

Adventist Heritage

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DANIEL & JOHN.
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Adventist Heritage

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To the editors:

Because of my long association and service at Atlantic Union College, I read the spring issue of *Adventist Heritage* featuring the college with intense interest. However, I was greatly distressed by the unfavorable reference to the New England Youth Ensemble made by the writer of the article, "Yet with a Steady Beat: Blacks at AUC." For this reason I feel constrained to correct the inaccurate picture presented by the writer.

1—The tour by the NEYE was during the summer, not the school year of 1988-89. Therefore all students participating were free to engage in any activity of their own choice.

2—The statement in the article that the NEYE is a "predominantly white group" is non-factual and very misleading. The facts are the Ensemble has always been open to all races and is entirely based on talent and character. It is of special significance to note that the two leading soloists for the past 15 years have been Afro-Americans, and they have both been featured on almost every concert without exception (which cannot be said of any soloist of any other race). This was simply because their talents and characters were of the top quality.

3—The statement that black-white opposition ultimately derailed the trip planned for the 1989-90 school year for the choir and the orchestra is also questionable. For again the tour was for the summer and was not under the sponsorship of the college financially or any other way. Incidentally, we learned that a youth rally had been planned for the young black SDAs of Johannesburg, and 4,000 were expected to attend. They were keenly disappointed when the tour was "derailed" by the strong opposition on the campus of AUC.

The letters of response that poured in from those of all races regarding our first tour were most touching. Such statements as:

"Your group of young people have done more for race relationships within our church in South Africa than any impassioned political speech has done or ever will do."

Church Ministries Department

"We do appreciate the courage and determination that it took to come and to break the isolation we suffer, not only from the world in general but unfortunately from fellow Adventists as well. The concerts we enjoyed reminded us that we belong together and need each other."

*D. Birkenstock
Rector*

Helderberg College



*Adventist Heritage
Volume 16, Number 2*

"Having you in Africa, especially Kwa-Thema Church was the most exciting experience in our entire lives. One is forced to think of heaven with all those melodious instruments, besides being together with our 'white' brethren, we were truly blest."

*Bingo Thipe
Kwa-Thema Township SDA Church*

Such statements as these made the effort and struggle worth while. And the members of the NEYE still look back on the South African tour as the most spiritually enriching experience of their lives.

*VIRGINIA-GENE RITTENHOUSE
DIRECTOR
NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE*

Erratum: My departure from *Adventist Heritage* and my return to full-time service in the Department of English and Communication, La Sierra University, was less graceful than originally planned. I was to have terminated my position with *Adventist Heritage* on July 1, 1994. An accident in early March, however, called for hospitalization and a prolonged convalescence. My name, therefore, should not have appeared as editor-in-chief in the last issue (16.2). I was glad to feature my *alma mater*, Atlantic Union College, in that issue, and Jocey Fay did a fine job of pulling all of the material together. I saw none of the copy, however, before it went to press. Some of the opinions expressed, therefore, do not represent the viewpoint of my editorship.

DOROTHY MINCHIN-COMM

THE EDITOR'S STUMP

Without the Millerites, there would be no Adventist heritage—and thus no *Adventist Heritage*.

On the morning of October 23, 1844, the followers of Baptist lay preacher William Miller awoke to the discovery that Jesus had not returned as Miller had predicted. Despite the pain associated with what they came to call the “Great Disappointment,” many continued to trust the essential rightness of Miller’s prophetic calculations and, more importantly, to value the intense experience of Christian faith that had empowered and united them.

During the next few years, they explored and resolved a variety of thorny doctrinal issues. At the same time, those who became the first Seventh-day Adventists built on the bonds of Millerite community to create an increasingly elaborate and integrated organizational structure devoted to proclaiming the gospel of God’s love in the light of their belief in Jesus’ imminent Second Advent.

Almost unintentionally, they became a tight-knit, clearly defined family of faith. Adventist doctrinal and behavioral distinctives—notably the Sabbath—reinforced a sense of their unique identity. And Adventist institutions provided the space within which they could create an alternative world—as sociologists Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart put it, a counter-America—within which they could live out their vision of life under God.

The creation of Adventist institutions has given us the chance to reflect together on our identity as a people. One way in which we can do so is through our ongoing attempts to understand the nature and meaning of Adventist history—through, among other media, this journal. And as we think about our past, we cannot but return to the Millerites.

It is especially appropriate that we do so now, in the wake of the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment, marked by Adventists worldwide on October 22, 1994. The central cluster in this issue is therefore designed to highlight various features of the Millerite experience and legacy. Charles Teel provides a brush-stroke overview of Millerism’s changing relationship with the wider culture of mid-nineteenth-century America. Anne Freed

explores just what it was about William Miller’s way of reading the Bible that made his message attractive to his contemporaries—thus telling us something about them, about Miller, and perhaps also about ourselves. Fred Hoyt considers the ways in which William Miller’s contemporaries, inside and outside the movement he founded, remembered him on the occasion of his death; in so doing, Hoyt focuses our attention on the public perceptions of Millerism in the wake of the Disappointment. And Fritz Guy examines how the Millerites who became Adventists came to reinterpret the Great Disappointment through their doctrine of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Two book reviews also address related themes. David Pendleton provides an overview of the new edition of *The Disappointed*, perhaps the most important historical study of Millerism in its social context to date. And I assess George Knight’s recent history of the Millerite movement, briefly exploring the contemporary significance of the story Knight tells so comprehensively.

Also in this issue, you’ll find two other articles sure to be of interest. Education has been among the most important of the legacies left us by the early Adventists. And Alma McKibbin was among the most dedicated and influential of pioneer Adventist educators. You can find about this devoted woman in Susie Myers’s discussion of her early years. Congregationalist divine Isaac Watts continues to be among the most popular Christian hymnwriters of all time. And Watts’s hymn, “The God of Glory,” was a source of inspiration for Millerites who looked for the soon return of Jesus. In this issue, Kenneth Logan examines this hymn and considers its importance.

I hope you’ll enjoy the time you spend reading this issue and thinking about the Millerites, their predecessors, and their successors. The story of Miller’s movement and its aftermath is a fascinating one even for people whose lives Millerism has not directly touched. For those of us who are, in some sense, William Miller’s heirs, it is all the more intriguing and meaningful.

GARY CHARTIER

The Millerite Experience: Shared Symbols Informing Timely Riddles?

Charles Teel, Jr.

Never have I been more profoundly moved by the shared symbols of my Millerite and Adventist heritage than on a Sabbath afternoon in the 1960s when I pilgrimaged to Washington, New Hampshire, site of the first Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We walked through a time warp into the sanctuary of this nineteenth-century clapboard structure—entered by our tight-knit foursome via gender-specific doors. For several hours we were immersed in the world of our Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist forbears. The famous Millerite Chart of 1842 calculated the end of time with clear precision. Drawings portrayed Millerite and early Adventist cosmologies, complete with apocalyptic beasts and portents. And faded photographs of Millerite and Adventist pioneers testified to the longevity of a Blessed Hope, a hope which spanned Dark Days, falling stars, and Great Disappointments.

But it was the hymns and tunes of the Millerite and early Adventist period that most captivated us on that Sabbath. The leather chests of the pump organ swelled and pipes obligingly responded with me-

lodious sounds as our mixed quartet quietly sang Sabbath veper hymns, assertively harmonized on traditional Second Advent songs, and enthusiastically belted out hyperbolic health tunes. The familiar



“Day is Dying in the West” merged into “I Saw One Weary” and culminated with “Water, Pure Waver” and “Pure Cold Water.” These latter tunes included dramatic rests and high “G” *fortissimos* and required altos and sopranos to enter into

tricky dialog with tenors and basses—with lyrics admonishing the faithful to “Put away your wine and beer and cider; Nature’s right to rule must never be denied ’er.”

A common heritage is built upon shared symbols, shared memories, shared stories, shared meanings, shared glosses, shared understandings, and shared misunderstandings. There would be no common heritage were it not for William Miller, his first lieutenant Joshua V. Himes, Millerite senior statesman Joseph Bates, younger Millerite preacher James White, and his bride-to-be Ellen Harmon. These movement leaders have bequeathed symbols that bind. They form the basis of our peopehood.

One hundred and fifty years following the Great Disappointment of 1844 we pause to take stock of meanings. I want here to sketch an overview of the Millerite story with a view toward asking how the Millerite experience might inform lives lived in the present. I do so under headings which call attention to a reformist heritage, an initial inclusive cry, a subsequent exclusive cry, and a concluding and unscientific postscript composed

of "So what?" comments and questions.

1. *The Millerites were at once a part of the fringe-cum-cutting-edge action in reformist and come-outer New England.* No less an authority than venerable historian Henry Steele Commager accords the Millerites a place in the roster of heady reformers—or, at minimum, high flying enthusiasts—from Boston at mid century.

For the reformers, at least, Boston was the Hub of the Universe. They could preach pantheism in the pulpit, transcendentalism in the schoolroom, socialism in the market place, abolition in Faneuil Hall; they could agitate the most extravagant causes and you would have to listen to them. And they consorted with the worst of men, and of women too. Whether they went they trailed behind them clouds of high flying enthusiasts—spiritualists, phrenologists, Swedenborgians, Millerites, vegetarians, Grahamites, prohibitionists, feminists, non-resisters, Thomsonians, Comouters of every shape and hue.

Eternity will rule on whether Boston merits the "Hub of the Universe" distinction and whether the Millerites figure more appropriately as "reformers" or "high flying enthusiasts." (Commager's characterization of Boston was challenged by Barry Goldwater, who opined that the original thirteen colonies might well be sawed off and let float out to sea with the continent being not only none the worse, but better for it—in clear contradis-

inction to John Donne in quite another context.) What cannot be gainsaid: that Boston fostered a reformist ferment which called forth the likes of those groupings and groupings cited so approvingly by Commager—and that those who became Millerites were there in the thick of things.

2. An inclusive cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him," characterized the early Millerite movement—an inclusive movement which attracted the energies of leaders who were at once committed to both religious and reform movements. (This inclusive "Bride-groom phase" of the Millerite movement begins in 1839 when publicist/organizer/apologist Joshua V. Himes moved Miller from "sand lot" countryside engagements to "big league" movement presentations at Himes' famed Chardon Street Chapel in Boston.)

Armed only with Bible, concordance, and a wooden literalism that allowed the prophetic and apocalyptic works of Scripture to interpret themselves when compared line upon line and precept upon

precept and number upon number, Miller developed an eschatological schema that was generally open to discussion and modification on all points but two: Christ would return, and he would return "about 1843."

On his own, Miller heralded the bridegroom's return for fully a half dozen years before Methodist minister Josiah Litch and Christian Connection cleric Joshua V. Himes joined the cause. Subsequently, Charles Fitch, Congregationalist-cum-Presbyterian pastor and an early recruit of Josiah Litch, emerged as one of the movement's most aggressive communicators—by word, pen, and chart. That the Millerite movement numbered among its leaders persons drawn from these diverse communions illustrates the cross-denominational appeal and inclusive nature of the movement.

