect it began to subside in the days of the Reformation under Luther and continued until the days of Whitefield and Wesley. Since then there has been no general war against the church.⁴ The false christs of verses 23-26, Bliss sees as arising during this long period of tribulation.⁵

Verse 29

Bliss saw the cosmic signs of this verse fulfilled in a literal manner. "This was fulfilled to the letter, in 1780, when, on the 19th

¹ Ibid., p. 40

² Ibid., p. 42

³ Ibid., pp. 42,43.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 43,44.

⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

of May, the sun was supernaturally darkened from morning till night, and even into the night."¹ He saw November 13, 1833 as the primary fulfillment of "the stars shall fall from heaven." Interestingly he quotes authorities that list recurring scenes similar to those which took place on this date.

A similar phenomenon was witnessed on the 12th of Nov., 1799, and at the same season of the year in 1830, 1831, and 1832. The meteoric shower was repeated on the morning of Nov. 13th or 14th, for several years, but on a scale constantly diminishing until 1838, . . .²

Verse 34

The conclusion Bliss drew from verse 34 concerning the last generation must have fanned the expectancy of Advent believers to new heights. "Seventy years are given as the age of man, and sixty-three of those years have passed away since the darkening of the sun, the living witnesses of which are not all gone from the stage."³

The differences of Bliss with Miller hinge around the identity of the tribulation. For Miller it ended in the times of the Roman emperors, so verse 29 had to follow that period. Hence his cosmic signs had to be interpreted figuratively in the ensuing period as a third sweep of history. Bliss, who saw the tribulation extending into the 18th century, could see the cosmic signs as literal because they fitted into a neat pattern chronologically. This also made Miller's third sweep of history redundant to Bliss.

Bliss' treatise was a very well-reasoned paper, and if publishing dates are significant, it appears he influenced very strongly those who followed him.

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 49.

³ Ibid., p. 60.

3. Hiram Carleton

In 1851 Hiram Carleton wrote a 58 page pamphlet analysing the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.¹ He too was concerned with the Universalist position and argues against it.²

Verse 4-14

He writes, "There are other substantial reasons for believing that in Matthew xxiv. 4-14, Christ spoke of events which would end only with the end of the world and with his glorious appearing in his kingdom."³

Even though Carleton argues strongly against these being totally fulfilled in the first century, he was slightly more open than either Miller or Bliss, and saw that perhaps some of the content could have had meaning to the disciples. In particular he mentions vv. 4-5, the warning against false christs.

Verses 15-22

These verses, Carleton says, were given in answer to the disciples question, "when shall these things be?" and apply to the destruction of Jerusalem. It appears that he has the tribulation continuing on to the second coming.⁴

Verses 23-28

Carleton comments that these verses represent the "state of things which should follow" the destruction of Jerusalem.⁵

¹ Hiram Carleton, An Analysis of the Twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew (Windson: Chronicle Press, 1851). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan; University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R2:34).

² Ibid., p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ Ibid.

Verse 29

Carleton is unclear as to whether he applied verse 29 to the events of 1780 or 1833. He calls them the "wonders" at the close of the tribulation, and it could be deduced that he means the cosmic signs.

Carleton's approach is adequate, but not detailed exegesis like Bliss or Miller. Broadly it can be said that he saw the chapter as covering two sweeps of history, similar to Bliss's proposal. Carleton drew no conclusions in interpretation that would mark his as making a new contribution to exposition.

4. H. K. Flagg

In The Saints Harvest,¹ though not giving an exposition of the chapter, H. K. Flagg does make reference to the 'abomination of desolation' in verse 15. He does this in commenting on the parallel nature of Dan 12:11-12. His thesis is that verse 15 is a picture of the Catholic Church placing itself without permission in the most holy place, attempting to usurp the work of the mediator. It represents the period of Papal supremacy during the Dark Ages. Flagg seems to be unique in Millerite literature in having applied verse 15 in this way. He seems to be doing more than just producing a topical study as he traces the 'abomination of desolation' through the book of Daniel. There is unfortunately no further clue as to how he would understand the remainder of the chapter.

¹H. K. Flagg, The Saints Harvest (Boston: Samson & Farrar, [1862?]). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R6:3.).

5. George C. Needham

In a twelve page tract, published around 1850, George C. Needham presented his views on verse 34 of Matthew chapter twenty-four.¹ It was entitled The Same Generation.

Verses 4-14

On these verses Needham took what was to become the standard Millerite view. "In order to answer their questions, Jesus proceeded to give them a history of the great leading events of Providence, from that time to the end of the world."²

Verses 15-20

Though Needham does not amplify his explanation, it can be seen from the context that he saw in these events the destruction of Jerusalem.³

Verse 21

The tribulation mentioned in this verse he saw as affecting Jerusalem, but also continuing right through to the 18th century. This can be seen when he applied the cosmic signs to the events of 1780 and 1833, immediately after the tribulation ceases.⁴

Verse 34

The main thesis of his paper is to identify the last generation and Needham is clear on who they will be: "The generation meant is the

¹ George C. Needham, The Same Generation (Boston: Union, [1850?]).
The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R11:3).

² Ibid., p. 1.

³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-10.

one that sees the signs of the 29th verse and the 25th of Luke XXI."¹ That meant the generation that had seen these signs and were still living. As it was around 1850 when Needham's tract was written, it can rightly be assumed that he anticipated the advent in an ensuing short time.

Generally it can be said that Needham followed a pattern similar to Bliss, but seeing he is not specific enough on some parts of the chapter any comparison must be tentative. The article itself is directed at explaining verse 34 of the chapter, therefore, any explanation of the rest of the chapter is incidental.

6. E. R. Pinney

E. R. Pinney was a Baptist minister of Seneca Falls, New York; a Millerite preacher and writer.² He attempted an exposition of Matthew Twenty-four around the year 1846.³ Later, Pinney expanded his initial treatment of the chapter into a 64 page booklet.⁴ It is a recapitulation of the previous views, a similar format with minor additions. His conclusions are the same.

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

² SDAE, s.v. "Pinney, E. R."

³ E. R. Pinney, Exposition of Twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew (N.p.: n.p., [1846?]). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R11:25).

⁴ E. R. Pinney, Exposition of Matthew, Chapter XXIV, 3rd ed. (Rochester, New York: Advent Harbinger & Bible Advocate Office, 1850). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R11:26).

Verses 4-14

From the 4th to the 14th verses inclusive, is a synopsis of the prominent events connected with this world's history. In which are brought to view the persecutions of the church, the political commotion among the nations of the earth, and the false Christs and false prophets which should arise to deceive the church and world, down to the end of time.¹

Commenting on verse 4 and 5 he says that the false Messiahs have appeared in all ages, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem. The 'wars' of verses 6 and 7 commenced with the destruction of Jerusalem.²

Pinney interprets verses 9-11 as applying to the persecution of the Middle Ages. He says: "During the Papal tribulation, these verses were fulfilled to the letter, in every particular; as all know who are at all acquainted with the history of that time of tribulation upon the church."³ From a chronological point of view this may appear, initially, a difficult application of these verses in the whole context of the chapter. But given Pinney's premise (also the Millerite premise) that verses 4-14 stretch between the two advents, then the conclusion is tenable, particularly as he viewed these verses as events arranged in their chronological order, so far as their commencement was concerned.⁴

Pinney's conclusions on verse 14 are significant. He says if you believe it is the common gospel of salvation, it has been fulfilled.⁵ If you suppose it is the proclamation of Christ's coming (ie. the Millerites' resurgent proclamation) then we have equally clear evidence of its fulfillment.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 8

²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

³Ibid., p. 10.

⁴Ibid., p. 10,24.

⁵Ibid., p. 17.

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

Verses 15-20

Pinney saw the fulfillment of these pronouncements in the fate of Jerusalem in the first century.¹ Pinney denies that the "abomination of desolation" has reference to Papal Rome. He sees only Pagan Rome in verse 15.

Verse 21

A significant variation in Millerite exposition is reached by Pinney in this text. He concludes that the tribulation is not connected with the Jews or Jerusalem. He appears to be arguing directly against Miller's view that the destruction of persons in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the greatest calamity of all times. He quotes the flood and later Christian persecutions to disprove this point.² He then concludes: "This period of tribulation commenced in 538, at which time, the Emperor Justinian gave to the Pope his seat, (Rome) Commencing the 1260 years in 538, their termination would be 1798."³

It is interesting to compare the other two principal Millerite expositors on this verse at this point. Miller said the tribulation of verse 21 was upon the Jews and Jerusalem. Bliss said it commenced with the Jews and continued on including all subsequent tribulation upon the Church. Pinney said it means only the Papal persecution commencing A.D. 538 - 1798.

Verses 23-28

These verses Pinney saw as being a continual warning to those waiting for the "appearance." He singles out those who go into the desert

¹ Ibid., pp. 19-24.

² Ibid., pp. 24,25.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

(Mormon Smith) and those who say He is in the secret chambers on the 10th day of the 7th month.¹

Verse 29

At the 29th verse, the Evangelist takes up the second question "What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world?"² Pinney now outlines in detail his belief that this verse was fulfilled by the dark day in 1780 and the falling of the stars in 1833.

It is difficult to follow Pinney's reasoning in making the signs of verse 29 the start of the signs of the second advent, when many of the earlier signs he says indicate the imminence of the Advent. It could be concluded that he felt that the signs of verse 29 had never occurred before that time (1780) and in 1850 they still appeared highly convincing and unique.

Verse 34

In his earlier publication, Pinney categorically stated that the generation who witnessed the dark day on May 19, 1780 (a generation being 70 years) would see Christ come in the clouds of heaven.³ In his 1850 publication this statement is removed, for the pragmatic reason that the seventy years had expired with the date of publication.

7. S. C. Kapff

S. C. Kapff was a German writer who published an exposition on the Olivet Discourse and it appears to have been translated by an unnamed

¹ Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

² Ibid., p. 33.

³ Pinney, Exposition [1846?], p. 29.

clergyman of the Church of England.¹ He outlines his position succinctly.

Verses 4-14

From the 4th to the 14th verse inclusive, Kapff said, Matthew spoke of the coming of Christ in general terms, and signs of that coming were mentioned for general warning and encouragement.²

Verses 15-28

Then from the 15th to the 28th verse inclusive, we have a prediction of Jerusalem's destruction.³

Kapff does, however, say that some of these verses (15-28) have a further reference, namely to Christ's visible coming. He particularly marks verses 21, 22, 24, 27.⁴

Kapff's most significant contribution is that he recognized that there was a blending in this chapter of the two events. The Second Advent was being superimposed on the destruction of Jerusalem. The idea does not seem to be well formed in his own mind, but he gives glimpses of this belief at various points of his thesis.