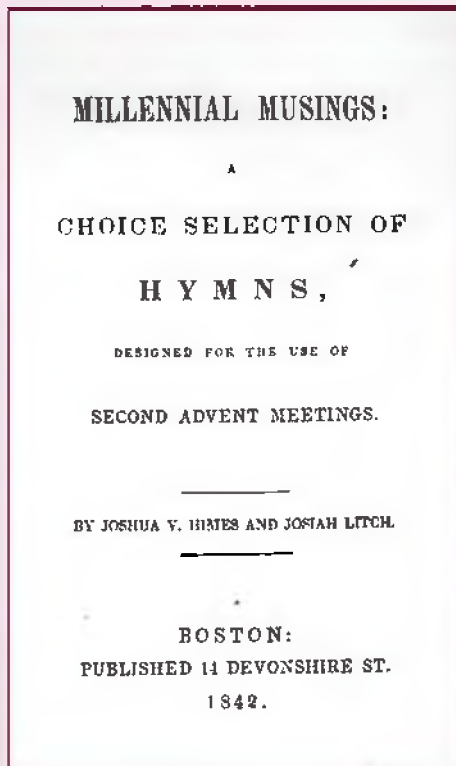
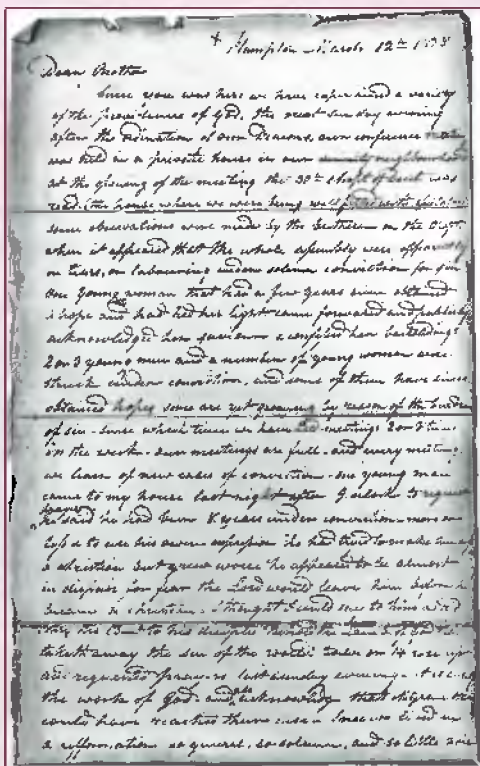
The positive affirmation, "The Bridegroom Cometh!" allowed for broad appeal to the various Protestant groups. The Millerite leaders disparaged sectarian fracturing and resolutely viewed their message as a general call to awaken or strengthen

Christian commitment. In 1840, at the First General Conference of Advent Believers, the Millerites affirmed

Opposite Page:
Charles Fitch

Left: This 1828 letter from William Miller expresses Miller's deep-felt conviction that Jesus' return was imminent.

Right: Music kept the early Millerites together; this hymn book contained many of the songs that inspired Miller's struggling followers in the years before and after the Disappointment.



that their movement was devoid of sectarian intent:

We have no purpose to distract the churches with any new inventions or to get to ourselves a name by starting another sect among the followers of the Lamb. We neither condemn, nor rudely assail, others of a faith different from our own nor dictate in matters of conscience for our brethren, nor seek to demolish their organizations, nor build up new ones of our own; but simply to express our convictions like Christians. "We know no sect, or party as such," wrote Himes that same year, "while we respect all."

In addition to sharing a commitment to the advent movement, each Millerite leader had devoted extensive energies to other reform movements as well. Fitch published his *Slaveholding Weighed in the Balance of Truth and its Comparative Guilt* in 1837. Litch was constantly in the forefront of early anti-slavery and temperance agitation. And Himes' credentials were well established among the reformist circles in Boston as being "among the most radical of the radicals."

Nor were these three leaders exceptional in their zeal for reform. Millerite editor and lecturer Henry Jones carried the cause of temperance throughout the North and had been banned from churches for his abolitionist stance. Millerite convention leader Henry Dana Ward was not only an ardent New York city abolitionist but also a temperance organizer who had cut his reform teeth in the anti-Masonic

movement of the 'twenties. Baptist Millerite churchman Elon Galusha, son of the governor of Vermont, chaired a county anti-slavery society and an interdenominational convention in 1841 which called

for resolutions against slaveholding churches. *Midnight Cry* editor Nathaniel Stoddard was deeply involved in the issues of temperance, abolition, and education and served as acting editor of the *Emancipator*, an anti-slavery paper. Methodist minister George Storrs preached his abolitionist activism not only to anti-sla-

very types but also to resistive Methodist bishops who did not share his enthusiasm for reforming either church or world. And seasoned Millerite preacher and conference organizer Joseph Bates earned the dual distinctions of carrying his abolitionist attitudes into hostile territory and captaining the crew of a "dry" merchant ship which plied the seven seas.

An examination of Himes's involvements demonstrated that he was indisputably the most active of the Millerites while at the same time championing movements for social reform—right up until the expected Year of Jubilee in 1843. His commitment to temperance, Christian unionism, abolition, and non-resistance continued through the very years of Millerism's rise to

movement status. After bringing Miller to Boston in 1839, Himes functioned as the organization's publicist and organizer. The Chardon Street pastor purchased the "biggest tent in the country" for Miller's meetings and recruited and scheduled other evangelists for speaking tours. He organized camp meetings and convened numerous second advent conferences. He edited two journals—the *Midnight Cry* in New York and the *Signs of the Times* in Boston—and helped found others in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Rochester, and Montreal.

3. *The exclusive cry, "Babylon is Fallen, Come out of her my people!" characterized the later Millerite movement—an exclusive movement which called the faithful out of all religious and social institutions of the world. (The exclusive "Babylon phase" of the Millerite movement begins in 1842 with the sermon by Charles Fitch which branded Catholicism and sects of "Apostate Protestantism" as "whores and daughters of whores.")*

The broad-based Millerite movement which had eschewed sectarianism took on the baggage of an organization. The "Ministerial Conferences" and "General Conferences" led by Miller, Himes, et al., came to include such activities as celebrating communion, examining movement preachers, naming an executive committee, and authorizing and endors-



Top: George Storrs, Millerite leader who bequeathed Adventism its belief in conditional immortality. **Right:** Miller studying the Bible, as always the basis for his preaching and teaching.

Opposite Page: Many of the early Millerite leaders were actively involved in the abolitionist movement, for which fiery editor William Lloyd Garrison was an effective spokesman.

ing newspapers, magazines, and even a hymnal—*The Millennial Harp*. Consolidation, and with it outsidership, were effectively guaranteed when Charles Fitch's mid-1843 apocalyptic sermon, "Come Out of Her, My People," was preached, printed, and scattered like the leaves of autumn. Fitch's point was stark: the saved remnant consisted of those who embraced the Advent movement, while Babylon was made up of those who did not—including Catholics and "all sects in Protestant Christendom." Once these two categories were discounted from mainstream American Christianity in the 1840s, the remaining population certainly numbered less than the one hundred and forty four thousand faithful celebrated in St. John's Apocalypse.

Fitch's call to come out was a signal that the moderate middle would not hold against the pressure of the militant left wing—the come-outers and the date setters. Miller's general end-time projection of "about 1843" was followed by a review of the Jewish calendar which placed the Second Coming at the close of the Jewish year on April 18, 1844. Later, the "seventh-month movement" gained adherents for its conviction that the Jewish Day of Atonement (the "tenth day of the seventh month")



of 1844 would usher in the eschaton. This Millerite come-outer movement constituted an exodus by the militant adventists from the established churches and from the established order in general: "not only the churches, but the governments of the world, too, were a part of Babylon."

What had begun as an inclusive movement assumed an embattled—indeed embittered—position. That beast of Revelation which most Protestants interpreted as Catholicism had sprouted horns. The wanton Babylonian woman had given birth to daughters. And only the separated Millerite remnant remained to usher in the Coming.

Miller did not wish to support this fracturing. "I have not ordained anyone to separate from the churches to which they may have belonged unless their brethren cast them out," he wrote as late as January of 1844. "I have never designed to make a new sect, or to give you a nickname." Only in an uncharacteristic moment did he appear to align himself with the language of the Fitch Call. But with this new cry the separatist faction gained a momentum of its own, a momentum which Miller "feared." Shrinking from the brethren giving "another cry, 'Come out of her, my people,'" Miller confided his anxiety: "I fear the enemy has a hand in this, to direct our attitude from the true issue, the midnight cry, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh.'" The inclusive Bridegroom cry was drowned out by the exclusive Babylon cry.

Follow, the pathos: crops unharvested, cows left in the pasture, and potatoes left undug. The faithful gathered, the day passed, and—in the words of Hiram Edson—"We wept and wept until the day dawn."

4. *A concluding and unscientific post script of "So what?" queries and comments on the matter of a shared heritage and shared symbols.* What do we learn from the Millerite experience? How might we, one and one half centuries removed from these

prophetic founders, recognize the signs of the time in these times? How may we become aware of those beasts which require slaying in this time and in this place? How may the gift of prophecy bequeathed by our Millerite and Adventist forbears continue to function?

Early Millerite inclusivism—exemplified by the inclusive "bridegroom" cry—eschewed sectarianism and centralized authority, welcomed the energies of a broad spectrum of religious and social reformers into its ranks, and continued to call for social justice and the reform of the republic's social structures while proclaiming the positive message of the Bridegroom's return as constituting the ultimate reform. And they were energized.

Later Millerite exclusivism—exemplified by the exclusive "Babylon" cry—embraced sectarianism and an accompanying heightened central authority, ratcheted increasingly specific interpretations from the scriptural text, set dates, branded non-believers as "whores and daughters of whores," and called adherents out of all social and religious institutions merely to await that kingdom whose builder and maker would be God. And they were disappointed.

The call to prophetic witness and spiritual insight is issued no less to communities than to individuals. It is through community—"where two or three are gathered together in my name"—that the One who inspired the prophets continues to speak to their children. It is that community characterized by a prophetic spirit which "heard" the spirit speaking more distinctly through some writings than others and so preserved the Biblical cannon. It is that community characterized by the prophetic spirit that can continue to "hear" the voice of the spirit speak through the voices of those prophets who originally spoke chiefly to their time and to their place.

What are the marks of an authentic

community of faith? Our Millerite and Adventist forbears remind us that the authentic community of faith is characterized beautifully and succinctly in the Apocalypse: the faithful remnant throughout history will bear testimony to Jesus by exhibiting the spirit of prophecy—by exhibiting a spirit that is truly prophetic. Such a community of faith will not only listen. It will speak out prophetically. And act out prophetically. Where persons and systems are naked in the face of meaninglessness, the prophetic community will call for and be agents of justice. Where persons and systems are broken, the prophetic community will call for and be agents of healing. Where persons and systems are fractured, the prophetic community will call for and be agents of wholeness.

What legacy will present-day Seventh-day Adventists, a full century and a half removed from their movement's founders, pass on to their children and to their children's children? Will this prophetic sect whose youthful leaders once called down woes on the "beastly" institution of slavery a century past speak out forcefully against demonic principalities and powers in this time and place? Will the descendants of those whose apocalyptic visions enabled them to perceive "signs of the times" continue to see signs in these times? Will the offspring of those who venerated the "spirit of prophecy" take seriously the task of asking what

it means to witness as a prophet community in the face of contemporary culture? Will the sons and daughters of those whose eschatological time tables proclaimed the imminence of the "Blessed Hope" be challenged to act out those hopes for the heavenly city within the warp and woof of this present order? Will they be energized by seeking to effect justice and righteousness on this "spit of sand called earth" as they wait faithfully? Or will they, as with the later Millerites, eschew broad dialogue with those of other faith communities, reject the social order *in toto*, come out of the world and its institutions—and be disappointed?

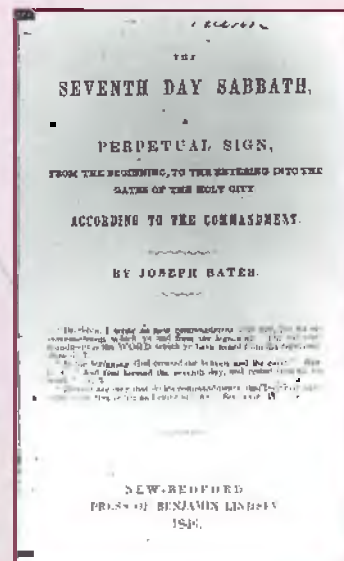
Symbols, we noted at the outset, bind us. To be a people is to share memories and hopes. Without shared symbols/stories/interpretations we cease to be a people of memory and hope. Symbols are intended precisely to point individuals and communities "beyond"—to a reality that cannot be touched, weighed, or measured. Yet when symbols/stories/interpretations cease to point us to a realm beyond and become ends in themselves ("is there really a sanctuary in heaven—furniture and all?"), they become idols. And God raises up prophets precisely to smash such idols. Like it or not—as with Paul the Apostle—

prophets show us that symbols/stories/interpretations must constantly be reviewed, ever renewed, and sometimes discarded. Against such notions, the orthodox core within all of us reacts negatively. When presented with progressive understandings and the possibility of change, our orthodox selves instinctively want to stone the prophets. And such stonings—as with Saul of Tarsus—can be staged with sanctimonious sincerity: we accuse the prophets of being "irreligious," or "sacrilegious," or "unorthodox," or "heretical." Yet, years later, it is the children of this would-be faithful who enshrine these very prophets in stained glass and accord them honor: those who smash symbols-turned-idols are credited with hearing God's voice for these times more clearly than those who stoned the prophets.