The difficulty that seems to forbid the above explanation of the prophecy is what we have already noticed, namely, that even where the destruction of Jerusalem is the prominent subject, we meet with foreshowings and admonitions which, strictly speaking, can apply only to the second visible coming of the Lord:

He also uses the term "blended together" when endeavouring to identify this phenomenon.⁶

¹ S. C. Kapff, The Coming of the Lord as Inferred from the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Chapters of St. Matthew, Compared with the Signs of the Times (London: J. Nisbet, 1837). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 2. R8:11).

² Ibid., p. 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 12,13.

⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

Verse 29

Kapff gives an interpretation of verse 29 that is unique in the expositions being reviewed here: "And as for what is contained in the 29th and two following verses, surely none ought ever to have denied that it cannot apply to any other thing than to the second coming of our Lord."¹ He further says that we have not seen any fulfillment of these signs mentioned in verse 29, therefore it is yet future.²

In summarizing Kapff's position, there are some basic similarities between his view and the other Millerite writers presented thus far. He does broadly follow the two sweeps of history, as do Bliss and others, in the early verses of the chapter. He then returns again for another review commencing with the destruction of Jerusalem. It is at this point that he sees a blending of certain verses, which he says refer to both motifs.

Kapff saw verse 29 connected with the second advent, but he said that there had been no fulfillment up to the time he wrote. In assessing his conclusion it should be remembered that his work was published in London in 1837. The title page of his publication says that he was Pastor in Konthal and was formerly Assistant Theological Tutor in the University of Tübingen. It could be concluded that he was not aware of the "dark day" of 1780 or the "falling of the stars" in 1833, or it could be concluded that he knew of them and did not think of them as having meaning in verse 29. If the latter conclusion is correct then it is significant that in Europe an ardent believer in the Second Advent was not as compelled by

¹ Ibid., p. 15.

² Ibid., p. 17.

the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833 as an American Millerite operating on the East coast of America. It should be remembered that his thesis subtitle says that he is comparing the statements of Matthew with "the signs of the times."

It could be argued that Kapff does not fit the definition of 'Millerite' as tendered at the beginning of this chapter. This would be technically correct. He has been included here as he is usually listed with Millerites and early Adventists.¹

8. Issac C. Wellcome

Issac C. Wellcome was a minister of the Advent Christian Church who published a treatise on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew in 1855.² It can be readily observed that Wellcome fits into what could now be described as a regular pattern of interpretation for his time.

Verses 4-14

It is not difficult to see, by the current of this discourse, that Jesus is predicting events to occur in consecutive order, during the whole Gentile dispensation, . . . Thus he passes directly over the event of Jerusalem's destruction, giving only a passing remark on it in verse 6, and proceeds to give a synopsis of events to the end of the world.³

Wellcome's "passing remark" is applying the "wars" of verse six to the

¹ Jean Hoornstra, ed., The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: 1978), p. 16.

² Issac C. Wellcome, A Treatise on the 24th and 25th Chapters of Matthew (Boston: n.p., 1855). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R14:5).

³ Ibid., pp. 13,14.

destruction of Jerusalem. He says the work predicted in verse 14 has nearly been accomplished.¹

Verses 15-28

After the general remark, or synopsis of events, Jesus commences to give a more minute account of those events. Wellcome saw here a return to the account again, to commence the second run through history. It is done in more detail, and commenced with the destruction of Jerusalem. Like Pinney, Wellcome argues very strongly that the tribulation of verse 21 refers to the Papal rule. "We have seen that the great tribulation was to be on the elect, and that it was caused by the 'man of sin,' or Papacy."² After commenting on verse 28, Wellcome says: "This is the second time in this discourse of our Lord, that he has led us down to the end of time."³

Verse 29

From page 65, Wellcome proceeds to give a lengthy discourse attempting to prove that the events of verse 29 were amply met in the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833.

Verse 34

"This generation now living have seen the sign, or 'these things,' and are destined to witness the coming of the Son of man."⁴ The sign that Wellcome mentions here is a reference back to the content of verse 29. It can be seen at a glance that Wellcome is not presenting anything new

¹ Ibid., p. 31.

² Ibid., pp. 54,55.

³ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

in his interpretations. He is obviously very close to Pinney's view, in fact a strong case could be made for a fairly heavy dependence on Pinney in places. This is particularly true of his argument of verse 21.

9. Horace Winchell

The last writer to be reviewed in this chapter is Horace Winchell. His work is dated in 1862.¹ He specifically states in his introduction that the treatise was written ten years before it was published. Therefore we can assume it reflects the thinking of the early 1850's. The section on Matthew is brief, being only part of a book dealing with other areas of Bible prophecy, particularly Daniel.

Winchell has some interesting departures from the major Millerite interpreters. He sees the discourse as a chronological sequence from the apostles times right through to the end of time, not in two sweeps, but in one uninterrupted sequence. "He began to predict a course of successive events, from the time the question was asked, down to the time of His second coming."²

Note how Winchell rehearses this sequence.

1. The false Jewish Christs arose (vv. 4-5)
2. "Wars and rumors of wars," (vv. 6-7). The first of any note were the battles in the destruction of Jerusalem
3. The persecution of the apostles by Pagan Rome (vv. 9-10)
4. The disciples giving the gospel to all the Roman world (v. 14)

¹Horace Winchell, Exposition of the 24th and 25th of Matthew (Falls Village, Connecticut: C. B. Maltbie, 1862). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R15:28).

²Ibid., p. 34.

5. The rise of the "abomination of desolation," (v. 15) which he identifies with the Papal power. This has caused flights on several occasions. Out of Jerusalem to Pella. Into the wilderness, to Piedmont, and he also says there will be a final flight into the air at the advent.
6. The shortening of the Papal tribulation is brought about by the Reformation (v. 22).
7. Verse 29 he sees fulfilled in 1780 and 1833.¹

Summary of Millerite Views

There is similarity in the views presented by the Millerites but there is also dissimilarity, primarily, variation at specific points in the chapters.

Similarities

1. Miller, Bliss, Carleton, Needham, Pinney, Kapff and Wellcome all saw the chapter as covering Christian history at least twice.² Miller saw a third coverage because of his interpretation of verse 29. Winchell saw the chapter as sequentially covering history once. They all see verses 15-20 as having reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Flagg saw verse 15 as having reference also to the Papal power.

2. All concluded that verses 4-14 had little or no reference to events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem, except Winchell.

3. All those that commented on verse 14 felt that the task of presenting the gospel was almost completed. It is also significant that they saw the commission in terms of geographic completion and not

¹ Ibid.

² Flagg is not included in these summary statements as he only comments on verse 15.

primarily to every individual.¹

4. All writers, except Miller and Kapff, saw verse 29 as having reference to the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833. Miller interprets them figuratively of history after A.D. 312 and Kapff says they will occur with the actual "appearance."

5. All those that commented on verse 34 indicated that they were the generation that would see Christ come.

Dissimilarities

1. Winchell stood alone when he saw the whole chapter as a chronological sequence of history.

2. Miller is unique when he interpreted the signs of verse 29 figuratively.

3. The interpretation of verse 21 also showed some divergence:

(a) Miller saw it as referring only to the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem and in the continuing persecution to the consummation. Carleton and Bliss supported Miller in this conclusion.

(b) Needham saw the verse as the tribulation that was experienced by Jerusalem and continued apparently through the pagan and Papal eras terminating in the 18th century.

(c) Pinney saw the tribulation as covering the 1260 years of Papal supremacy, A.D. 538-1798. Wellcome supported this view as did Winchell.

4. The major dissimilarity presented by Kapff was his recognition that the signs between and including vv. 20-28 had implications both to

¹Bliss, p. 15. is an example of this interpretation.

the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Advent.

5. Winchell's position is unique in that where the others were denying vv. 4-14 had any meaning prior to A.D. 70, he argues that they had significance to this period.

Comparison of Millerite Views with Ellen White

When the salient features of Millerite interpretation are compared with White's conclusions, several aspects emerge. Overall, White was closer to the interpreters after Miller, than to Miller himself. This is clearly because of his interpretation of the "tribulation" and the cosmic signs. White saw the signs as literal, Miller saw them as figurative. Miller saw the "tribulation" as the Roman assault on Jerusalem, White saw it as extending over the entire Christian era. She does not see the chapter as covering three overlapping replays of history as Miller does.

White affirms, with the Millerite interpreters, that the preliminary signs have meaning to the last generation, but she contradicts them by also affirming they have meaning to the first century disciples. (Winchell is the exception here, because White affirms his position). She encompasses all their interpretations of the "tribulation," not limiting it to one specific assault as many of them did.

It can be seen readily that White emerged from Millerite stock, both geographically and experientially. This heritage she brought into her understanding of the chapter. Her indebtedness to this background, including her basic interpretation of the Olivet Discourse, must be acknowledged. However, a singular distinctiveness is also apparent. She

is prepared to contradict an established approach¹ (supporting the Universalist against the Millerites). She sees in much of the chapter expansiveness and depth of meaning that rises above and beyond her environmental heritage. It can be concluded that Ellen White was influenced by the Millerite expositors but she exhibited an exegetical maturity that proceeded far beyond their conclusions.

¹The primary example here is White's clear teaching that verses 4-14 had meaning as signs of the destruction of Jerusalem when all Millerites, except Winchell, said they had no meaning for that time.

CHAPTER IV

ADVENTIST AUTHORS CONTEMPORARY

WITH ELLEN WHITE

This chapter is to survey the literature presented by Ellen G. White's Seventh-day Adventist contemporaries. As 1915 was the year of her death it has been arbitrarily adopted as the terminus for this period. It is, however, recognised that any writer who could have significantly influenced White, must have had their views known before the end of the nineteenth century, because most of her significant material on the Olivet Discourse was in print by that time.

James Springer White

The most significant writer on this subject during this period was her husband, James Springer White. He obviously considered the Olivet Discourse important as evidenced in his regular and expanded treatment of the topic throughout his lifetime. His first publication contained sixty-four pages.¹ In 1871 it was enlarged to eighty pages and the original title expanded,² but his expository conclusions were not altered.

¹ James Springer White, A Brief Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Review and Herald Office, 1857). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 3. R8:16).

² James Springer White, The Second Coming of Christ or a Brief Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1871). The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Sec. 4. R9:10).

In 1876,¹ 1880,² 1885,³ and 1890⁴ further treatments of the subject were published. In 1889 James White also wrote a small booklet on the subject of the Second Advent.⁵ Though it is not a treatise on the Olivet Discourse, it is important to our study as passages from the chapter are quoted.

James White follows a consistent pattern of interpretation through the years, with some relatively minor changes, apparently due to his continuing study of the chapter, (see comments on verse 34).

Like many of the Millerite expositors, he was also facing the conclusions reached by the Universalists that the chapter was fulfilled in Jerusalem's era.⁶ Basically it can be said that he followed an interpretation that could be broadly called Millerite. This should be expected as he would have been only a young preacher when the expectations of 1844 were thrust upon him, and he would have most certainly been influenced by his older brethren and their expositions.⁷

¹This was almost identical to the 1871 publication except that the section on the ten virgins was omitted.

²A sixty-four page treatise with the same title and publishing details as the 1876 publication.

³This was the same as 1880 edition.

⁴James Springer White, An Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four or the Second Coming of Christ (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1890). This is his most expansive attempt covering ninety-four pages.

⁵James Springer White, The Second Advent, Manner, Object and Nearness of the Event (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1889).

⁶James Springer White, Matthew 24, (1857), p. 2.

⁷White did not attend school until he was 19 years of age (1840) and his schooling totalled only 29 weeks. He began preaching at 21 (1842) and was only 23 years of age at the time of the Disappointment.

Most of the following quotations are taken from his 1857 publication.

Verses 4-14

James White saw these verses as being a general description of events happening to the church from Christ's time to the end.

We think it will appear evident, upon an investigation of this chapter that from the fifth to the fourteenth verse our Lord passes rapidly over the important events of the Christian age; that he gives only a general description of the commotions in the natural and political world, the persecutions of the church, and false prophets which would arise to deceive the church and world, down to the END.¹

The events following, commencing with verse 15, James White said were a "more particular description of the great events of the Christian age, connected with the people of God, commencing at the destruction of Jerusalem."²

It can be immediately seen that James White here is very closely following Miller, and the other major Millerite expositors in his overall interpretation of the chapter. He does, however, make some specific contributions in the interpretation of certain verses. Verses 9-10 are a brief description of the afflictions and martyrdom of the church. Hundreds of thousands of the faithful followers of Jesus were most cruelly put to death in the days of Pagan Rome, yet the prophecy doubtless applies more particularly to the long period of Papal persecutions"³

In verse 14 James White saw the work of the gospel as indicated in verse 14 as "nearly accomplished."⁴ This view was held very widely in

¹ James Springer White, Matthew 24 (1857), p. 2.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

the years immediately following 1844.

Verses 15-20

James White interpreted these verses as particularly answering the disciples question "when shall these things be?" The events that surrounded the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are here portrayed.¹

Verse 21

An interesting interpretation is offered on verse 21. James White seems to commence with a consistent course of exegesis by saying that the "tribulation" of this verse was predicted in Daniel 9:26-27. "Here is a clear prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies."² He then seems to be inconsistent by saying the tribulation had nothing to do with the Jews.

We take the position that the "tribulation" here mentioned is the tribulation of the church of Jesus Christ, and not that of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, . . .

Our Lord speaks of the tribulation which his people would suffer from the time of their flight onward.⁴

This he elaborates as being both pagan and Papal persecutions against the church, but that this tribulation was finally "shortened" by the mighty work of the reformation and other reformers.⁵

Verses 23-28

In this passage, Christ was warning against deceptions that were occurring in the "present age."⁶ Presumably we are to understand the times in which James White was living and writing.

¹ Ibid., p. 16.

² Ibid.,

³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶ Ibid.

Verse 29

What could now be termed the 'classic' position was taken by James White on the cosmic signs, the events of 1780 and 1833.¹ It is worth noting that he said that the last sentence of verse 29 ("the powers of heaven") are yet future and occur with the 'appearance'.² This would not have seemed unusual in 1857, as there had been fifty-three years between the signs in the first section of the verse, that is between the 'dark day' and the 'falling of the stars'.

Verse 34

In his 1871 edition he reinterpreted the earlier Millerite stance of "this generation" by saying that it was not the generation which saw the 'dark day'³ who would witness the 'appearance', but those who saw the last sign, 'the falling stars'.⁴ Bliss had interpreted a generation as being seventy years, so we presume James White had the "coming" now within the turn of the century. In the 1889 publication this is clearly his belief.

It should be noted that all publications after his 1880 edition were published posthumously; there is, however, no major change of position after the 1871 treatise.⁶

¹ Ibid., p. 23.

² Ibid., p. 30.

³ Eg. Bliss, p. 60

⁴ James Springer White, Matthew Twenty-four (1871), p. 50

⁵ James Springer White, Second Advent (1889), p. 23.

⁶ A. T. Jones, ed., An Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four on the Second Coming of Christ (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1890). This 94 page treatise is almost certainly an edited copy based on James White's 1890 publication. If it is Jones' work he has relied very heavily on James White.

The remaining Seventh-day Adventist writers in this section will be dealt with in order of publication. In selecting this order of presentation it is recognised that this will reveal little of the influence or dependency they had on each other. However, seeing the intent of the chapter is to compare their interpretations with Ellen White, the time sequence method has been chosen. Apart from James Springer White, almost all of the literature to be surveyed in this section was published between 1885 and 1899.

H. M. Kenyon

In February and April of 1885 H. M. Kenyon presented a series of lectures which included comments on the Olivet Discourse.¹ These were most probably given in Battle Creek, Michigan. There is no set pattern of exegesis to follow, but he does give a broad statement on the relevant portions of the chapter.

Verse 3-14 carry us briefly from the time Christ was speaking, over the whole gospel field, to the end of the world. Then in verse 15, He comes back to the time of the disciples instructing them what to do when Jerusalem should be threatened, then onward to verse 28, carrying us again to the end. Coming back again to verse 29, He gives the signs for which the disciples asked.²

The exegesis Kenyon offers is difficult to follow. It can, however, be clearly seen from the summary statement above that his broad understanding followed earlier Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist interpretation.

His three commencing points in the chapter are similar to Miller's,

¹H. M. Kenyon, Tabernacle Lecture Course (Oakland, California: 1885). (Reprinted in 1978 by "Leaves of Autumn Books," Payson, Arizona).

²Ibid., p. 23.

though the starting point for the third coverage (verse 29) is different because of where Miller ends the time of tribulation. Kenyon can also be compared with Pinney and James White in that he too refined some of Miller's positions.

Bible Reading for the Home Circle

The compilation Bible Readings for the Home Circle,¹ reveals some of the thinking of the church on the Olivet Discourse in the 1880's. It does not give an exhaustive treatment of the chapter, but its comments are important in our assessment as revealing the church's viewpoint at this date.

Verses 4-14

Though not stating it as such, the author(s) are endeavouring to show that verses 4-14 do reach to the end of time and were significant for more than the disciples. Stated in the usual way, they are indicating that these verses do not primarily apply to the disciples age. The disciples were not to expect the Lord's coming in their generation.²

Verse 14 was seen as almost fulfilled and the entrance of the gospel into darkest Africa, the last major stronghold of heathenism, was appealed to as support for this claim.

Verses 15-20

These verses are seen as "particularising the events of the

¹ Bible Readings for the Home Circle (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890). Bible Readings was the result of an 1883 General Conference resolution to print a monthly periodical containing various topical Bible studies. These were later compiled into book form.

² Ibid., p. 27.

future." Presumably the events of A.D. 70 can be seen as a major happening in the Christian era which the chapter discusses.

Verse 21

This verse is explained by linking it directly to Daniel 7:25 and equating it with the "time, times and the dividing of time," which are identified with the 1260 years of Papal persecution, A,D, 538-1798. No attempt is made to explain the relationship of the verse to preceding verses.¹

Verse 29

Immediately after the Papal persecutions, which were subdued by Wickliffe, Luther and others, followed the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833.²

Verse 34

An interesting interpretation has been given this text.

As though he said, This generation of which I speak; the one that actually sees the last sign, has seen all of them in the sense that we have seen the progress of science. We have not actually lived during its entire development, but we look back and say we have seen it.³

Here is an attempt to make the "this generation" passage relevant for the entire Christian era, and the last sign would be the falling of the stars in 1833.

In fairness it must be said that this book was setting forth its understanding of the chapter in a readable form for topical Bible Study and not deliberate exposition.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the chapter is viewed as highlighting some of the major events of the Christian age much the

¹ Ibid., p. 28.

² Ibid., pp. 28-30.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

same as Ellen White's 'historical continuous' approach. Unlike her, however, it is not consistent when it makes verses 4-8 reach to the end, past the destruction of Jerusalem.

J. H. Waggoner

In 1888, J. H. Waggoner published his book From Eden to Eden.¹ The eighteenth chapter covers the topic "Signs of the Second Coming of Christ," and so has bearing on our subject.

Verses 4-14

Waggoner categorically denies that these verses have any meaning to the disciples' time.

These verses clearly refer to the last days, and the end spoken of is the end of the world, or of the gospel age, for it is not true that these things took place after Jesus spoke these words, and before the destruction of the temple, which was in A.D. 70. Verses 9-14 also refer to the end of the world, . . .

He makes no reference to verses 15-20, presumably recognizing that they are describing the downfall of Jerusalem.

Verses 21-22

The great tribulation, verses 21-22, had, according to Waggoner, reference to the long persecution of the church under the Roman power, specially under Papal Rome.³ This is equated with the 1260 years of domination by the Papacy which the author believed began in A.D. 538 and ended in A.D. 1798.

¹J. H. Waggoner, From Eden to Eden (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1888).

²Ibid., p. 225.

³Ibid.

Verses 23-28

Waggoner felt that the warnings of these verses directed against false christes and deceptions concerning the Parousia also belonged to the last days.

Verse 29

In verse 29 Waggoner sets forth what was hinted at in Bible Readings, and was to become a standard position, that the actual signs of the Parousia commence with the cosmic signs of verse 29. These were the apparently supernatural events of 1780 and 1833.² Most of the explanation of the chapter centres on verse 29.

In summary, Waggoner was facing the same fear that the Millerites and James White dreaded. That was, if you admitted the verses had meaning for the disciples time, you could not conclude they had meaning in the nineteenth century. So apart from verses 15-20, the rest of the chapter applies to the "last generation" exclusively as signs of the Advent.

Ellet J. Waggoner

Ellet J. Waggoner (son of J. H. Waggoner) better known for his association with the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, covered the Olivet Discourse in his book Prophetic Lights.³ It was entered in the office of the Librarian of Congress in 1888, the same year as his father's publication, From Eden to Eden. It could also be noted at this point that Ellen White's Great Controversy was also entered for the first

¹ Ibid., pp. 225-26.

² Ibid., pp. 226-30.

³ E. J. Waggoner, Prophetic Lights (Melbourne, Australia: Bible Echo Publishing House, 1889).

time in 1888.

Waggoner saw the chapter as primarily giving the time of the coming of the Lord. In his opinion Matthew gave the most definite information on the timing of the Advent above all other prophecies of the Bible.¹

Verses 4-14

On these verses he took a similar view to his father in denying that they have any meaning to the disciples' time. He wrote: "We cannot agree with those commentators who find the fulfillment of this prediction in the numerous pseudo-messiahs that appeared in the first few centuries."² "There cannot be the slightest doubt but that in these verses we are carried rapidly over the history of the world till the end of time."³

Verses 9-10

Concerning these verses, Waggoner declared: "In verses 9 and 10 we have reference both to the pagan and papal persecutions, and not only to those, but to all the persecutions for conscience sake that shall take place before the Lord comes."⁴

Interestingly, Waggoner said that the position of persecution until the Lord comes is supported by Daniel 7:21,22.⁵

Verses 15-20

Waggoner considered that these verses were answering the disciples question, "When shall these things be?" and that they were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.⁶

Verses 21-22

In these verses is the point where all reference to the destruction

¹ Ibid., p. 115.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 116-17.