Sobering riddles, these: how to keep inclusive Bridegroom calls from evolving into exclusive Babylon damnations, how to be inspired by a future hope without withdrawing from the present, how to continue reading the signs of the times in these times, how to keep prophets/prophesy alive and well in this time and in this place, and how to keep shared symbols from becoming idols.

Timely riddles, these.

Left: William Miller's farm house in 1844. Right: The discussions of Christian belief and practice that followed the Disappointment led to a variety of new conclusions, like that of Joseph Bates that contemporary Christians ought to observe the seventh day Sabbath.



The Journey of an Idea

By Fritz Guy

The idea of the “cleansing” of the sanctuary in heaven is a distinctively Adventist item of theology, but it didn’t emerge out of nowhere in the preaching of William Miller. Like all theological notions, it is part of a larger historical and theological picture.



John Calvin introduced into Reformation thought the idea of the threefold office (*munus triplex*) of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. In this connection, he understood Christ’s priesthood as having two principal components: (a) Christ’s death, which blotted out our guilt and abolished the

ceremonies of the Law; and (b) Christ’s continuing intercessory ministry, which reconciles us to God and opens up for us a way into the divine presence, but which is denied by the sacrifice of the Mass. But Calvin also saw in Christ’s priesthood two additional features: (c) Christ’s identification with us in our infirmities, and (d) the priesthood of believers. Although Calvin recognized the objective reality of Christ’s heavenly ministry, he interpreted the reference to “the greater and more perfect tabernacle” (Heb. 9:11) as a sym-

bol of the physical body of Christ.

At about the same time, the Lutheran theologian Philip Melancthon offered a summary of Christ’s functions (*officia*) as high priest: he (a) proclaims the gospel, (b) offers sacrifice for us, (c) always prays for us, (d) announces the remission of sins, and (e) takes away sin and returns life. While this description of Christ’s priestly service is similar to Calvin’s, it adds at the end a “life-giving” element that increases the experiential relevance of Christ’s heavenly ministry.

If the seed of a theology of Christ’s high-priestly ministry was planted by Calvin, its most noticeable growth occurred in the writings of his Puritan descendants in seventeenth-century England. For them, this ministry was essential to human salvation, for it made possible the spiritual growth of the Christian, especially through forgiveness but also through

Hiram Edson’s cornfield epiphany provided the basis for Adventism’s developing sanctuary doctrine and offered despondent Millerites renewed hope.

Theological Background

In the light of the explicit New Testament affirmation of a sanctuary in heaven and of the ministry of Christ as high priest there, it may be surprising that Protestant theologians have given the subject so little attention. It has, of course, received incidental consideration in commentaries on the relevant passages in the Letter to the Hebrews and the Revelation to John. But it has played a very small role in the systematic thought of major theological figures past and present.

the guidance and persuasion of grace. In this connection the Puritans developed a detailed typological understanding of the Old Testament sanctuary, which for them symbolized both the mission of Christ and the sanctuary in heaven. The heavenly sanctuary was thus regarded as certainly real, although not necessarily corresponding to its earthly shadow in form and material. The Puritans noted the importance of the Day of Atonement, which they interpreted partly in juridical terms. But most of all, Christ's ministry as a heavenly high priest was for them the assurance of God's interest in human lives and the impossibility of any meritorious human work of mediation.

In the twentieth century, although the creative mind of Karl Barth examined and illuminated almost every known theological topic (including the Sabbath), he discussed the high priesthood of Christ in heaven only in two brief passages in his *Church Dogmatics*. In one, he emphasized the exclusiveness of this priesthood, "for which there is no parallel," because Christ "is not only the One who offers sacrifice but also the sacrifice which is offered." Barth noted further that we can describe Christ's work either as His "high-priestly work" or as His "judicial work," and that either way "we shall mean and say exactly the same thing." In the other passage, Barth stressed the continuation of Christ's ministry in our behalf: "He not only did but does stand before God for us," so that "today, now, at this very hour. [He is] our active and effective Representative and Advocate before God, and therefore the real basis of our justification and hope."

Other twentieth-century theologians have had even less to say about our subject. Emil Brunner, first in his *Christology*, *The Mediator*, and later in *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, merely identified the elements of Christ's traditional threefold office with the corresponding functions of revelation, recon-

ciliation, and dominion. He did not otherwise consider the idea of Christ's priestly ministry, much less the idea of a high-priesthood in heaven. And when G. C. Berkouwer devoted a chapter of *The Work of Christ* to the threefold office, he was more interested in the significance of triplicity as such than in the meaning of each element. He expounded the meaning Christ's priesthood only with reference to sacrifice, with no discussion of intercession at all.

To a small extent, however, the lack of systematic theological reflection on Christ's high-priestly ministry is reduced by the contribution of theologically-inclined commentators on the Letter to the Hebrews—B. F. Westcott, F. F. Bruce and Aelred Cody, for example.

The Emergence of a New Idea

Apart from the Puritans, the mainstream of Protestantism may have paid little attention to the significance of the Bible's sanctuary images in general and to the theme of Christ's high priestly ministry in particular. But Seventh-day Adventists have kept the discussion of the sanctuary alive and flourishing. Thanks to the preaching of William Miller, the idea of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven began its theological journey as an apocalyptic symbol of the second appearance of God in the person of Jesus the Messiah. The King James Version of Daniel 8:13-14 provided the language. A heavenly figure asked, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?" The answer was provided by another heavenly figure, who said, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." The sanctuary, Miller thought, could in this case refer to both the earth and the church—the earth to be cleansed by fire when Christ returned,

and the church to be cleansed of the uncleanness of sin. The "two thousand and three hundred days" were to be interpreted as a period of 2300 years beginning in 457 BC and continuing to AD 1843. The date was subsequently recalculated to 1844, and finally specifically identified as Tuesday, October 22, 1844.

When that day brought, not the reappearance of Jesus but "the great disappointment," the idea of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven did not die. Instead, it began a new stage in its journey. Although the available contemporary sources do not establish the exact time and place this new stage began, years later one of the central participants, Hiram Edson, wrote out his recollection of events that occurred Wednesday, October 23, at his farm a mile south of the town of Port Gibson, New York, on the Erie Canal about midway between Syracuse and Buffalo.

Early that morning, most of the little group of believers who had met in Edson's farm house went home. To the few who stayed, he said, "Let's go out to the barn and pray." As he remembered it, they went out to a granary that was almost empty—empty because, in view of the impending end of the world, the corn hadn't been brought in. Inside the granary,



they shut the door behind them and knelt to pray. They prayed until they felt the witness of the Spirit that their prayers were heard, they would be given new light, and their disappointment would be explained.

Later, after breakfast, Edson recalled, he said to a friend, "Let's go out to comfort the brethren with this assurance." Perhaps because it was a shortcut to their first destination, or perhaps because they wanted to avoid the road where they might be seen, they set out through the farm, crossing a field where the corn was still in shocks. Halfway across, Edson



stopped and looked up at the sky. Suddenly he realized that the prophecy of Daniel did not say that "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" to the earth (as the Adventists had all supposed), but that he came "to the Ancient of days."

Looking back at the experience later, Edson wrote, "I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy [Place] to come to the earth . . . He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth." Edson remembered further

that his companion, noting that he had stopped, went on across the field. At the fence he turned and saw Edson still in the middle of the field. He called out, "Brother Edson, what are you stopping for?" Edson replied, "The Lord was answering our morning prayer."

Within 12 or 15 years, the Adventist idea of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary had taken on a fairly definite shape. It was a combination of the three principal ingredients mentioned above and coming from three different parts of Scripture via different elements of theological history. The picture of Christ as high priest in heaven (Hebrews 7-9) was part of Adventism's Protestant heritage. The vision of the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of history (Daniel 8:13-14) was inherited from William Miller. The association of Daniel's prophecy of divine judgment with the judgment related to the ancient Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) and the application of this combined symbolism to something happening in heaven itself, was original with the sabbatarian Adventists.

In the light of these three ingredients, it was concluded that the ministry of Christ in heaven had two aspects—intercession and judgment. These two aspects

corresponded respectively to the regular daily services connected with the Holy Place of the Old Testament sanctuary, and to the special Day of Atonement service connected to the Most Holy Place. These two aspects were distinguished not only functionally but also temporally, with the later one identified as the eschatological Day of Atonement or "cleansing of the sanctuary" beginning in 1844.

The Progress of the Idea

As the idea of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary continued its journey in Adventist theology, it acquired greater definition. Ellen White generally affirmed the views of Uriah Smith, maintaining that "the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work" in behalf of humanity, and that his intercession there is "as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross." Concerning the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary, she made three initial points: (a) it involves "an examination of the books of record," (b) its purpose is "to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, and are entitled to the benefits of His atonement;" and (c) it "must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people." Another, additional element of the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary was also identified by Ellen White as the ultimate meaning of the scapegoat ritual: "the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and placing of those sins upon Satan," which is involved in "the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners."

Opposite Page: William Miller, from the front of a bound volume of *The Midnight Cry*.

Top: Josiah Litch

Bottom: This selection from a report of resolutions adopted by the post-disappointment Millerites highlights their ongoing conviction of the essential truthfulness of their proclamation of the Advent Near.



Additional suggestions regarding the sanctuary's "cleansing" came as decades went by and new generations of Adventists began to think about the "cleansing" of the sanctuary. About the turn of the century two influential figures offered ideas that were different from earlier views and different from each other. One was Albion Fox Ballenger, an American preacher who worked in England, Ireland, and Wales. He claimed that, at his ascension, Christ cleansed the sanctuary in heaven from all human sin, and that what began in 1844 was the cleansing of the sanctuary from the sin of Satan, the great originator of evil. The other was William Warren Prescott, a college professor and editor. He interpreted the "cleansing" of the sanctuary as a restoration of a correct understanding of the gospel after a long period of distortion.

Toward the middle of the twentieth century, still other views developed. On the one hand, M. L. Andreasen, a teacher and administrator, associated the "cleansing" with a cosmic vindication of God in the lives of a generation of people who live without sin. Along with the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven there must be a cleansing of the human heart. It must become obvious that God can keep people from sinning, so they can pass the close inspection of the investigative judgment. On the other hand, Edward Heppenstall, a teacher at La Sierra College and later at Andrews University, understood the "investigative judgment" to be "a loving revelation from Christ of the righteous decisions in favor of those who have trusted in Him."

This early chart, prepared by Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale, outlines Millerite beliefs regarding the course of history and the imminence of the Second Coming.

More Recent Developments

In 1980, the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven became the focus of a major theological debate and confrontation when Desmond Ford, a teacher from Australia who had joined the faculty of Pacific Union College, challenged "the traditional Adventist interpretation" on several points, in part reiterating questions raised earlier not only by Ballenger but also by W. W. Fletcher in Australia, and L. R. Conradi in Europe. Among other things, Ford claimed that the "cleansing" mentioned in Daniel 8:14 refers first of all to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, not to the sanctuary in heaven described in the Letter to the Hebrews, but that it also symbolizes "a rediscovery of the true gospel," that is, "by an understanding, appreciation and appropriation of the great principle of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ." Ford was particularly unhappy with the traditional Adventist notion of an "investigative judgment," which could not, he insisted, be adequately supported from Scripture.

At the end of the August, 1980, meeting of the ad hoc Sanctuary Review Committee at Glacier View, Colorado, convoked to consider Ford's position, the so-called consensus statement, "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary," was approved as an expression of the church's current thinking about the sanctuary. According to this statement, "this end-time judgment at the close of the 2300-day period reveals our relationship to Christ, disclosed in the totality of our decisions. It indicates the outworking of grace on our lives as we have responded to His gift of salvation; it shows that we belong to Him."