⁶ Ibid., p. 119.

of Jerusalem ceases, and where the account of the signs indicating the Lord's coming is resumed . . . he includes in the term "great tribulation" the tribulation consequent upon the pagan persecution of Christians, and the greater tribulation that accompanied the persecutions of the church by the papacy.

E. J. Waggoner was obviously also aware of the Universalist threat,² and as his interpretation of the early verses indicates, tried to meet it. It is, however, in reference to this point that he made his unique contribution among Seventh-day Adventist interpreters. He was not expansive, and could even be said to be tentative, but he recognized that there are portions of the chapter which apply to both events, that is, the destruction of Jerusalem and the second advent. He labeled it the "perspective view."³ He defines it in the following way: "That is, two things widely separated in point of time, yet having features in common, are spoken of together, without any notice being taken of the intervening time . . . it cannot be denied that a small portion of his language applies equally to each."⁴ He recognized the destruction of Jerusalem as being a "miniature likeness" to the destruction at the second coming.

Though recognizing this principle, it is clear in his exegesis that he is hesitant in applying it, except in a very general way. His conclusion almost denies his "perspective view," where he says that Christ clearly distinguishes between the two events in the chapter, so that no careful reader of the Bible is in danger of confounding them.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 122.

² Ibid., p. 119.

³ It appears that E. J. Waggoner did not coin this term "perspective" as it is set in quotation marks.

⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

⁵ Ibid.

E. J. Waggoner certainly saw glimmerings in this chapter that Seventh-day Adventist writers before him (apart from Ellen White) had not seen.

Verse 29

Waggoner here saw the standard Seventh-day Adventist view of the cosmic signs in 1780 and 1833.¹

Verse 34

What generation? and what things? Why, the generation in which the signs appeared, shall not pass till all the wonders of the second advent shall have been accomplished.²

It is difficult to see how Waggoner concluded in 1888 that the "generation" that saw the dark day of 1780 would still witness the appearance. He does not define "generation," but we assume that it must have been over 100 years in his thinking.

Waggoner was a careful Bible student, as his better known involvement in 1888 testifies. In leaving his contributions on this chapter we would not miss that he felt verses 23-27 were a parenthesis that interrupted the sequence between verses 22 and 29.³ Ellen White also recognized this.

O. A. Johnson

In 1894 O. A. Johnson, a minister of wide experience, published a small treatise.⁴ The only comments on verses relevant to our discussion were on verses 21-22, which he applied to the Papal persecution from A.D. 538-1798. Comments on verse 29 followed, which he saw as a witness

¹ Ibid., pp. 143-47.

² Ibid., p. 127.

³ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴ O. A. Johnson, Bible Lessons for Bible Students (College View, Nebraska: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1894).

to the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833.

His Glorious Appearing

In 1895 there was published a small book of nearly 100 pages entitled His Glorious Appearing.¹ The author's name does not appear, but it is a significant attempt to exegete the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.²

It follows previous interpretations which suggest at least two sweeps of history in the chapter, but it also suggested some sound insights not pursued by Seventh-day Adventist commentators up to this time (apart from Ellen White).

Verses 4-5

The author sees the warnings of the false Messiahs as applying to the times of the disciples before the destruction of Jerusalem.³

Verses 7-8

The signs in these verses have occurred through history, since these words were spoken, but they now abound as never before so constitute a special sign for the last days.⁴

Verses 9-10

"Here is a brief description of the afflictions and martyrdom of the church of Christ."⁵ The author sees this beginning not only in the pagan Roman empire but extending into the Papal dominance.

¹ His Glorious Appearing, rev. ed., (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1895).

² The 1895 edition is already revised. An 1896 printing claims to be the 26th edition. Echo Publishing Company also printed an edition in 1896.

³ His Glorious Appearing, p. 13,15.

⁴ Ibid., p. 17

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

Verse 14

The common understanding is also presented here by the author, that the gospel is rapidly reaching every nation, the work has encircled the globe.¹

In summary of verses 4-14 the author concludes, "Thus far in the discourse Jesus has passed over the entire Christian dispensation."²

Verses 15-20

Our Lord having in verses 5-14, passed over important events in the Christian age down to the end, goes³ back and introduces in verse 15 the destruction of Jerusalem, . . .

Verse 21

The writer spends from pages 34 to 38 endeavouring to prove that the 'tribulation' was not connected with the Jews, but with the church of Christ from this time forward. "Our Lord here speaks of the tribulation which his people would suffer from the time of their flight onward."⁴ This is stated to be the noted persecutions under pagan Rome and especially under the Papal period.

Verse 29

Special care is taken over several pages by the author to show that the cosmic signs were a fulfillment of the 1780 and 1833 phenomena.⁵

Verse 34

The usual position is taken for "this generation," but the Lisbon earthquake (of 1755) is added to make a third sign along with the 'dark day' and 'the falling stars,' which the generation must witness to

¹ Ibid., p. 30.

² Ibid., p. 31.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 44-54.

be those that see the Parousia.¹ It is difficult to see the logic of a generation stretching from 1755 to 1895.

Summary

This exposition ranks beside the most extensive of any yet examined. Its authorship is intriguing. Whole paragraphs are quoted from James White's work.² The author appears to be writing in 1894 (see page 30), and on page 38 reference is made to A. T. Jones' Two Republics in the manner of an author referring to his own work. James White died in 1881 and therefore he is not the author, though he is quoted extensively. It is tentatively concluded that the author is A. T. Jones. This is further substantiated when compared with a book of the same topic and size which was published in 1890 with A. T. Jones listed as editor.³ Verbal dependency can also be shown in this publication with James White's works. A. T. Jones was also building his ability as a writer and speaker during these years.

James Edson White

In 1898 James Edson White, the second son of James and Ellen, published The Coming King.⁴ Apart from minor exceptions, it follows

¹ Ibid., p. 68.

² E.g. pages 17-21 should be compared with James White's 1857 publication, pp. 3-5.

³ A. T. Jones, ed., An Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four or the Second Coming of Christ (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1890).

⁴ James Edson White, The Coming King (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1898).

James Springer White's 1857 publication in the interpretation of the chapter. This is not a plea for dependence on his father's work, for as has already been seen a similar broad outline was characteristic of most Seventh-day Adventist writers. Conversely it would be highly unlikely that he was not aware of his father's publication.¹ As a writer on this subject he obviously reviewed the available literature. He succinctly summarizes his interpretation as follows:

First, From the fourth to the fourteenth verses we are carried rapidly down from the apostles' time to the end of the world, considering the events to transpire as matters of history.
Secondly, In verses fifteen to twenty-eight the ground is again gone over from the destruction of Jerusalem, showing the true church in connection with the history of the world during that time.
Thirdly, The remainder of the chapter records the visible signs that were to mark the soon coming of Christ to earth.²

The above interpretation is by now so familiar it needs little comment. Later pages show clearly his belief that the tribulation of verse 21 commenced upon the Christians who fled Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and was continued by pagan and Papal Rome.³ The cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833 marked the visible omens of Christ's coming.⁴

James Edson White's book is far more than an exposition of Matthew 24. He also adds a dimension to the interpretation of the chapter which has not been seen in Seventh-day Adventist literature up to this time. A large section of his book takes the preliminary signs of

¹ There are verbatim borrowings by J. E. White from His Glorious Appearing (see His Glorious Appearing p. 37 cf. Coming King pp. 99-100 as an example). If, as already postulated, A. T. Jones was the author of His Glorious Appearing its dependence on James Springer White has already been noted.

² J. E. White, pp. 88-89.

³ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 115-28.

verses 4-14 and assembles them to show how these too were being fulfilled dramatically in his time. Almost all other commentators before him had concluded that these signs reach to the end but had not shown their contemporary meaning.

Asa Oscar Tait

Asa Oscar Tait, in 1899, had his book entitled Heralds of the Morning published by Pacific Press.¹ The book is not an exposition of the Olivet Discourse, it is more a topical presentation of the 'signs' as witnessed by contemporary events. Consequently he only makes passing reference to parts of the chapter.

Some of the preliminary signs of verses 6-8 he says have always been seen, but had then reached an intensity not witnessed before.²

On the question of the generation that see "all these things" he says: "They may be seen to-day and they will become more and more marked and pronounced as these closing moments of time go by."³ Tait was obviously trying to explain how all the signs had been witnessed and the appearance had not eventuated. He does it by increasing the intensity of the fulfilled signs and indicates this will be a continued intensity. The scope and nature of his book fails to make any real contribution to the present study.

¹Asa Oscar Tait, Heralds of the Morning (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1899).

²Asa Oscar Tait, rev. ed., Heralds of the Morning (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1909), p. 368.

³Ibid.

J. N. Loughborough

J. N. Loughborough was already, in 1904, a well known speaker and author. In Last Day Tokens¹ he is concerned primarily with cataloguing the cosmic signs that have occurred from the middle of the sixteenth century to the opening years of the twentieth century. He sets the cosmic phenomena of 1780 and 1833 in this much wider context.

He is familiar with James Springer White's Exposition on Matthew, and James Edson White's Coming King, as is evidenced by his footnotes.² He is not exegeting the chapter, but briefly summarizing it, and if he is not using James White's material, then his conclusions are the same. "The Saviour goes over this prophetic ground three times, first giving what may be called a summary of events reaching down to the end."³ The larger context of the quotation shows he is returning to verses 4-14.

The second sweep commences at A.D. 70. "From verses fifteen to twenty-eight, our Saviour goes over the ground the second time, down to His second coming, this time going back only to the destruction of Jerusalem."⁴

The 'tribulation' Loughborough concludes, is the 1260 years of the 'Dark Ages,' from A.D. 538-1798, which were shortened by granting of religious toleration to all religions about 1773 and onward.⁵ "The third time our Saviour reviews this line of prophetic events down to His coming,

¹ J. N. Loughborough, Last Day Tokens (Warburton, Australia: Signs Publishing Co., 1904).

² Ibid., p. 50, 52.

³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 50, 51.

He goes back to the close of the tribulation, and gives the definite signs by which it may be known when He is 'near even at the doors'.¹ The "definite signs" were the 'dark day' and the 'falling of the stars' in 1780 and 1833.

This is as much as Loughborough wants to prove from the chapter and he proceeds to amplify the cosmic signs. It can only be concluded that Loughborough accurately represents a previous view of the chapter; most likely James White's view.

W. A. Spicer

W. A. Spicer's Our Day in the Light of Prophecy,² which includes a brief exposition of the Olivet Discourse, seems to be the first denominational publication to present a new approach to verses 4-14, that is, of course, apart from Ellen White. Perhaps it should now be noted that by 1912, the year of Spicer's publication, Ellen White's major statements on Matthew 24 had been in print at least 12 years.

Verses 4-14

The first portion of the prophetic discourse (verses 4-14) deals with general conditions that were to prevail both in the last days of the Jewish state, and on a yet larger scale in the course of history leading to the last days of the world. There was so close a parallel between these times that Christ, in one description, answered both questions asked, . . . The believers saw these things fulfilled in that generation before Jerusalem fell; but as we read the prophecy, we see the wider application₃ and yet larger fulfillment through the course of history

¹Ibid., p. 51.

²W. A. Spicer, Our Day in the Light of Prophecy (Melbourne, Australia: Signs Publishing Company, 1912).

³Ibid., p. 72.

It would appear that opposition to the Universalist position was either weakening or had expired. Spicer feels quite free to give the text its obvious meaning and applies it to the disciples' generation. Another dimension for the change could well have been his awareness that Ellen White had also interpreted these verses in the same manner. Though it cannot be proved that he was familiar with her interpretations of the chapter concerned, it can be shown that he was familiar with her works in general. Even in the present publication under review he quotes from Testimonies for the Church,¹ in 1937 he published a book in defence of the Spirit of Prophecy² and in 1941 a life history of our early pioneers.³

Verses 15-20

Spicer considered this passage was fulfilled in the historical events of A.D. 70. Interestingly, he used the sign of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem as a warning that the present generation should likewise watch for signs of the advent.⁴

Verse 21

He sees the 'tribulation' as the years foretold by Daniel, presumably the 1260 years of persecution. These were shortened by the influence of the reformation.⁵

Verse 29

Spicer presents the normative viewpoint and sees the cosmic

¹ Ibid., pp. 424,35.

² W. A. Spicer, The Gift of Prophecy (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1937).

³ W. A. Spicer, Pioneer Days of the Advent Movement (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishign Association, 1941).

⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 79-81.

signs fulfilled in 1780 and 1833.¹

In summary it can be concluded that Spicer does follow the contemporary normative interpretation, but he is alone up to this point of time in the dual application he implies for verses 4-14. Neither was this a view he modified, indeed in his 1941 publication on the Signs of Christ's Coming² he amplifies it, even using what appears to be an Ellen White phrase, "Indeed, He mingled the signs of the two great events together."³

Bible Readings (1914 Edition)

In 1914 a revised and enlarged edition of Bible Readings was published.⁴ The interpretation was also revised and expanded. The dual fulfillment principle that Spicer had applied to verses 4-14 was clearly enunciated. The following quotations have been included to aid in our conclusions regarding Ellen White and Seventh-day Adventist commentators during this period.

Christ's answers to these questions are worthy of the most careful study. The destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish nation attending it are a type of the final destruction of all the cities of the world, and the overthrow of all nations. To some extent, therefore, the description of the two great events seem to be blended.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 85.

² W. A. Spicer, Signs of Christ's Coming (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941).

³ Ibid., p. 12. Cf. White, Desire of Ages, p. 628.

⁴ Bible Readings for the Home Circle (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1914).

⁵ Ibid., p. 312.

The following quotation should be carefully noted:

When Christ referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration when the Lord shall rise out of His place "to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," and when the earth "shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover he slain." Isa 26:21. Thus the entire discourse was given not for the early disciples only, but for those who were to live during the closing scenes of the world's history.¹

The above statement will be readily seen as an unacknowledged, almost verbatim quotation from Ellen White's Desire of Ages, p. 628. There are only three or four minor changes in the passage affecting pronouns or tense. Specific interpretation of texts also reflect Ellen White's influence.

Verses 4-12

At several points the 'preliminary' signs are said to refer to the disciples' times and the Second Advent, "as already noted the prophecy has a double application, . . ." ²

Verse 14

The author clearly quotes Col 1:23 as evidence that Paul had completed his commission in A.D. 64. Verse 14 will have its wider fulfillment immediately prior to the Second Advent. ³

Verses 15-20

Though these clearly refer to the events of A.D. 70, the author does use the context as a warning about contemporary believers being aware of the signs of the Parousia. ⁴

Verse 21

"All these tribulations occurred under either pagan or papal

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 313.

⁴ Ibid.

Rome."¹ This was initiated against the early Christians following the destruction of Jerusalem, and continued until the middle of the eighteenth century.

Verse 29

The one consistent interpretation by Seventh-day Adventist commentators throughout this period was that the cosmic signs of verse 29 were seen as the events of 1780 and 1833. Bible Readings again affirms this.

Conclusion

As intimated earlier in the chapter, the majority of the literature surveyed in this section was written in the 1880's and 1890's. Spicer's Our Day in the Light of Prophecy and the 1914 Bible Readings being the major exceptions. Ellen White wrote her most detailed exposition on the Olivet Discourse within the same period.

The three areas of importance are found in:

1. The first chapter of Great Controversy, 1888, or its forerunner Spirit of Prophecy Vol 4, 1884.
 2. The Review and Herald articles of December, 1898.
 3. The chapter "On the Mount of Olives" from The Desire of Ages, 1898.
- Of these, The Desire of Ages, chapter is probably the most specific and detailed in its interpretation. Unless a Seventh-day Adventist writer had been very familiar with the writings of Ellen White, it is doubtful whether, until 1898, they would have been aware of her interpretation. It is correct that the principle of dual application that she applies to the verses 4-14 and later verses in the chapter, could have been observed

¹Ibid., 314.

in an incipient form in 1884, and more clearly in 1888, but this would have to pre-suppose studious attention to what she wrote and wide availability of her works at this time. The primary assumption being tendered in this conclusion is that Ellen White's dual fulfillment approach to the Olivet Discourse, began to influence Seventh-day Adventist writers soon after it was articulated. Whereas her husband James had been the chief exponent during this period, and most of the writers up to the late 1890's followed his approach, the denominational literature after the end of the nineteenth century came under Ellen White's influence.

Having stated the area of Ellen White's primary influence on her contemporaries we will now summarize the similarities and dissimilarities that are apparent.

James White was seen as the chief exponent and writers followed almost slavishly his accepted schema of the two sweeps of history contained in the chapter.¹ Those who adopted this stance, were Kenyon; Bible Readings, 1890; J. H. Waggoner; E. J. Waggoner; His Glorious Appearing (presumably A. T. Jones); James Edson White and J. N. Loughborough. All of the writers before 1900, except E. J. Waggoner, concluded that the preliminary signs of the chapter had no meaning for the disciples. This was of course the main dissimilarity with Ellen White who maintained that these signs did have meaning for the disciples. E. J. Waggoner should also be aligned with Ellen White for his "perspective" view, which gave glimmerings of more than one fulfillment to the chapter, is similar to her exposition of Matthew 24. Though it should be noted he did not apply the

¹It should be recalled that James White was indebted to the Millerites for this schema, particularly Pinney and Bliss.

principle specifically.

Ellen White agreed with her husband in seeing that the "tribulation" affected the early Christians under pagan Rome as well as the continuing Papal persecutions. Supporting this view was His Glorious Appearing, and James Edson White; the rest of the pre-1900 writers saw "the tribulation" as being primarily, or only, the Papacy.

All are agreed, including Ellen White, that the cosmic signs of 1780 and 1833 were a fulfillment of verse 29. To Kenyon and James Edson White these were so important that they were the first "definite" signs of the Parousia.

In summary of this chapter, the following observations can be concluded:

1. Ellen White's significant writing on the chapter was not published until the 1880's, after her husband's death, by which time he had become somewhat of a pattern for contemporary writers
2. Ellen White agreed that Matthew 24 was teaching all that her husband and others were saying, but felt that it also had meaning which they had not discerned. With their teaching she basically concurred but she was not intimidated by her peers in amplifying its fuller meaning which they had not discovered
3. She was bold enough to agree with the Universalists in saying that, at least until verse 28, the chapter had meaning for the first century; in this she was practically alone among Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist commentators up to 1900
4. Ellen White substantially influenced Seventh-day Adventist

writers in their interpretation of the Olivet Discourse once her works were known.

Where Ellen White agreed with her contemporaries, it was not because she was influenced by, or dependent upon them. It seems better to say that they all matured from the same stock (Millerite), hence their points of agreement and similarity. Just as we concluded in our chapter on the Millerites that she was not dependent on Millerite exposition for her views, so we can conclude that her distinctive approach to Matthew 24 was worked out independently from her Seventh-day Adventist contemporaries.

CHAPTER V

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE BY

ELLEN WHITE'S NON-SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

CONTEMPORARIES: PART I

Having compared and contrasted the Millerite and contemporary Seventh-day Adventist authors with Ellen White's interpretation of Matthew 24, we now turn our attention to non-Seventh-day Adventist writers.

Writers will be examined who published before her death in 1915, but for practical purposes (as set forth in the preceding chapter) any writer who could have influenced her would need to have published before 1900.

The extent of this paper will not allow this section to be exhaustive, for it must be granted that any commentator who wrote before 1900 could possibly have been read by Ellen White and therefore indirectly contributed to her work. The possible range of publications that this allows is not available to the present researcher. However, for the purposes of this study an assessment of her use of other authors can be conducted by firstly reviewing the authors that were available to her in her own libraries, and evaluating other works that she may have had access to.

It is true that the cut off point will be arbitrary, but White's religious and educational background as well as her theological leanings dictate the material that was likely to have influenced her.

The books known to have been available to her will be examined.

first, that is to say, those appearing on her library lists.¹

John Fleetwood

A history of the life of Christ in Ellen White's library was by the Rev. John Fleetwood.² His interpretation of the chapter is detailed and concise. The whole chapter was fulfilled in the generation that witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. He expounds the following conclusions.³

1. The false christs of verses 4-5 arose between the resurrection and the destruction
2. The wars were waged by both Jews and Romans during this period (verses 6-7)
3. Earthquakes and famines were recorded during this time in both Jerusalem and the wider Roman world (verse 8)
4. There was betrayal and apostasy amongst Christians (verses 9-13)
5. The Roman armies finally laid seige to Jerusalem which was accompanied by a 'tribulation' never seen on such a scale at Jerusalem. This was

¹The E. G. White Research Centre presently lists two inventories (D. F. 884). One entitled Private Library and the second Books in the E. G. White Library in 1915. These are explained as being "on shelves in E. G. White Study and in the Office and Vault." The Private Library seems to be included in the second list, and it is the second inventory that is used in this study. There are two titles listed which were unavailable for the present study which may have some relevant material. They are listed as Jessica Cone, Scenes from the Life of Christ, and Wm. Hole, Life of Jesus of Nazareth.

²John Fleetwood, History of the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Edinburgh: A. Fullerton and Co., n.d.).

³Ibid., pp. 210-13.