More than one member of the Sanctuary Review Committee recalls its Glacier View meeting as an exceptionally painful and troubling experience. Its outcome was as much the result of polemics and politics as of theological and biblical reflection; and theology done with a political motive is never very good theology. The effects of Glacier View on the church in North America have been significant and mostly negative, and even worse in Australia and New Zealand, which lost 35-40 per cent of their Adventist pastors. Jack Provonsa of Loma Linda University spoke for many when he said shortly afterward, "I don't agree with [all of] Des Ford's theology, but I miss his voice."

Yet there were some positive results, too: in the aftermath of Glacier View, there was further thinking about the sanctuary in heaven and its "cleansing." It was seen as "a demonstration of the true character of God's sovereignty," as "a call to moral seriousness," as an indication of "God's continuing initiative." Some of



these ideas were reflected in a 1994 supplement to the *Adventist Review*, subtitled "The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing."

Paradoxically, although Ford lost his ministerial credentials, his ideas became increasingly influential. He is widely regarded as having asked the necessary questions, and even some of his answers seemed more acceptable later than they did at first.

The Uses of an Idea

In addition to reviewing the *content* of the idea of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven, it is useful to consider the ways in which this idea has *functioned* during its journey.

For the earliest Seventh-day Adventists, the doctrine of the sanctuary was "the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844." So far from being merely an interesting picture of something happening in heaven, it was a theological understanding of their spiritual experience—their hope and their disappointment. It was the means by which they could come to terms with the unfulfilled expectations, in which they had invested both their financial resources and their religious identity—indeed, the very meaning of their lives. In that moment of extraordinary spiritual intensity, the doctrine of the sanctuary "opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great Advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people." Thus they could see that although they had been mistaken, they had not been utterly deluded; and they still had a mission and a message.

But making sense of the expectation and disappointment of 1844 was not the only function of the Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary. It also expressed Adventist concerns about the Sabbath and the nearness of the Advent. As Uriah Smith put

it, "No person can receive the true light on the sanctuary, and the present position and work of our great Mediator, without having his attention specially directed to the Ten Commandments." And "if Christ is now closing up His work as priest, which is very soon to finish, it is absolutely certain that the second coming, also, is very soon to occur; inasmuch as, His priesthood being finished . . . His next move is to come for His people."

Nor have subsequent discussions of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary been ends in themselves; they have always been related to other issues. For W. W. Prescott, the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in heaven was an expression of the anti-Catholicism that had characterized Reformation theology and that was dominant in much of nineteenth-century America. For M. L. Andreasen, the "cleansing" of the sanctuary reinforced the idea of sinless perfection. For Desmond Ford, as for A. F. Ballenger 80 years earlier, the "cleansing" of the sanctuary illustrated the spiritual price of legalism—uncertainty about one's relationship to God; the idea of an investigative judgment was seen as an enemy of righteousness by faith, and a subversion of Christian assurance.

For Ford's opponents at the Glacier View meeting and afterwards, the "cleansing" of the sanctuary became a litmus test of Adventist orthodoxy and loyalty. Even at Glacier View, Desmond Ford was condemned not so much for being un-Biblical as for being unorthodox—that is, for thinking differently. Interestingly, this function of sanctuary theology as a test of orthodoxy has nothing in common with its profound spiritual significance in 1844.

The Continuing Journey

A century and a half after the journey began, it continues, guided by words of Ellen White written a hundred years ago: *There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be*

revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.

Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. . . . We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end.

Adventists still think and talk about what the doctrine of the sanctuary and the idea of its "cleansing" mean for their religious belief and experience. The meanings are inevitably different from the meanings of the past because the world is different and Adventists themselves are different. They are part of a theological journey that the Adventist community of faith has found not only challenging but rewarding.

Sources

Sources for this article are available upon request.

“A Feast of Reason” The Appeal of William Miller’s Way of Reading the Bible

By Anne Freed

In the early nineteenth century, William Miller attracted a large following of evangelical Christians from various denominations into a movement later to be called “Millerism.” How did Miller attract these Baptists, Methodists, Christianites, and other Christians to join him in searching the Bible for evidence of Christ’s soon coming? Miller and his followers lived in a relatively peaceful period of history; they did not experience hardship or persecution like many other groups that have found hope and meaning in the Bible’s apocalyptic prophecies. What convinced Millerites of the validity of Miller’s warnings of an imminent, cataclysmic end of the world?

Miller defended his Biblical interpretations by ap-

Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

VOICE OF THE PROPHETS

One of those, who in their travels and sojourns in the land of Israel, saying, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth,' 'Will stand in motion, I will smite the land: and I will make the prophets to cease; they shall think, 'The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every vision: In your days I will perform it. Jer. xiii. 23-29.

PROPHETIC PERIODS.

Diagram of the Prophetic Periods, as calculated by eminent Divines in Europe and America.

The Second Coming of the Messiah, the Judgment, and the First Resurrection, with the overthrow of the Kingdom of this World, together with the Apostate Ecclesiastical Structures; and the Inauguration of the Millennial Reign of Christ upon the Earth, with his People, about the years eighteen hundred and sixty-seven or eight.

EMINENT EXPOSITORS.

Among the most prominent teachers of this doctrine are the learned Doctors E. B. Elliott and John Canning, of London.

Many others in Europe have taught the imminence of the event:

Lord Carlisle, the Duke of Manchester, Viscount Mandeville; Bishops Hengley and Newton; Sir Isaac Newton, Heil, Goodwin, Bichard, Gill, Bickersteth, Love, Knox, Usher, Eym, Briggs, Birks, and a host of others.

In America, Duffield, D. N. Lord, Tyng, Dr. Leed, Shinnel, Bryant, Miller, Selig, Litch, Heil, D. T. Taylor, and many others.

VOLUME I. [Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4]

PUBLISHED BY JOSHUA V. HIMES. BOSTON, MASS.

Ho that tasteth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.

pealing to the rationality of his listeners. His method of prophetic interpretation shared the language and categories of the scientific method during a time when this method seemed to promise direct access to “facts” or “truth.” Miller consistently applied his method of biblical interpretation, in this way assuring his followers of a reliable revelation of God’s intentions in an age of uncertainty. This essay will explore Miller’s method of reading the Bible in the context of the social and intellectual setting in which he preached in order to help us more clearly to understand the emergence of the movement he led.

Miller’s Deistic Background

Miller’s method of biblical interpretation developed during the years of his conversion from deism to evangeli-

cal Christianity. While he eventually rejected deism, the Enlightenment spirit of rationality left its mark on him. Miller first encountered deism after he married in 1803 and moved to Poultney, Vermont. There, he devoted most of his free time to the study of books he borrowed from the town's library or from community leaders. Miller joined the Masons and often associated with the "principal men of Poultney who were deists."¹

Miller began to struggle with what he perceived as inconsistencies in the Bible and after reading Voltaire, Hume, Paine, and Ethan Allan, he finally decided to discard it. He only retained theistic beliefs in nature as the revealer of God and in "a hereafter" where virtue would be rewarded.²

During his twelve years as a deist, Miller often mocked the religious devotion of his relatives, especially his uncle Elihu Miller and his grandfather Phelps, both Baptist pastors.³ A series of events led Miller to doubt his deistic convictions, however. From 1810 to 1815, he

served as a lieutenant and then a captain in the military; as such, he served in the War of 1812. The war and a bout with spotted fever forced him to confront the reality of death. The death of his father in 1812 finally led to his conversion to Christianity.⁴

The war had convinced Miller of the possibility of divine providence. After the war, he "began to suspect that deism tended to a belief of annihilation" or to a "denial of a future existence." A growing awareness of his own sinfulness led Miller to seek forgiveness. Yet he found no evidence outside the Bible of a savior. Slowly opening himself to participation in the Baptist community of his youth and to a consideration of the Bible, he began to conclude that it contained "principles . . . perfectly adapted to the wants of a fallen world." Witnessing to his convictions he wrote, "I was constrained to admit that the Scriptures must be a revelation from God; they became my delight, and in Jesus I found a friend."⁵

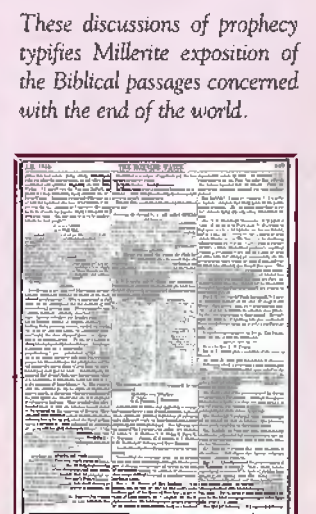
Upon his conversion, Miller was often taunted by deistic friends for his "blind faith." He responded by defending the consistency of the Bible, claiming that all of it could be harmonized. Finally, he

determined to harmonize all apparent contradictions or remain a deist.⁶ Thus, he equated proof of the Bible's inner consistency with proof of its inspiration. This presupposition led him to adopt a rationalistic method of Biblical interpretation by which he sought an "empirical verification for faith."⁷

Miller's Methodology

For Miller, consistency meant finding a single meaning for a given figure or image wherever it appeared in the Bible. For example, if one passage of Scripture indicated that beasts stood for kings or kingdoms, this definition could be confidently applied to explain the other uses of the term throughout the bible. In using this hermeneutical method, Miller joined the popular historicist tradition of biblical interpretation. Like such other noted historicists as Sir Isaac Newton, Joseph Mede, and George Stanley Faber, Miller interpreted biblical prophecies by comparing prophetic symbols in various books of the Bible with world history. Historicists believed that they could discover a chronology of prophetic events, including those regarding the Bible's yet-unfulfilled accounts of the end of the world.⁸

Miller believed that, using the Bible alone—without the aid of commentaries—believers could discover the mean-



These discussions of prophecy typifies Millerite exposition of the Biblical passages concerned with the end of the world.

ing of any passage, no matter how obscure.

I commenced with Genesis. . . . Whenever I found any thing obscure, my practice was to compare it with all collateral passages, and by the help of Cruden's Concordance I examined all the texts of Scripture. . . . Then by letting every word have its proper bearing on the subject of the text, if my view of it harmonized with every collateral passage of the Bible, it ceased to be a difficulty.⁹

After a systematic search of the Scriptures beginning in 1816, Miller concluded: [The Bible] was indeed a feast of reason. All that was dark, mystical or obscure . . . had been dissipated from my mind before the clear light that now dawned from its sacred pages.¹⁰

Miller was further convinced by his study of biblical prophecies that the second coming of Christ would occur "sometime around 1843." He did not publicly proclaim his convictions, however, until 1832.¹¹

The Context of Miller's Preaching

Miller announced his message of the imminent second coming to audiences that were likely familiar with his methodology. Historian Kai Arasola observes that "no North American Protestant interested in Biblical prophecies in the early half of the nineteenth century could avoid encountering the traditional historical method."¹² Historicism developed mainly among English and American

prophetic time periods; (2) the consistent comparison of history with prophecy and various apocalyptic symbols; (3) the identification of the biblical "little horn" with the papacy; and (4) the synchronization of different prophecies into a coherent system.¹⁵ In particular, Mede was a premillennialist—one who believed Jesus' second coming would occur before the millennium foretold in the book of Revelation.¹⁶

Miller read three historicists—Thomas Newton, John Gill, and Faber—who followed Mede's method. Miller claimed independence for his interpretation, however, declaring that he had only a general knowledge of their work.¹⁷ Yet his acquaintance with them, and other indications of their popularity, suggest that many of his listeners were also familiar with historicism.

Thomas Newton was the nineteenth century writer most quoted on the topic of

prophetic exegesis. He emphasized the synchronization of prophecy, claiming that it could refute skeptics when "scientifically" applied. John Gill was a Baptist scholar described in 1868 by another Baptist writer as "in some respects the most learned man that had yet appeared in our denomination." Gill wrote multi-volume commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, expounding prophecies using a method similar to Mede's.¹⁸ Faber, a contemporary of Miller, was a "voluminous" writer on prophecy. He followed Mede, Newton, and Gill in his methodology, yet he did not indicate his view of the exact nature of the events that would fulfill the prophecies he interpreted.¹⁹

Others besides Mede, Newton, Gill, and Faber relied on historicist methodology in interpreting prophecy. In his massive study, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, LeRoy Froom lists "75 expositors,

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PROTRAIT OF MR. MILLER.