'shortened' otherwise the whole nation would have been destroyed
(verses 21-22)

6. The Jews were warned against expecting a Messiah to deliver them
(verses 23-28)

7. The Son of man did come in the form of the Roman armies, his servants
as "eagles" devoured their prey (verses 26-27)

8. The catastrophe to the nation is again described in symbolic language
using Isa 13:9 as an example of nations destroyed in the removing of
heavenly light, from stars, sun and moon (verse 29)

This is the classic Universalist position¹ which the Millerites
and some Seventh-day Adventist writers opposed so strongly. Ellen White
would have been in basic agreement with Fleetwood's interpretation of the
chapter, at least to verse 21, but there the agreement would cease. As
to whether she was indebted to Fleetwood,² or any commentator who presen-
ted such a viewpoint, would be difficult to prove. That she had such a
book with this viewpoint in her library is clear. If she was indebted
for this idea to one such commentator, then she was most certainly selec-
tive in not accepting their entire approach and certainly eclectic in
accomodating another's views to finalise her own model. There are no
similarities in the way Fleetwood and White have structured their chap-
ters on the Olivet Discourse.

¹It is not concluded that Fleetwood is a Universalist as such, but
the term is used as defined in the 'Millerite' chapter.

²John Fleetwood seems to be an assumed name, and 1767 has been
suggested as a possible publishing date, The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclo-
paedia, s.v. "Fleetwood, John."

Thomas Newton

One important treatise in Ellen White's libraries was by Thomas Newton,¹ which includes some very relevant comments on Matthew chapter twenty-four.

This volume was well known to some of the Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist commentators previously reviewed. John Newton and Issac Newton are both mentioned by Ellen White,² but she makes no mention of Thomas. Seeing his work was published as early as 1823, and his prophetic views were widely known by Ellen White's theological forbears and the book was in her library, it is certainly probable that she was aware of what he wrote.

His exegesis on the Olivet Discourse is of considerable worth to our present study. He first concludes its relevance to Jerusalem.

Our Blessed Saviour treateth of the signs of his coming and the destruction of Jerusalem from the fourth to the thirty-first verse inclusive; by 'signs' meaning the circumstances and accidents, which should forerun, usher in, and attend this great event: and I am persuaded the whole compass of history cannot furnish us with a prophecy more exactly fulfilled in all points than this hath been.³

From this premise Newton proliferates data in the ensuing pages to support the first century fulfillment. For the verses following verse thirty-one Newton says:

. . . he proceeds now in verse 32nd [sic] to answer the former part of the question, as to the "time" of his coming and the destruction of Jerusalem.⁴

¹ Thomas Newton, Dissertations on the Prophecies 13th ed. (London: W. Baynes and Son, 1823).

² Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, s.v. "Newton."

³ Newton. p. 383.

⁴ Ibid., p. 436.

It can be concluded that Newton also saw the later parables and exhortations of the chapter as relevant for the disciples and the approaching destruction that many of them would witness.

It is clear that Newton, up to this point, does not differ widely from some of his theological peers. His next comments show a further dimension he believes is in the chapter.

Hitherto we have explained this 24th chapter of St Matthew, as relating to the destruction of Jerusalem: and, without doubt, as relating to the destruction of Jerusalem it is primarily to be understood. But, though it is to be understood of this primarily, yet it is not to be understood of this only; for there is no question that our Saviour had a farther view and meaning in it. It is usual with the prophets to frame and express their prophecies so as that they shall comprehend more than one event, and have their several periods of completion . . . and this I conceive to be the case here, and the destruction of Jerusalem to be typical of the end of the world.¹

This rather lengthy but relevant quotation shows Newton definitely subscribed to a dual fulfillment concept. It appears, however, that he did not see this fulfillment concerning the second advent as overlaying the early verses of 4-14, but that it starts to apply once the destruction of Jerusalem comes onto the scene.

. . . our Saviour no sooner begins to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem, then his figures are raised, his language is swelled, and he expresseth himself in such terms, as, in a lower sense indeed, are applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem, but describe something higher in their proper and genuine signification.²

It is difficult to conclude from this statement by Newton, whether he is referring to verse 15, (as Jerusalem itself comes into deliberate focus) or whether he sees it starting at verse 29, for he quotes verses 29-31 immediately after the above quotation. He continues:

These passages, vv. 29-31 in a figurative sense, as we have seen,

¹Ibid., p. 440.

²Ibid.

may be understood of the destruction of Jerusalem, but in their literal sense can be meant only of the end of the world.¹

From verse 31 following he is clearer:

All the subsequent discourse too, we may observe, doth not relate so properly to the destruction of Jerusalem as to the end of the world and the general judgement our Saviour loseth sight, as it were, of his former subject, and adapts his discourse more to the latter.²

Newton has been quoted rather fully because he is a crucial writer on this subject. The dual fulfillment principle is more clearly expounded by him than by any other writer examined thus far. White obviously exhibited an exposition which also used this principle extensively. It could even be postulated that she gained her knowledge of this approach to the chapter through Newton. His Dissertations was published four years before she was born and it was known by her theological antecedents. It was a volume in her library. However, even here there is a missing dimension in Newton's work. His reference to the second advent, superimposed on the destruction of Jerusalem commences at the earliest at verse 15. It could be argued that he sees it initially at verse 29. Even at verse 15 he ignores the verses up to verse 14 as having meaning to the generation that will witness the second advent. If Newton did influence Ellen White in the manner postulated, she applied the principle more consistently and used 'dual fulfillment' for the whole chapter, not just the later sections.

William Hanna

Almost thirty years before Ellen White wrote her Desire of Ages, William Hanna, a Scottish Doctor of Divinity, published his life of

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 441.

Christ.¹ It is now recognized that Ellen White was indebted to Hanna for some material in Desire of Ages.² Both Walter Specht and Raymond Cottrell state that Ellen White got some ideas from Hanna.³ Examples can be given of almost verbatim quotations from the same book.⁴ Some have claimed that Ellen White used the structure of Hanna's Life of Christ for structuring Desire of Ages. Even a cursory comparison of chapter titles shows some chapters in each book following the same content order, but there is also some divergence of order which shows greater dissimilarity than similarity. In a careful comparison of content of the chapter covering the Olivet Discourse in Hanna and White, there appears to be no parallel phrases. There is basic similarity of structure as the chapter is introduced around the setting of the temple and Christ's announcement of its destruction, but this similarity could well be because of the use of the same scripture. The only obvious similarity of wording in the introduction of the chapter is the phrase a "dark foreboding" by Hanna and "the foreboding of evil" by Ellen White.⁵

Hanna's principles of interpretation for the chapter are very relevant for our discussion. He was not so interested in explaining

¹William Hanna, Our Lord's Life on Earth, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Edmonton and Douglas, 1869).

²Robert W. Olson, 101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981) p. 101.

³Ibid., p. 104.

⁴Cf. Desire of Ages pp. 770-71 with William Hanna, Life of Christ (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.) p. 754. The quotations for the remainder of this section have been taken from Hanna's 6 vol. 1869 publication. The script of this edition is identical to the one volume work, Life of Christ.

⁵See Our Lord's Life on Earth, 4:159 cf. Desire of Ages, p. 627.

individual verse meaning as he was in broadly amplifying principles of exposition. He felt the Lord was giving advance warning of three separate events.

Taking up that inquiry with the information which we now possess, we should say that it referred to three distinct and separate events:
 (1) The destruction of the Temple; (2) The coming of Christ;
 (3) The end of the world.¹

Hanna sees the coming of Christ as premillennial and the end of the world as post millennial.² The coming of Christ would be to set up an earthly kingdom for the millennial reign.

Hanna views this perspective as the "mountain" and "valley" view with each peak apparently superimposed on the other with no obvious notice of the valleys between the peaks.³

His relating of these three events to the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapter should be carefully noted.

1. For the disciples and the destruction of Jerusalem 24:1 to 24:29
2. For the coming of Christ, 24:29 to 25:30
3. For the final judgement 25:31 to 25:46⁴

Hanna was confirming what most of the other commentators of this period were concluding, that up to verse 29 was for the first century church. Interestingly though, he was not completely against seeing only a first century fulfillment of verses 1-29.

Even here, however, in the first section - whose reference to the proximate event of the destruction of Jerusalem no one can doubt - we have instances of that double sense of the Lord's sayings, their applying to the incident more immediately alluded to, yet carrying along with them ulterior references to the future⁵

¹ Ibid., 4:161.

² Ibid., 4:180-81.

³ Ibid., 4:164-65.

⁴ Ibid., 4:166.

⁵ Ibid., 4:168.

This principle he did not apply to the text to give an illustration of what he was saying. He does however, use the word "blending" to describe this phenomenon.¹

One related comment of Hanna's is very pertinent to the study of the discourse: he says that just as the early disciples had difficulty distinguishing between the events of the first advent and the second, so the events of the second and third advents are also obscure for those living in the Christian dispensation.²

In summary, Ellen White would have affirmed much of what Hanna concluded about this chapter. However, as well as agreeing with him that the "entire discourse" was given for the disciples, she would positively state it was not given for the disciples only. Where Hanna timidly suggests that it probably contains further reference beyond the disciples' time, White positively says that it does and goes on to show when and how.

There is similarity in principles of interpretation, but as usual, White goes beyond this contemporary also. Other research is presently in progress which may give us a better overall view of the extent to which White was influenced by Hanna. From Hanna's section "Prophecies of the Mount" any influence would be difficult to prove.³

¹ Ibid., 4:182 cf. Desire of Ages p. 628.

² Ibid.

³ Hanna has two chapters covering the discourse with the same title.

Theodor Keim

Keim's life of Christ was published in 1881.¹ According to the Ellen White library lists, only volume 6 was in her library. The volume that deals with the Olivet Discourse was volume 5. Therefore it may have been possible that Ellen White never even saw any of Keim's notes on the chapter.

Little time will be spent with his approach because he comes from the nineteenth century German liberal school, and almost the whole of his treatment of the chapter is dealing with the authenticity of the text.

He did not believe Jesus had recourse to prediction.² The majority of the text he saw not as the work of Jesus, but of a "Jewish-Christian who lived towards the close of the apostolic period"³

Apart from indirect mention that the earlier sections of the chapter had reference to the disciples,⁴ Keim concludes nothing of significance for comparison in the present study. It is doubtful whether this writer influenced Ellen White in any way, or that she even read what he wrote on Matthew 24.

Alfred Edersheim

In 1892 Alfred Edersheim's two volume work on the life of Christ was published.⁵ Like many of the publications of this time on this subject

¹Theodor Keim, History of Jesus of Nazareth, 6 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1881).

²Ibid., p. 228.

³Ibid., p. 237.

⁴Ibid., p. 243.

⁵Alfred Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892).

(including Desire of Ages) Edersheim's work is really an historical-devotional narrative of the life of Christ as portrayed in the gospels. It is general exposition rather than detailed exegesis.