The above is a portrait of Mr. Miller, taken by the artist, and is a very good one. It shows him from the waist up, wearing a dark coat and a white shirt with a cravat. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer.

The artist has done a very good job of capturing Mr. Miller's features and the texture of his clothing. The background is a simple, light color, which makes the portrait stand out.



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scattered over a dozen nations, spread over four continents,” who anticipated William Miller’s major positions regarding prophetic time.²⁰ While not all of them, according to Froom, reached the same conclusions as Miller, these statistics illustrate the common use of the historicist method by forerunners of Miller.

In addition to the widespread use of the historicist method, other intellectual developments in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America account for the appeal of Miller’s method of biblical interpretation. Historian Nathan Hatch describes a crisis of religious authority following the Revolution that led to an “individualization of conscience.” Point-

ing to the roots of this phenomenon, Hatch maintains:

*Above all, the Revolution dramatically expanded the circle of people who considered themselves capable of thinking for themselves about issues of freedom, equality, sovereignty, and representation. Respect for authority, tradition, station, and education eroded.*²¹

Influenced by these cultural movements, popular religious leaders as diverse as Caleb Rich and Abner Jones rejected traditionally established systems of religious doctrine in order to search the Scriptures for religious truth.²² Hatch calls this reliance on the Bible alone “religious authoritarianism” under the guise of a “populist hermeneutics” or an “open Bible,”²³ recognizing in this way that theologians inevitably impose systems of interpretation on the Bible, whether they claim to do so or not.

Questioning traditional authorities led nineteenth century Christians to seek alternate validation for biblical truth. Most American Protestants rejected individualistic or subjectivistic understandings of religious truth emphasized by Transcendentalists and nineteenth century German theologians.²⁴ Rather, American Protestants looked to science and the scientific method in order to validate their

convictions. According to George Marsden, this was a result of the persistence in America into the nineteenth century of notions inherited from the Enlightenment, especially the widespread influence of Scottish “Common Sense” philosophy. Marsden describes this position as “anti-philosophy,” since its adherents rejected skepticism and speculation. Instead, they presupposed “the reliability . . . of sense perceptions, of reasoning, memory, and the testimony of others.” On the basis of such presuppositions, Common Sense philosophers argued for a core set of beliefs common to people of all cultures.²⁵

Such a common core of self-evident “truths” provided a foundation for various systems of knowledge or “laws of reality,” including scientific knowledge and biblical truth. By applying the Baconian inductive method, one could seek knowledge of “facts” in both the natural world and in the bible. In the case of scripture, one determined “facts” by identifying the meaning of words.²⁶ J. S. Lamar, of the Disciples of Christ, asserted, for instance, that, when studied inductively, the Scriptures “speak to us in a voice as certain and unmistakable as the language of nature heard in the experiments and observations of science.”²⁷ Others, like Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary, treated even “figurative language” as “just as definite in its meaning and just as intelligible as the most literal.” Hodge



Opposite Page, Top: Miller’s message naturally aroused controversy, exemplified by this tartly-titled pamphlet. **Bottom:** Many publications reported on the state of the Millerite movement and expounded the Millerite message. The report in this one of a lecture in Newark is noteworthy for the contemporary portrait of “Father Miller,” which conveys a sense of his personality as effectively as any picture of him.

Top: Miller’s promoter and manager, Joshua V. Himes. **Bottom:** A later artist’s reconstruction of Miller’s lecturing style.

argued that, "when interpreted according to established usage," such language "is not only definite in its import, but it never expresses what is false to the intellect." In this way, Hodge, like Miller, expressed the confidence that God was revealed to human beings with an accuracy that could be scientifically established.²⁹ Scientific rationality, then, provided many Protestant Americans with authoritative validation for biblical truth when other traditional authorities had lost their influence.

By providing empirical validation for the Bible, Miller's method conformed to conventional nineteenth century methods of biblical interpretation. As Whitney Cross has noted, "the Advent movement's most distinctive feature was . . . its extreme closeness to orthodoxy."²⁹ Similarly, Ruth Alden Doan rightly emphasizes that the Millerites and many of their Protestant opponents employed similar assumptions and methods. They both regarded numbers, statistics, and calculations as the best "evidence" for the correctness of biblical interpretation and proof of biblical authority.³⁰ Since the early 1700s, orthodox Presbyterians had stressed the importance of "Evidences of Christianity," especially miracles and prophecies—as opposed to mere "enthusiasm"³¹—

in establishing the "facts" of biblical doctrines. While the Millerites emphasized the

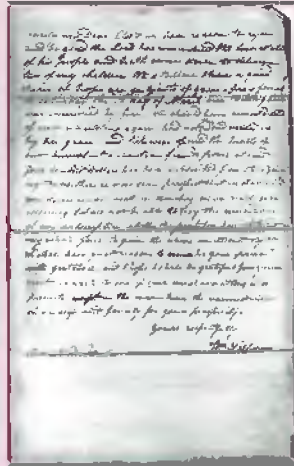
cataclysmic intervention of God in human history, Doan argues, orthodoxy took a turn toward postmillennialism. "The evangelical sons and daughters of Calvinism" found it easier to embrace a God who worked through the processes of history than one who interrupted the steady progress of humankind through time.³² Millerism attracted those from among the orthodox who were comfortable with a transcendent God, a radical "Other" who could touch while remaining untouched by human history. Others related better to an immanent God who worked in and through history. They turned to postmillennialism from the premillennialism that was central to Miller's view of God and history.³³

Millennial Hope in the Nineteenth Century

A growing interest in both premillennialism and postmillennialism emerged in the early nineteenth century.³⁴ Like many other Westerners, Americans were experiencing changes in their social and cultural environment because of rising nationalism, migration, the industrial revolution, scientific discoveries, new ideologies, and changing authority

structures.³⁵ Many Protestant leaders advanced millennial views based on a comparison of prophecy and the tumultuous character of their times.³⁶ Congregationalist leader Jedediah Morse, for example, complained that religious leaders are "criminally ignorant of the Scripture prophecies, which relate to the present period, and inattentive to events, which are remarkably fulfilling them."³⁷

Others, more optimistic about social progress, adopted postmillennialist views. Lyman Beecher anticipated an imminent



EXPECTED DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD. 309

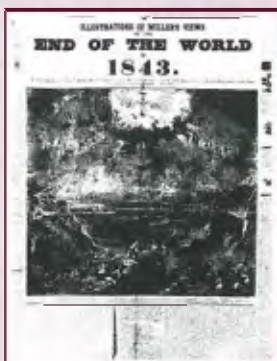
next day, and his father wished to have me come and talk to the people on the subject of the Lord's coming. I was immediately agree with myself for having made the covenant I had; I rebelled as soon against the Lord, and determined not to go. I left the boy, without giving him any answer, and retired in great distress to a grove near by. There I struggled with the Lord for about an hour, endeavoring to release myself from the covenant I had made with him, but could get no relief. It was impressed upon my

at the close of a burning fever in the spring of 1843, Mr. Miller remains in his journal, that, up to that time, he had given three thousand two hundred lectures!

An interesting reminiscence of Mr. Miller's early career, is related by his biographer as having occurred soon after the publication of his views in pamphlet form. As he was passing down the Hudson river, in a steam-boat, a company of men standing near him were conversing respecting the wonderful improvements of the day. One of them remarked, that it

conscious, 'Will you make a covenant with God, and break it to your?' and the preceding substance of this being overwhelmed me. I finally submitted; and promised the Lord that if he would sustain me, I would go, trusting in him to give me grace and ability to perform all he should require of me. I returned to the house, and found the boy still waiting; he remained till after dinner, and I returned with him to Dresden." Such was the beginning. And yet, two years since, barely

was impossible for things to progress, for thirty years to elapse in the same ratio that they had done; "for," said he, "man will create to something more than human." Mr. Miller replied to him, that it remained him of Gen. 1:2: 4.—'May shall not to end, and knowledge shall be increased.' A pause ensuing, Mr. Miller continued, and observed that the improvements of the present day were just what we should expect at this time, in the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. He then commenced



millennium as a culmination of revivals, new missionary movements, and the efforts of temperance societies.³⁶ Similarly, Edward Griffen, a Congregationalist pastor/educator from Boston, predicted in 1813 that the millennium would begin in 1921 or 1922, pointing to the rise of the mission movement and Turkey's weakening power as signs of prophetic fulfillment.³⁹ Such postmillennial views reflected the optimistic spirit of the early nineteenth century.

Yet too many changes and disappointed expectations eventually led many Protestants to abandon such optimism and to seek a certainty about the future dependent on hope in divine intervention rather than divinely-inspired human achievement. Millerites sought this cer-



tainty in the familiar prophecies of the Bible. Millerites believed it was essential, therefore, to establish the authority of Scripture. They regarded movements such as Universalism as particularly threatening to biblical authority.⁴⁰ They sought to "prove" by empirical means that the Bible could be its own interpreter. Such proof depended on the empirical validation of prophecy.⁴¹

The Attractiveness of Miller's Rational Hermeneutic

Miller's strict application of the historicist method of prophetic interpretation offered his followers tools that enabled them to feel confident and secure in an uncertain time. Because historicism appeared to conform to the canons of rationality used in science, Miller's method of prophetic interpretation—which Arasola terms the "logical absolute of popular biblicism"⁴²—assured Millerites of the fulfillment of their pietistic hopes.

Miller presented his system of interpretation with the kind of confidence one might expect scientific investigation to elicit:

To get the whole truth, all those visions or prophecies must be concentrated and brought together, that has reference to the subject which we wish to investi-

*gate, and when combined, let every word and sentence have its proper hearing and force in the grand whole, and the theory or system, as I have shown before, must be correct.*⁴³

Miller based this confidence on his understanding of the nature of prophecy:

As prophecy is, a language somewhat different from other parts of scripture, owing to its having been revealed in vision, and that highly figurative, yet God in his wisdom has so interwoven the several prophecies, that the events foretold are not all told by one prophet, and although they lived and prophesied in different ages

*of the world, yet they tell us the same things. . . . There is a general connection through the whole; like a well regulated community they all move in union . . . observing the same rules, so that a bible reader may almost with propriety suppose . . . that he is reading the same prophet.*⁴⁴

Miller's confidence in the harmony of different scriptural passages can be recognized in the following examples of Miller's hermeneutical rules:

1. *The Bible contains a revelation from God to man, and of course must be the best, plainest and simplest that can be given. It is a revelation in human language, to human beings, and must be understood by the known laws of language.*

2. *The Bible is always to be understood*



Opposite Page, Top: This 1828 letter from William Miller expresses Miller's deep-felt conviction that Jesus' return was imminent. **Center and Bottom Left:** These discussions of prophecy typifies Millerite exposition of the Biblical passages concerned with the end of the world. **Bottom Right:** The William Miller home, Low Hampton, New York.

Top: Joseph Marsh's *The Voice of Truth* was one of many independent publications that fostered communication among the Millerites—and that prefigured the numerous enthusiastically self-published periodicals produced by the Millerites' Adventist heirs. **Center:** An early ambrotype of James and Ellen White, among the many Christian believers who experienced the Great Disappointment. **Bottom:** The young James and Ellen White, sometime in the wake of the Disappointment.

literally, when the literal sense does not involve contradictions, or is not unnatural.

3. When the literal sense involves the passage in contradiction, or expresses ideas which are unnatural, it is figurative, or parabolic, and is designed to illustrate rather than reveal the truth.