On the discourse in general, he says the disciples could not have . . . conjoined the desolation of the Temple with the immediate Advent of Christ into His Kingdom and the end of the world, their question to Christ was twofold: When will these things be? and, what would be the signs of His Royal Advent and the consummation of the 'Age'? On the former the Lord gave no information; to the latter His Discourse on the Mount of Olives was directed.¹

Edersheim is not denying that the chapter mentions the destruction of Jerusalem, but he is saying that the signs apply primarily to the advent.

He is difficult to follow in some of his interpretation. This could be the result of the confusion that he feels the Synoptic writers brought into their own understanding of Christ's words.² He appears however, to conclude that even though the early signs of the chapter were not signs of the destruction of Jerusalem, they were recognised by the disciples as part of their times. The teaching given was intended for practical purposes.³

On verse 14 he is more specific and says the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the inhabited earth for a testimony to all nations. "This, then, is really the only sign of 'the End' of the present 'Age'."⁴ He saw between the destruction of Jerusalem and the second advent a period of time apparently protracted.⁵

Some of Edersheim's pre-suppositions need to be known before we

¹Ibid., 2:433.

²Ibid., 2:450.

³Ibid., 2:445.

⁴Ibid., 2:448.

⁵Ibid., 2:449.

can assess his position outlined above. He spends ten pages of the chapter outlining the rabbinical view of the age to come to give background to the discourse.¹ He also believed in the future conversion of the Jews,² which directly influenced his view of the church in this chapter. The admonition of Christ for the church was "dim" and "general" and deliberately veiled for her sake.³

For the purpose of this study we need not proceed further in ascertaining Edersheim's view of the chapter. Regarding interpretation there are little, if any, parallels with Ellen White's views. Concerning similarity of narrative, there are parallels in the description of the magnificence of the Jerusalem temple. Single word parallels could be established, but there is no parallel in phraseology.

¹Ibid., 2:434-45.

²Ibid., 2:449

³Ibid., 2:449-50.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE BY

ELLEN WHITE'S NON-SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

CONTEMPORARIES: PART II

As noted in the preliminary remarks to Chapter V, the extent to which this discussion of White's contemporaries extends needs to be arbitrarily limited. In the previous chapter those works were examined that were found on her library shelves at the time of her death in 1915. As the recorders of her library inventory note, because a book was found in her library does not necessarily prove she was familiar with it. It would have been possible for her larger office library to have in it books used, or even purchased, by her literary assistants. However, as an initial approach these have been assessed separately.

Apart from her library, Ellen White obviously "breathed in an air" that was in a sense pre-determined by her cultural and theological surroundings. She was brought up a Methodist.¹ She early came under the intense influence of the preachers of the Second Advent awakening, with all the Protestant presuppositions and persuasions that it carried with it. She labored in a church that saw itself as the 'restorers of truth' and the final link in a chain that reached through a lengthy heritage rich in theological insights.

¹Ellen G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1915) p. 24-25.

The extent to which she was influenced by this "air" will probably never be determined. This chapter, however, assumes the milieu of her life work and will examine a sampling of authors to assess their treatment of the Olivet Discourse. Only works published before 1900 will be examined (that is to be contemporary with, or antecedant to Desire of Ages, 1898). Only those writers who have direct bearing on the discussion will be included in this chapter, other writers who have been examined and answer the above criteria, but have no specific contribution to the present study are included in the Bibliography. Some have been annotated.

Adam Clarke

Adam Clarke,¹ the well known Methodist commentator, was used and read widely among early Adventists,² including Ellen White.³ Clarke appears to reach a new height in applying the total chapter to the experiences of the first century Jewish nation; specifically right up to the end of verse 43 the application is made to the Jews. This is then followed by general admonition for them.⁴

The reader has no doubt observed, in the preceding chapter, a series of the most striking and solemn predictions, fulfilled in the most literal, awful, and dreadful manner.⁵

¹Adam Clarke, New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 vols. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.). He appears to have written his commentary between 1810-1826.

²Eg. see Last Day Tokens p. 43; His Glorious Appearing p. 33.

³Great Controversy, p. 547.

⁴Clarke, 1:226-36.

⁵Ibid., p. 236.

He makes no direct reference to the chapter having meaning to the second advent. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Josephus and Bishop (Thomas) Newton.¹

Albert Barnes

Barnes completed his New Testament Commentary and a section of the Old, between 1832 and 1853.² His interpretation of how Jesus answers 'the disciples' question is pertinent:

This he does, not by noticing them distinctly, but by intermingling the descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, so that it is sometimes difficult to tell to what particular subject his remarks apply. The principle on which this combined description of two events was spoken appears to be, that they could be described in the same words, and therefore the accounts are intermingled.³

Barnes, in general, shows how the chapter fits the first century, but does not demonstrate specifically how the dual fulfillment principle is to be applied. It could be noted in passing that "intermingled" was an expression Ellen White used.⁴

Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry's commentary⁵ was published in 1864, a year after the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organised. On the subject at hand

¹Ibid., p. 225.

²Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, 27 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962).

³Ibid., 17:251.

⁴E.g. Desire of Ages, p. 628.

⁵Matthew Henry, Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, 9 vols. (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1864).

he states:

. . . this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgement, and as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype, and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter.¹

Henry sees the chapter as having specific meaning to those who would be associated with the destruction of Jerusalem, but makes it clear that the second advent also appears strongly in the far distance.²

Frederic W. Farrar

In the E. G. White library inventory, Dean E. W. Farrar is listed as the author of Life and Work of St. Paul (presumably this should be F. W.). His equally well known work on the Life of Christ is not listed.³

Farrar does not exegete the chapter but his principle of interpretation is similar to that of Hanna and Newton.

It is evident, from comparing St. Luke with the other Synoptists, that Jesus turned the thoughts of the disciples to two horizons, one near and one far off, . . . one was the type of the other, the judgement upon Jerusalem, followed by the establishment of the Church on earth, foreshadowed the judgement of the world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom at His second coming.⁴

And as we learn from many other passages of Scripture, these signs, as they ushered in the destruction of Jerusalem, so shall reappear on a larger scale before the end of all things is at hand.⁵

Farrar is undoubtedly as close, or closer, to White's position than either Hanna or Newton. Unfortunately he is not as specific on some

¹Ibid., 7:347.

²Ibid., see p. 357 on vv. 29-31.

³Frederic W. Farrar, Life of Christ (London: Cassell and Company, 1874).

⁴Ibid., p. 519.

⁵Ibid., p. 521.

of the passages as would be necessary to make a detailed comparison. In principle it is a very similar approach to White's appraisal.

Christopher Wordsworth

The renowned Anglican commentator, Christopher Wordsworth, pens some relevant comments in his commentary on Christ's Olivet Discourse.¹

Here is the clue to the interpretation of this chapter. Our Lord's prophecy has a double reference, - to the judgement of Jerusalem, and to that of which that judgement was a type, viz. His second Coming to judge the world.²

Wordsworth goes on to say:

It is to be observed, that several Future Events, however distant from each other, seem to be represented by Prophecy as contemporaneous, till one of those events is near, and detaches itself from the others, and then the true sense of the Prophecy becomes more clear.³

Wordsworth is clear that the prophecy right throughout and including verse 34⁴ has a double reference to these two events. Particularly does he spend time expounding that verse 15 and the "abomination of desolation" has reference first to pagan Rome in A.D. 70, and further to the church at large by Papal Rome.⁵

Wordsworth can also be added to that growing group who saw the 'dual fulfillment' principle very much the same way as White saw it.

Cunningham Geikie

During 1881 and 1882 the church's Sabbath School lessons were on the Life of Christ. Along with Spirit of Prophecy vols 2 and 3, Geikie's

¹ Wordsworth, New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 vols. (London: Rivingtons, 1877).

² Ibid., 1:85.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

Life and Words of Christ¹ was recommended as extra reference material.²

Geikie takes the position common to his time and background that the whole chapter can be taken as fitting the events of the first century.³ The chapter moves to its climax in the parabolic sections, with emphasis on preparedness. These sections bear more particularly on the second advent. Geikie does, however, see the "times of the gentiles" occupying the space between the destruction of Jerusalem and the advent.⁴

In the fifth and sixth chapters we have analysed the views on non-Seventh-day Adventist writers who were known to White, or who were prominent in and before her time. Several considerations emerge from this review.

In general terms it can be concluded that the non-Seventh-day Adventist commentators were closer to White's views than either Millerite or Seventh-day Adventist. Hanna, Newton, Farrar, Wordsworth, Barnes, and Henry all clearly enunciate the principle of 'dual fulfillment'. Though most of them show only the first century fulfillment, they state the principle clearly for its application to the generation before the Advent.

The Millerites and Seventh-day Adventist writers had reacted to some who adopted the first century fulfillment only. They had not recognized that a significant number of non-Seventh-day Adventist commentators were recommending that the chapter was for the disciples and also those

¹ Cunningham Geikie, Life and Words of Christ, new ed. (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1891).

² W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, "Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White," DF 389, 1933. Ellen G. White Research Centre.

³ Ibid., pp. 631-36.

⁴ Ibid., p. 635.

who would witness the Advent. Ellen White adopted a view that was much wider than her immediate religious context. All of the non-Seventh-day Adventist commentators saw verse 21 as being the tribulation that was connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, and none of them specifically stated it had reference to the Papal persecution of the church. In interpreting verse 29 and the cosmic signs, no mention was made at all that they could have been literal events of the eighteenth or nineteenth century, even by those commentators that had lived during this period. Exegetically this is explainable, because verse 29 sequentially follows verse 21, and, if verse 21 meant the destruction of Jerusalem then verse 29 had to follow the tribulation of A.D. 70. Therefore, the events of 1780 and 1833 could not be associated with the destruction. Those who saw the chapter as also having meaning to the second coming associated the cosmic signs with the actual 'appearance.' It seems as though the non-Seventh-day Adventist writers during this period viewed the distinctive views of the Millerites and the Seventh-day Adventists as not worthy of mention, as there is no attempt even to refute what was being claimed by the Adventists.

The final chapter will endeavour to define the implications of White's exposition, as seen against the background of her contemporaries.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This final chapter will deal with the evidence of the preceding chapters under two headings: firstly, Ellen White's indebtedness to other writers; secondly, the implications of White's interpretation of the Olivet Discourse.

Ellen White's Indebtedness to Other Writers

The influence other writers may have had on Ellen White, will be reviewed from two perspectives: firstly, actual verbatim borrowing of words or phrases and secondly, the similar use of ideas or basic philosophy of approach.

Verbatim borrowings in the writings of White, in regard to this chapter, are difficult to prove. It has already been shown that in areas of the Desire of Ages White did borrow directly from other writers.¹ Regarding what she wrote on the Olivet Discourse and the material that has been examined in this study, there is in fact only an occasional word that could be labelled borrowing.

It has already been noted² that the terms "blended" and "intermingled" were mentioned by writers other than White to describe the 'dual

¹See Olson, pp. 101, 103-105.

²See pages 84 and 90 for "blended", "intermingled" etc.

fulfillment' phenomenon inherent in the chapter. However, it could be argued that there would only be a limited number of synonyms for this concept, and the chances of different writers using the same word is not remote. White herself used several different phrases to describe the term.¹

The difficulty in concluding definite dependence can be illustrated by comparing statements from Desire of Ages with Hanna's Life of Christ. The general similarity of the introductions to the Olivet sermon that there is among many of the writers on the subject has already been noted.² This can be clearly illustrated by using Hanna and White.

. . . Christ lingered yet a little while reluctant to take what he knew would be his last sight of its sacred interior. At last, however, sadly and slowly he departs.³

Slowly and regretfully Christ left forever the precincts of the temple.⁴

That there is a general similarity as to expression cannot be denied, but a comparison of other authors will also show general similarities.⁵ It would be extremely tenuous to conclude dependence on the word "slowly", the only word directly common to the two passages.

It can be clearly concluded from the works examined on the Olivet

¹ See p. 11.

² See p. 82.

³ Hanna, Life of Christ, p. 556.

⁴ White, Desire of Ages, p. 626.

⁵ If the introductions to the Olivet Discourse sections of Fleetwood (pp. 208-9); Keim (pp. 225-26); Edersheim (pp. 431-32); Farrar (pp. 254-57); Geikie (pp. 515-17) are compared general similarities of content are obvious.

Discourse, that the verbatim similarities between White and her contemporaries are not significant.

The second area of influence that now needs to be determined is the similarity of overall interpretation. In Chapter II it was shown that White used vv. 21-22 and v. 29 of Matthew chapter 24 to show that the cosmic signs that appeared in 1780 and 1833 were to be seen in these verses. This was termed the 'historical continuous' interpretation.¹ In examination of Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist literature it was demonstrated that this also was, almost without exception, their conclusions on v. 29.² It can therefore be concluded that in adopting this interpretation, White was operating out of a contemporary environment that directly influenced her conclusions. This is not to say that White borrowed or copied this view, she obviously felt that the exposition was correct, and as a Seventh-day Adventist she believed it, and her Millerite experiences demanded it.

However, if the conclusions of Chapter II are correct and the 'historical continuous' interpretation was not the definitive way in which the Olivet Discourse was to be interpreted, then to whom was White indebted for this 'dual fulfillment' concept.³

¹See p. 16.

²Miller was the only exception in the 'Millerite' literature, apart from Kapff, who was a German and therefore did not witness the cosmic activity. There were no exceptions in the S.D.A. contemporaries.

³The researcher's concept of inspiration does not rule out direct revelation, or White's own study as a valid possibility of her knowledge of this principle. However, the issue here is to see if other writers knew of it.

The Millerite literature does not reveal it, Kapff, who hinted at the possibility, nevertheless, did not demonstrate his thinking on it. Even if Kapff's principle could be defined and applied, it is doubtful if White was aware of his work, because it originated in Europe, probably at Tübingen.

Seventh-day Adventist literature is silent on the principle until after 1912. Spicer¹ is almost certainly echoing Desire of Ages as he implemented the principle in Signs of Christ's Coming. Bible Readings of 1915² is certainly using the 'dual fulfillment' principle in verbatim quotation from Desire of Ages. Initially the exception may appear to be E. J. Waggoner, who talks of the "perspective" view.³ In his text Waggoner is quoting the term but he gives no further indication of its origin. If we can rely on a definition of the term from his time,⁴ the "perspective" view is not synonymous with 'dual fulfillment.' It appears to be two prophecies in the one passage, one following the other but the perspective of time between them is left indistinct. Waggoner's phrase "it cannot be denied that a small portion of his language applies equally to each"⁵ seems to indicate 'dual fulfillment.' However, his additional statement "Nevertheless, he has so fully distinguished between them that no careful reader of the Bible is in danger of confounding them"⁶ leaves

¹ Spicer, Signs of Christ's Coming, p. 12.

² Bible Readings, (1915) p. 312.

³ Waggoner, Prophetic Lights, P. 121.

⁴ G. R. Beasley-Murray, Jesus and the Future (London: MacMillan & Company, 1954) pp. 131-35.

⁵ Waggoner, p. 121.

⁶ Ibid.



no doubt as to his interpretation of "perspective." It could be remembered that White was most likely well aware of Waggoner's book, as the Echo Publishing House was distributing it when she arrived in Australia.

It would seem that White did not gain the 'dual fulfillment' principle from the Millerites or her Seventh-day Adventist contemporaries. However, as the preceding two chapters have demonstrated, the principle was widely known and used by both her Protestant forbears and her contemporaries. At least two of these were in her library,¹ and several others were possibly known to her.² While she did not conform in every detail to their exegesis, she was following the same principle in her own Seventh-day Adventist context. Farrar in particular articulated hermeneutical criteria that most nearly matched Ellen White's own interpretation.

The question as to whether White is indebted to Farrar or any of the other non-Seventh-day Adventist authors for her treatment of Matthew 24, cannot with certainty be demonstrated. That it was available to her is certainly demonstrable.

Whether White borrowed the 'dual fulfillment' principle or not, we are faced with the indisputable fact that she used it to develop what became a unique interpretation of the Olivet Discourse among her Seventh-day Adventist peers. This she adopted, even though it was affirming what many of them were denying, that the first fourteen verses had any meaning to the disciples before the destruction of Jerusalem. White did not deny their basic positions, even affirming them, but gave the chapter a depth

¹Hanna and Newton.

²Barnes, Wordsworth, Henry, Geikie and Farrar.

and a breadth not realized by them. If we assume that she borrowed this principle that was available to her, we are faced with the ability White showed to select theological options and discard others. Whether this ability was acquired discernment, or divine superintendence in selection, it does not detract from the ability.

It is the conclusion of the researcher in this section, that if Ellen White did indeed borrow from her non-Seventh-day Adventist contemporaries, her position as 'messenger of the Lord' is not down graded but indeed enhanced. That is, apart from recording what she was shown, at least on this occasion, she had the ability to select a principle that was more adequate than those of her immediate contemporaries.

Implications of Ellen White's Interpretation
of the Olivet Discourse

If Ellen White has only a pastoral role in the church, and used scripture in homiletic manner only, then she does not have to satisfy any stringent exegetical criteria in her interpretation. But, if the presupposition is correct that White does reveal exegetical insights then a harmony of approach must be attempted.

Ostensibly we are faced with a contradiction between her 'dual fulfillment' and her 'historical-continuous' interpretation. White appears to have left the contradiction unresolved, in a similar manner to which Christ left the original discourse to His disciples. ". . . leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves."¹

¹White, Desire of Ages, p. 628.

On pages 19-21 some of the exegetical difficulties have been shown in connection with the 'historical-continuous' interpretation. As far as this discussion is concerned in endeavouring to harmonize White's approach the real area of tension centres around v. 29 and the cosmic signs. It is significant in our assessment to note that in recent years these 'signs' have been reappraised. The 'dark day' is now stated to have been originated by "natural causes"¹ and terms such as "mysterious," "unexplained phenoma" or "supernatural"² can now be abandoned. This abandonment does not deny God using a natural event to strengthen the faith of believers in their interpretation of certain scriptures. Concerning the 'falling stars,' long ago Bliss pointed out that the uniqueness of the meteoric shower in 1833 was not its single occurrence but its display was better than the ones before or after 1833.³ Astronomers have been aware of this for decades, though acknowledging the significance of the 1833 display.⁴

The question today is not whether these cosmic signs were meaningful to the believers of the time, or even if they were a fulfillment of prophecy, but what relevance do they have for believers 200 years after the first sign appeared? If the final generation that is to witness the second coming is to see "all these things," that is, the signs of the chapter corporately, then it is a question of looking forward as well as

¹ Adventist Review 157(22 May 1980):693-696, 701

² White, Great Controversy, pp. 306-307.

³ Bliss, p. 49.

⁴ See "Great Leonid Meteor Shower of 1966," Sky and Telescope (January, 1967) pp. 4-10.

back. If it is necessary to consult encyclopaedias to inform the current generation that these things even occurred, then we do injustice to the context in which they were originally given.

Apparently there is a conflict between the two methods of interpretation that White has left us. To assume that she did not recognize this is unlikely. White lived in expectation of an imminent return and wrote out of that context. She not only confirms the historical fulfillment through which the Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged, but her work contains a dimension that would be relevant should the imminent return be delayed.

This principle can be demonstrated from her use of the term "great tribulation" (see pages 14-15). White says this was fulfilled in the pagan and Papal persecutions. She was looking back on history for the 1260 years of Papal dominance was ended. However, she also could look beyond her day and say that the "great tribulation" was also yet future, that it would occur immediately prior to the second coming. In one place White interprets the "great tribulation" as it fitted the 'historical-continuous' model of interpretation. In another place she uses it as it applies in her 'dual fulfillment' scheme. It seems safe to conclude that what the "messenger" illustrates would be safe for the church to emulate. The illustration of the "great tribulation" has been used, but the principle would be valid for any specific sign of the chapter including the cosmic signs of verse 29.

The 'historical-continuous' method leaves the Seventh-day Adventist Church poised in the middle of verse 29 waiting for the "shaking

of the powers of heaven," the only sign (in the Olivet Discourse) between the present and the parousia. If we continue to hold that the events of 1780 and 1833 fulfilled the first half of verse 29, we must also be consistent and say the preceding portions of the chapter are past and have no present meaning. To continue to use the preliminary signs as applying in the present while postulating the cosmic signs are past violates the natural import and sequence inherent in the chapter. It may conform to topical study of scripture, but not to exposition. It also leaves unanswered the relationship between White's use of the two distinct methods, and it fails to use her most detailed suggestion for exegesis.

The ever-increasing time gap between the early Advent movement and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church, will only heighten the tension between these two methods of interpretation. They can not now be used as mutual options viable at the one time. They cannot be stood astride hoping to maintain both, for time produces an ever widening gap, and an inevitable split.

The apparent contradiction could be solved by acknowledging that the 'historical-continuous' method of interpretation now needs to be retired. Not discarded and its validity denied, for this would sever our origins. Its authenticity needs to be reaffirmed but its obsolescence admitted.¹ The "Messenger" has clearly defined and presented the model to replace it, even though it may take courage to adopt it.

¹This may appear contradictory, but it is made in reference to use a given interpretation has to time, and not in regard to its inherent accuracy. That is, the application of Matt 24:29 to the cosmic activity

of 1780 and 1833, was valid for the Millerite and early Seventh-day Adventist believers. The validity of their interpretation should not be evaluated by contemporary norms. Each generation exegetes within its own time, understanding and available data. Hence due to the passing of years, a view from a previous time can be regarded as obsolete but not invalid. New wine may not fit into old wine skins, but they were quite suitable for the original contents. To retire an obsolete model is no reflection on its original value or even its authenticity.

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