4. When a passage is clearly figurative, the figure is to be carefully studied, and the passage compared with other parts of the Word where the same or similar figure may be employed.⁴⁵

Applying Miller's hermeneutical rules to biblical prophecies convinced Millerites that the Bible revealed the imminent coming of Christ, although initially they did not set an exact date for the *parousia*, and Miller himself resisted doing so until just prior to October 22, 1844.⁴⁶

Miller's method of reading Scripture, combining an appeal to pietistic hopes for Christ's second coming and confidence in rational access to truth through inductive study, attracted a wide range of people. His rational approach attracted people from educated as well as uneducated groups. His followers came primarily from pietistic groups such as Baptists and Methodists, although not exclusively. Several of Miller's close associates were reformers and rationalists who had belonged to the Christian Connection, such as Joseph Bates and J. V. Himes. Notable leaders who were sympathetic to Miller's teachings included Joseph Wolff, an Episcopal missionary, and George Duffield, a Presbyterian minister and scholar.⁴⁷ An influential Baptist leader in New York, Elon Galusha, affirmed the Millerite faith in the soon coming of Christ, but he did not endorse the exact date proclaimed by the Millerites—"founded," he said, "upon an analogical argument, which,

though sound and convincing, came short of absolute assurance."⁴⁸ While Galusha was received back into Baptist fellowship in 1856, he never renounced "sounding the Midnight Cry."⁴⁹

The commitment to Miller's interpretations of prophecy by such leaders reveals the rational appeal of his methodology in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁰

Nathan Hatch's observation regarding Enlightenment thinkers who used the historicist method of prophetic interpretation might equally apply to many of Miller's followers: "The study of prophecy offered rational men the opportunity to see God's plan unfold in history and produced tangible and coherent proof of religious

doctrine."⁵¹ Indeed, Miller himself testified to the "common sense" nature of his arguments:

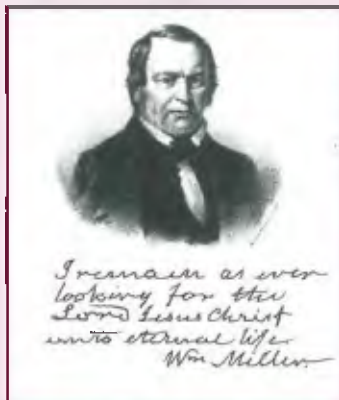
*The rules selected, I doubt not will be sanctioned by every well balanced mind acquainted at all with scriptural interpretations. . . . Although the Bible sometimes speaks in figurative language, yet the plain, obvious, and literal sense of a passage is not to be abandoned unless absolute and evident necessity require it.*⁵²

A common example of how Miller followed this principle will illustrate his logic. He reasoned that a "horn" in prophetic writings could be easily understood on the basis of the fact that ancient kings wore horns in their crowns. Thus, when a prophet said a "horn" would arise, this meant "little else" than that a kingdom or king would arise. Referring to this

interpretation, Miller argued that "at least this sense is so obvious that no man acquainted 'with the modes of speaking' when the sacred writers wrote, could mistake this its 'obvious meaning.'"⁵³

For Miller, correct interpretations of the literal meanings of texts depended on comparing prophecy with history. While he affirmed that the "Bible is a system of revealed truths, so clearly and simply given, that the 'wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein,'"⁵⁴ interpreting prophecy by comparing it with history required some sophistication and did not guarantee consistent results. Yet agreements among historicists that events such as the French Revolution and the displacement of papal power confirmed prophetic predictions seemed to verify empirically prophetic interpretations based on the historicist method.⁵⁵

Accordingly, Miller argued against prophetic interpretations that failed to



“pass the historical test.” In the Millerite journal *Signs of the Times*, he often challenged Professor Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary. In one critique, Miller called Stuart’s *Hints on Prophecy* “one of the most skeptical works that I have read for twenty years.” Miller then gives the basis of his criticism. According to Stuart’s interpretation, Miller said,

God in the designation of numbers in Daniel and Revelation, nowhere tells the truth with certainty, and rarely does he tell the truth at all The facts in history brought as a fulfillment of prophecy . . . fall short twenty days, or thirty days; and this too, where God attempts to point out an event, and gives its length in days. . . . [T]he professor might show us at least, on his scheme, one prophecy literally fulfilled; but this he has failed to do. So much for the Professor’s learning.⁵⁶

The logic of Miller’s literal-historical interpretation of prophecies depended on

a distinction between “typical” and “anti-typical” fulfillments. For example, prophecies regarding the Jewish exile in Babylon were to be typically fulfilled in the return to Jerusalem and anti-typically fulfilled in the cataclysmic ushering in of the New Jerusalem.⁵⁷ This aspect of Miller’s methodology justified bypassing literal applications of prophecies to ancient Jewish history.⁵⁸ Miller regarded the current success of his movement as well as history as empirical confirmation of his message:

In one word, in a moral point of view, every effect [of the preaching of the second coming] is good; and if ever there is a “midnight cry” made the effect must be similar to the one now produced, or it cannot have scriptural fulfillment.⁵⁹

Miller maintained his confidence in the appeal of historicist methodology even after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844. He affirmed his continuing belief in the nearness of the *parousia* in his *Apology and Defense* of 1845, though he deferred its proclamation to “younger brethren.” In his final appeal he wrote: “I do not ask you to embrace an opinion of mine; but I ask you to weigh well the evidence contained in the Bible.”⁶⁰

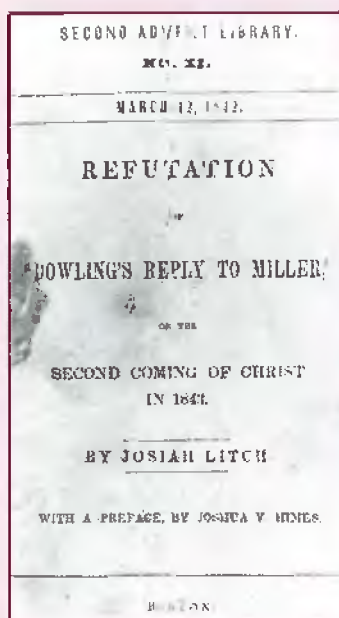
Conclusion

Whether or not Miller’s followers weighed all the evidence as carefully as he did, they probably believed they were being led to the truth by rational means. The constant appeal to scientific rationality in Miller’s writings, in the context of the democratic, populist culture of early nineteenth-century America, convinced many Protestants of the accuracy of Miller’s apocalyptic predictions. He appealed to a culture which understood his language. He answered the uneasiness and uncertainty of many evangelicals with a familiar voice—offering the assurance found in biblical prophecy made available through historicist methodology.

In an age of scientific rationalism, this methodology gave people a new sense of power over their destinies. If reforming society failed by human efforts, they could still move themselves toward a solution to society’s ills using tools employed in the scientific study of prophecy. William Miller put these tools into their hands.

Sources

Sources for this article are listed on page 44.



Opposite Page, Top: Miller after the Disappointment; the reproduced passage in his own hand expresses his ongoing faith in Jesus’ soon coming.

Center: An early artist’s rendering of Miller’s New York home.

Top: This cartoon was one of a number to lampoon Miller, his followers, and—especially—Joshua Himes, portrayed here as a profiteer left behind at the second advent because of his desire for wealth.

Left: This engraving, made around the time of the Disappointment, depicts the end of the world as envisioned by the Millerites.

Right: Josiah Litch waded into the fray to defend Miller against objectors and attackers with polemical works like this one.

William Miller: An Obituary Evaluation of a Life

By Frederick G. Hoyt

The arrival of the Pacific Mail steamship *Oregon* at San Francisco on 22 February 1850 provoked the daily *Alta California* into printing a special supplement the following day, "News by the Oregon!" Although this ship brought 201 male and 9 female passengers up from Panama (via Acapulco, San Blas, Mazatlan, and San Diego), what caused the greatest excitement was the 95 mail bags stowed in her hold. These had been brought to Chagres by three ships from New York (the *Empire City*, *Ohio*, and *Cherokee*) and another ship from New Orleans (the *Falcon*), and then carried across the Isthmus by a US Mail Agent to be loaded on the *Oregon* at Panama.

Obviously the editor was challenged to condense the most interesting and significant items from many newspapers for his news-hungry readers. Some attention was given to the activities of Congress, the furor created by the antislavery issue and the Wilmot Proviso, various sensational crimes, Indian depredations, and Mormon activities. But one item about a peaceful death in a small New York village the editor printed in its entirety, obviously thinking that it would be of

major interest to his readers, many of whom had migrated from New England and the eastern United States:

Miller the Prophet.—Wm. Miller, the prophet so called, says the Lowell Mass. Courier, somewhat celebrated for his views respecting the nearness of the advent, died on Thursday last, at his residence at Low Hampton, New York. He was sixty-eight years of age. He was a native of Pittsfield, in this state. He

settled at Poultney, Vermont, where he was county sheriff. He held a captain's commission in the American army upon the breaking out of the last war with Great Britain. He was held in much esteem by his neighbors. He first promulgated his doctrines in regard to the second coming of Christ in 1833. He was disappointed in the fulfilment of his expectation in 1843, and came out the next year with an "Apology and Defence," acknowledging the want of accuracy in his chronological calculations, but claiming that the nature and nearness of the event were still sustained by scriptural evidence. In that belief he has since lived and died—worn out with the infirmities of age.

William Miller and "Millerism" had been big news during the 1840s, but after the "Great Disappointment" of 22 October 1844 he had quickly dropped from view. But here he was again, some five years later, back in the news thousands of miles from his home. And it was in a surprisingly complete, accurate, and fair article. Before the news reached distant California his death had been widely reported in American newspapers and journals, often with considerable analysis of his life and its impact, and sometimes at length.



Length of Obituaries

The length of these obituary notices varied from the impressive treatment of the *Boston Atlas* and the *New York Tribune* articles to very concise death notices. Thus the *Christian Register* (Boston) in its "Deaths" column for 29 December 1849 simply noted: "In Low Hampton, N.Y., Rev. Wm. Miller, the 'Advent' preacher, 68, a native of Pittsfield, Mass." Almost as brief was the notice in the *Christian Advocate* (New York) for 3 January 1850.

The significant *Atlas* article ("Death of William Miller, the Prophet") presented an impressive biographical sketch with emphasis on the involvement of the deceased with "Millerism." It was fair in its balanced evaluation of his character and personality, and his impact on American society. Some periodicals reprinted the article in its entirety. Others reproduced major portions of it.

Many other periodicals reprinted short excerpts from the lengthy *Atlas* article, such as the following:

Death of Father Miller

From a notice in the Boston Atlas, we learn that William Miller, who took the lead, some years ago, in the "advent" movement, died on the 20th instant, at the age of 68. He has thus not lived to see the great consummation of whose immediate coming he was so confident, six years ago.

Similar short notices clearly derived from the *Atlas*, but not always giving proper attribution, appeared in several periodicals in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and South Carolina.

Next in significance was an article in the *New York Tribune*, 25 December 1849. It was a concise, factual, and evaluative article, unfortunately marred by a mistake in the place of Miller's death: Low Hampton, New York, became just Hampton, which was in turn corrupted into Kompton by some copiers. The stature of the *Tribune* contributed to its widespread utilization by other newspapers.

These two major articles appear to have supplied the basic materials for numerous short newspaper notices concerning Miller's death. The *New York Evening Post* for 24 December 1849 seems to have contributed also to a lesser degree. As was the practice in those days before regular news services were available to periodicals, they generously copied each other, often without giving credit, and added their own evaluations and comments.

Titles

Since William Miller was a common name in the United States in the 1840s, clarity demanded more specificity than prefixing "Mister" or "Reverend," or "Parson" as was occasionally done. Thus he became simply "the Prophet," "Miller the Prophet," or "the Second Advent Prophet" (one added an intensifier to make him "the great second advent prophet"). Some felt that he was adequately differentiated by the label "the Advent preacher." Still others were intrigued by the alliterative "Miller the Millerite." By far the most common appellation was simply "Father Miller." Not only did this offer clear identification to media readers but it also suggests the affection and respect he had earned as a person regardless of any negative evaluations garnered by his message. Among Adventist fellow-believers a simple "Brother Miller" was adequate identification.

Further Identification

In addition to such titles added to William Miller's name to differentiate him clearly from others with the same common name, many periodicals assisted their readers with short descriptive explanations. Thus the widely-read *Boston Atlas* article described him as "somewhat celebrated for his views respecting the Advent." The *Georgia Journal and Messenger* (Macon; 2 January 1850), together with many other papers, explained that

he "took the lead, some years ago, in the 'advent' movement." Several newspapers described Miller as "somewhat noted for raising a Second Advent party in the country."

One periodical simply termed Miller "the author of the Millerite movement." Another labeled him "the celebrated prophet of the second coming of Christ." And another simply called him "the author of 'Millerism.'" And yet another editor termed him "the founder of the sect of Millerites, or Adventists."

Regrettably some editors became vitriolic in identifying William Miller. Thus the *Belfast, Maine, Republican Journal* (28 December 1849) described him as "the author of all the mischievous religious excitement called Millerism." The *Columbus, Georgia, Enquirer* (8 January 1850) described Miller "as the leader of a set [sect?] of dupes who believed, or pretended to believe, that the day of judgment was at hand." The *Boston Investigator* (26 December 1849) declared that "The celebrated William Miller, the founder or originator of the religious delusion commonly known as 'Millerism,' is no more."

Perhaps the best identification of the man and the movement he created was provided by the *Christian Secretary*, a Baptist journal published in Hartford, Connecticut (4 January 1859). "Few men, of late years, have created a greater excitement in the community than William Miller," they asserted. It then carefully explained the history of this phenomenon: *He commenced lecturing on "the second advent of Christ about the year 1843," as early as the Summer of 1833, and previous to that time, we believe, he had published a small book on the subject. His theory was fortified with mathematical demonstrations which only needed the fact to be proved that his data and principles of interpretation were correct, in order to render it a dead certainty. As it was, that part of the religious commu-*

nity which had never given much attention to the subject of prophecy, as the time, according to Father Miller, drew near for the final winding up of all things here below, began to evince an extraordinary interest in "Millerism" as it was termed. Miller continued to lecture to large audiences, and to make proselytes wherever he lectured. The excitement continued to increase up to the very latest moment fixed by him for the destruction of the world. Lecturers sprung up on every side, and scores, who a few months previous were regarded as plain, unlearned men were edifying the world by lectures on the prophecies of Daniel, illustrated with painted boards hung up against the wall, on which were figures of beasts and a mysterious row of figures.

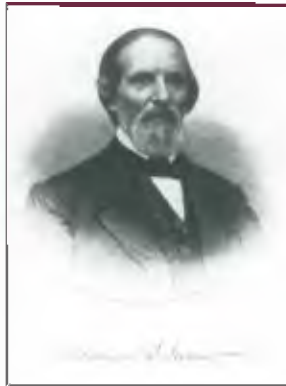
Biographical Data

The basic biographical data for William Miller was quite consistent in all of these reports: he was born at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 15 February 1782; there was nothing distinguishing about his childhood and youth or his limited education; the family moved to Low Hampton, New York, when he was four; at 22 he settled in Poultney, Vermont, where he served as a deputy sheriff; during the War of 1812 he was commissioned a captain in the US Army, serving most notably at the critical battle of Plattsburg; after the war he settled in Low Hampton where he held the office of Justice of the Peace; there he died on 20 December 1849, aged 68.

All of this was fairly typical of small-town American life during the first half of the 19th century. What happened to William Miller in 1833 eventually set him apart and made him a familiar name to Americans. That was when he began reluctantly to speak in public about his

conviction that Christ would return in 1843. This had been preceded by years of diligent Bible study which focused on the unfulfilled prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

The dramatic personal crisis which had preceded Miller's decision to go public with the results of his years of study was later revealed in his own words:



One Saturday, after breakfast, in the summer of 1833, I sat down at my desk to examine some point, and as I arose to go out to work, it came home to me with more force than ever, "Go and tell it to the world." The impression was so sudden, and came

with such force, that I settled down into my chair, saying, I can't go, Lord. "Why not?" seemed to be the response; and then all my excuses came up, my want of ability, etc.; but my distress became so great, I entered into a solemn covenant with God, that if he would open the way, I would go and perform my duty to the world. "What do you mean by opening the way?" seemed to come to me. Why, said I, if I should have an invitation to speak publicly in any place, I will go and tell them what I find in the Bible about the Lord's coming. Instantly all my burden was gone, and I rejoiced that I should not probably be thus called upon, for I had never had such an invitation. My trials were not known, and I had but little expectation of being invited to any field of labor.

In about half an hour from this time, before I had left the room, a son of Mr. Guilford, of Dresden, about sixteen miles from my residence, came in and said that his father had sent for me, and wished me to go home with him. Supposing that he wished to see me on some business, I asked him what he wanted? He replied that there was to be no preaching in their church the next day, and his father wished to have me come and talk to the

people on the subject of the Lord's coming. I was immediately angry with myself for having made the covenant I had; I rebelled at once against the Lord, and determined not to go. I left the boy without giving him any answer, and retired in great distress to a grove near by. There I struggled with the Lord for about an hour, endeavoring to release myself from the covenant I had made with him, but I could get no relief. It was impressed upon my conscience, "Will you make a covenant with God, and break it soon?" and the exceeding sinfulness of thus doing overwhelmed me. I finally submitted; and promised the Lord that if he would sustain me, I would go, trusting in him to give me grace and ability to perform all he should require of me. I returned to the house, and found the boy still waiting; he remained till after dinner, and I returned with him to Dresden.

The Atlas then described the impressive results of this dramatic confrontation with the supernatural:

From this time and onward he was pressed with invitations to present his views in many places, and travelled extensively throughout the Northern, Eastern, and Middle States, and Canada, and labored almost constantly for the succeeding twelve years; but visited no place without first receiving an urgent invitation.

In the religious atmosphere of that era these words would have carried great impact. Not only was William Miller thus portrayed as the reluctant divine agent but he forcefully demonstrated the miraculous nature of his unique calling and the validity of his mission. Although some may have privately questioned the authenticity of Miller's "call" or his qualifications and preparation for this demanding duty, no one ever publicly questioned the fervor with which he dedicated himself to his preaching during the hectic decade following 1833.

The impact of Miller's assiduous study and dedicated preaching were assessed by many periodicals. Some editors saw positive results. To the Concord editor of the

New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette (27 December 1849) he was clearly “the founder of the sect of Millerites, or Adventists”; another credited him with “raising a Second Advent party” (*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 27 December 1849) which according to the *New York Tribune* (25 December 1849) reached “some 30 or 40,000 disciples.”

After reprinting the *Boston Atlas* article, the editor of Boston’s influential periodical *Littell’s Living Age* (19 January 1850) added a personal comment which, outside of Adventist/Millerite papers, was the most positive in its appreciation of Miller’s life and labors:

We heard “Father Miller” preach on this great subject, to an immense audience, one night in Philadelphia. His evident sincerity, earnestness, and simplicity, attracted to him our high respect. We think the success which marked his labors, notwithstanding his want of learning even upon his chosen subject, arose from his bringing prominently forward a neglected truth.

However, this influential editor felt it necessary to add a serious disclaimer to his praise: “And it is to be feared that his confident and ill-founded predictions as to the time, will throw temporary discredit upon the great burden of many prophecies—the second coming of our Lord.” Unfortunately it was the negative impact of “Millerism” which provoked most editors to write at the time of William Miller’s death.

Negative Comments

“He was unquestionably an honest and sincere man,” the *Emancipator and Republican* (Boston; 27 December 1849) conceded, “but his doctrines have been the cause of immense harm to hundreds and thousands who were deluded and deceived by them.” The editor of the *New York Baptist Register* was even more severe (quoted in *The Christian Mirror*, Portland, Maine, 17 January 1850):

The death of this far famed prophet was noticed in our last number . . . When he found himself so egregiously mistaken, and had produced so much agitation and distress over the land, and so much mischief in many churches, he owed it to himself and to the cause of Christ, to have made a very humble confession for his arrogant and impious assumptions; he then would have been restored to the fellowship of his brethren, and have put an end to the delusions which he had started, and hundreds of weak and erratic minds still entangled in their miserable vagaries and confident conceits, would have been liberated from their thralldom.

In the opinion of the *Boston Investigator* (26 December 1849), Miller was “the victim of a strange hallucination,” although “in other respects he is spoken of as having been a worthy man—strictly temperate and proverbial for his integrity.” Unfortunately, “The effect of his peculiar religion, however, has proved in many instances most melancholy.” In confirmation of this he stated “that the first patient received into the New Hampshire Asylum for the Insane in 1843, was rendered crazy by Millerism which assigned that year as the end of the world; and that during the seven years the Asylum has been in operation, 22 persons have been sent there from the same cause.” This is typical of numerous unsubstantiated charges against Millerism as a fundamental causative factor for insanity. For example, this story was repeated in the *Providence, Rhode Island Republican Herald* (29 December 1849) and in *The Farmers’ Cabinet* (Amherst, New Hampshire, 3 January 1850).

Also troubled by these contradictions in the life of the “Rev. William Miller, well known as an advocate of

literal interpretation of the prophecies,” was the *New York Evangelist* (3 January 1850):

As originating one of the most remarkable, and in some respects melancholy, outbreaks of fanaticism of modern times, he will long be held in remembrance, with associations that may do injustice to his piety and talents. He was an uneducated man, but possessed great strength and clearness of mind; and no one who has ever heard his lectures, could doubt his sincerity. It was his sincerity that made the mischief. There is many a literalist in good and regular standing, who if as logically consistent, and as reckless of consequences as Mr. Miller, would be following in his footsteps. We have no doubt he was as much disappointed at the great failure in '43 as the most insane of his followers. And admitting his theory of interpretation, he was very justifiable in his earnestness; his chain of reasoning was well-nigh irresistible on his own ground. He was the great apostle of Literalism; a more honest or more capable expositor of that theory will not be found. His piety, benevolence and consistency, we believe, have never been questioned on any good grounds.



Scathing words were also used by *Hartford’s Baptist Christian Secretary* (4 January 1850) in describing the practical effects of “Millerism”:

This well known personage departed this life at his residence in Low Hampton, Dec. 20, 1849, at the age of 68. Few men, of late years, have created a greater excitement in the

Previous Page: *William Miller’s grave-site*

Opposite Page: *Millerite leader Samuel Snow*

Joseph Bates, father figure to younger Millerites, defender of the Sabbath, and author of the still-readable Autobiography of Joseph Bates.

community that William Miller. Thousands became ardent followers of Miller, and having embraced one radical error, their minds were fitted for the reception of others far more dangerous. The most wild and fanatical scenes followed; and the very worst heresies that ever afflicted the Church of Jesus Christ were readily adopted. Among these heresies, the spiritual wife system, and imparting the gift of the Holy Ghost, may be mentioned as having been embraced by some of Mr. Miller's disciples; but it is proper to add that many of them did not go to such extreme lengths. In many of the larger towns where Miller lectured separate and distinct "bands" were formed out of those who left other churches for the purpose of devoting themselves to the teachings of "Father Miller;" and this too, in violation of the explicit instructions of Miller, who enjoined it upon them to remain in the churches with which they were connected. But such radical errors could not flourish in the church, and the consequence was, that "they went out from us because they were not of us," and a new sect bearing the name of their teacher, was the result, despite the remonstrances of the teacher himself.

"He was doubtless a sincere and devoted man," a perplexed *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal* (Portland, Maine; 2 January 1850) conceded, "but his example furnishes an illustration additional to innumerable others in the history of the church, of the dangers of a rash promulgation of uncertain opinions." "Incalculable evils have resulted from his course," this Methodist paper cautioned, "but still it must be borne in mind that much of them is attributable rather to his followers than to himself."

The *New York Tribune* (25 December 1849) described Miller as "uneducated," "not largely read in even the common English [Bible] commentaries," which apparently explained why "his views were absurd, and supported but feebly. . . ." These comments by an influential and widely read national newspaper were fre-

quently copied.

"This man, who befooled so many persons, in regard to the world coming to an end in the year 1843, is dead." These stark words began an article in *The Trumpet and Universalist Magazine* (Boston; 29 December 1849). "His theory furnished the ardent sectarians with a powerful means, of frightening the community," they explained, "and they did not hesitate to make use of it. Hundreds professed to be converted, by believing that the world would come to an end, AD 1843, which however proved to be a total deception." The editor's conclusive judgment was severe: "Shame on the clergymen who countenanced the falsehood. They knew better, many of them."

Positive Comments

There were numerous positive comments about William Miller the man, but few positive ones about Millerism. "Mr. Miller was regarded with much affection by his neighbors," the widely quoted *Boston Atlas* declared, "who esteemed him as a benevolent, intelligent man, and a kind neighbor." The generous words in the concluding paragraph were also widely copied:

He was a man strictly temperate in all his habits, devoted in his family and social attachments, and proverbial for his integrity. His brain was of large volume, and he was capable of great mental efforts. He was naturally very amiable in his temperament; but when he thought he was unjustly represented, he often indulged in biting sarcasm on his revilers. His mental faculties were clear to the last, and he fell asleep joyful in the hope of a speedy resurrection.

An impressive variety of other journals commented on William Miller as a person, some in extremely flattering terms. "He was a man of temperate habits, of integrity and worth," in the opinion of the *Boston Emancipator and Republican* (27 December 1849). "He was also a man of

great mental power," and "unquestionably an honest and sincere man." The *Boston Investigator* (26 December 1849) declared that Miller was "spoken of as having been a worthy man—strictly temperate and proverbial for his integrity." The *New York Baptist Register* reprimanded those who had "indulged in severe strictures, and . . . ridicule" of Miller, labeling this "very improper" because "he was no doubt a lover of the Saviour . . ." (quoted in *The Christian Mirror*, Portland, Maine, 17 January 1850). In the opinion of the *Bunker-Hill Aurora and Boston Mirror* (29 December 1849), Miller "was unquestionably sincere in his belief of the reappearance of the Saviour in 1843." "He was a man of moderate abilities and very little education, but of strong will and fanatical temperament" in the opinion of *The Home Journal* (New York; 5 January 1850).

The *Christian Secretary* (Hartford; 4 January 1850) especially commended Miller for his conduct when his predictions failed: "After the period fixed by Father Miller for the final consummation of all things here below, had passed away, he very honestly and properly came out and acknowledged that he—not the

New York, March 15, 1845.

A MUTUAL CONFERENCE.

In view of the present state of the Advent cause, and the vast responsibilities resting upon us all at this crisis, it has been thought advisable by Bro. A. J. Loomis, Warrum, Jones, Coles, H. W. Warrum, and others, to call a Conference of the *best* Adventists, teachers, and brethren, who still adhere to the original Advent faith, as proclaimed by us to the world, for the last few years.

The object of this meeting will not be for controversy on points of doctrine, or on questions of doubtful dispute, but to strengthen one another in the faith of the Advent at the door, and to consult on the best mode of unitedly carrying forward our work, in conforming, and preparing the Advent congregations among us for the speedy coming of the Lord: and also to unite our efforts, for the conversion and salvation of sinners. Our time is precious, and should be employed to the best advantage, so that we may give account to our Judge, at his appearing.

We cordially invite all the Advent lecturers, who approve of the object of the proposed Conference, to unite with us in the deliberations. Each of the Advent congregations, also, are invited to send one or two brethren, to consult with us. The meeting will be a voluntary one, and all who unite in it will feel the importance of unity of action, in all that concerns our spiritual welfare.

The Conference will commence, if time continue, and Providence permit, the last Tuesday in April, in Albany, N. Y., or its vicinity, as that will be the most convenient location for all to attend. Due notice, however, will be given of the place.

Addresses are expected from Bro. Miller, Calcutta, Whiting, and others.

Bible—was mistaken; but he insisted that the time was close at hand, notwithstanding there was now no definite 'clue to the time.'"

"He was a shrewd but narrow-minded man," the *New York Tribune* (25 December 1849) declared, "practical, though of an ardent and fanatical temperament." This evaluation was widely copied.

"His piety, benevolence and consistency, we believe, have never been questioned on any good grounds," was the judgment of the *New York Evangelist* (3 January 1850). The *Portland, Maine, Transcript* (5 January 1850) simply labeled him "a well meaning man." Although Boston's *Christian Watchman and Christian Reflector* (27 December 1849) identified Miller as that "eccentric individual, sometimes called 'The Prophet,' and notorious for his views of the 'Second Advent,'" they admitted that "As a preacher he was frank, bold and eloquent."

They also weakly commended him for making "a kind of apology for the non-fulfilment of his prediction," when 1844 ended with "the earth still turning on its axis, and revolving about the sun, and Miller with it. . . ."

The paradoxical situation of how a man of sound character, excellent mind, and solid social standing in a stable and conservative community could have fallen into what was generally considered to be extreme fanaticism was obviously a serious challenge for many of Miller's contemporaries. As has been seen, some blamed his followers, others cited his limited education, others pointed to his faulty method of interpreting prophecy, and still others blamed the failure of the clergy to respond properly to Miller's preaching. The *New England Puritan* (Boston; 27 December 1849) offered a surprisingly advanced psychological diagnosis:

It would seem, that for several years before he came out with his peculiar views, he had given his mind intensely to the study of history, in connexion with the Scripture prophecies. And it is very probable, that in this concentration of his mind upon that course, he lost the proper balance of his faculties, and acquired that species of monomania, which is called] fanaticism. That from some cause he had fallen into that state of mind, is evident from his own account of his exercises, previous so [to?] his divulging his views. A completer specimen of a fanatical view of the mind's intercourse with God, and of one's mistaking impressions on the imagination for revelations from God, that we have in this, is rarely to be found, and it is well worth the while, in

this to see how great a matter a little of false fire may kindle.

Adventist/Millerite Reactions

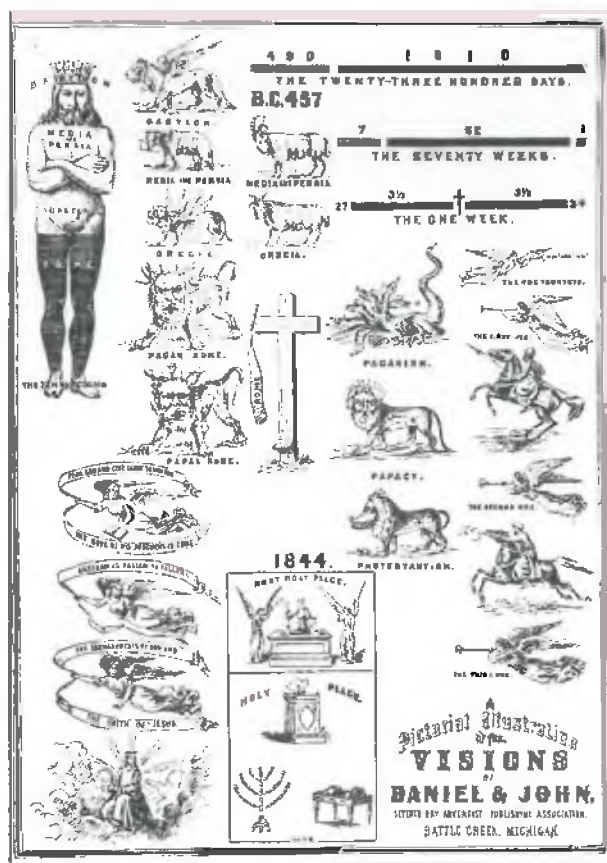
For the remnant of Millerites who were still faithful "Adventists" when Father Miller died, such comments about his having been a mad fanatic would have been repulsive. Most of the many periodicals that had spread the message of Millerism at its height had disappeared by the time of his death. Regrettably copies of only one such journal have survived, the *Advent Harbinger and Bible Advocate*, published weekly in Rochester, New York, by Joseph Marsh.

Marsh's readers were warned of Father Miller's imminent death in the 22 December 1849 issue. On a recent visit a Brother H. Tanner had "found our aged and worthy brother very ill with a dropsical complaint; and to all human appearances will soon fall asleep in Jesus." But he reported that "Bro. Miller yet retains the use of his mental faculties, and converses freely and joyfully on that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." "Relative to the time of the advent," Tanner reported, "Bro. Miller is confident that it is very near, and thinks that if he could live fourteen months longer, he would not have to sleep in the grave, but would be changed from mortal to immortality by the Lord at his coming." The rationale for Miller's extension of the Advent into early 1851 was not given.

The next issue (29 December 1849) of the *Harbinger and Advocate* not unexpectedly had a black-bordered section: "Death of Bro. Miller." "This worthy

Opposite Page: This notice called Millerites to meet together in the wake of the Disappointment at Albany.

This Seventh-day Adventist prophetic chart shows the influence of earlier Millerite models and demonstrates Adventism's continuity with Millerism as regards prophetic interpretation.



child of God, faithful and efficient minister of Christ, and profound student of prophecy, sleeps in Jesus." These moving words were followed by a "private note" from Elder Joshua V. Himes, dated at Low Hampton, December 21: "I am overwhelmed in the affliction of the death of Father Miller, who was taken from us Dec. 20th, at 3 o'clock, P.M. He died peaceful and happy."

Editor Marsh's gracious words followed:

Of Bro. Miller it may justly be said, as a man of natural endowments, but few of any age have been his superiors. As a correct expositor of prophecy, he has had no rivals in modern times. But few, if any, surpassed him in pure Christian philanthropy, and faithfulness in the work of his high and holy calling. As a Christian, he was as faultless, perhaps, as any other man. And as a husband, a father, a brother, and a friend, his worth cannot be told. And in view of his valuable life, and peaceful death, it may justly be said of him, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

A following section (simply titled "Bro. William Miller") reproduced a letter Miller had written to a church in Beekmantown, New York (?), on 19 November 1834, in reply to their invitation for him to "settle with them." He politely but firmly declined, explaining that he had to move freely from place to place, proclaiming "the hour of his judgment is come." The editor obviously felt that parts of this letter disclosed the true essence of Father Miller:

You may call me visionary—I do not blame you. But I am strongly pressed in my mind.—God has opened the door. He has blessed me in every place, when I have fearlessly put my trust in him; and I cannot go

An artist's crude rendering of the lecturing Miller.

back. I know it is a thankless office—I know it is a slaving [sic] life—I know the scoffs, the jeers, the frowns, of a gainsaying world—I know the tauntings of the free—the temptations of the enemy—all, all against me. I feel too my own insufficiency—my weakness—my sin—my age—my trembling—my ignorance—my inexperience;—all, all in or about myself, is against me. Yet there is a spirit that tells me to go on. I have often cried to God to undeceive me, if I am deceived.

When I go forward in the work, I have



great peace. When I shrink from it, I am troubled.

In the 29 December 1849 issue the *Advent Herald* printed a letter from Elder Joshua V. Himes to Sylvester Bliss. Himes had been with Miller during his final illness and death. As this issue is not extant it is fortunate that the *Harbinger and Advocate* reprinted Himes' letter in their 12 January 1850 issue. Himes reported that Father Miller's faith was "unwavering" and that he had watched the development of events in Europe which he felt indicated the approach of Armageddon:

For several months past he has been confined mostly to his room. A part of this time he has been confined mostly to his bed

and easy-chair, in excruciating pain. In the midst of it all he has manifested great patience and forbearance. For a man of his age, and compassed about with infirmities as he was, he gave evidence of a large degree of Christian attainment. During the times of his greatest suffering he would repeat passages of Scripture which were consoling, and also numerous hymns of Watts and others, that expressed the hopes and joys of the redeemed.

He arranged all his business some months since, and was ready at any hour to depart. He felt that he had done his duty to the world and the church. And having given up the idea of seeing the Savior before his death, he only waited for the call of his God and Savior to "depart and be with Christ, which was far better than to remain in the flesh."

Father Miller had some final words for "the brethren": "Tell them we are right,—the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;—but they must be patient and wait for him." "He would often repeat the words, 'Yes, O, I long to be there!,'" Himes added. "Such views of the future glory tended to mitigate the present pains of the body, which at times were violent."

"But," in Elder Himes' moving words, "the closing scene finally came":

On the 20th of December, in the morning, it was manifest to all that he must soon depart. During the morning he had no particular conversation with me: yet he would break forth in expressions like the following: "Mighty to save!" "O, I long to be there!" "Victory! victory!" "Shouting in death!" etc. He finally sunk down into an easy sleeping, or dozing state. Occasionally he roused up, and opened his eyes, but was not able to speak, though he was perfectly rational, and knew us all. He continued to breathe shorter and shorter, till five minutes past 3 o'clock, P.M., he calmly and sweetly gave his last breath; . . . Oh how peacefully and happily he died! I was privileged to stand with his wife, children, and friends, about his bed, when he gave up the ghost. I closed his eyes, while all other eyes were filled with

tears. It was a solemn scene. While the wife, and children, and friends were weeping the loss of a beloved relative, I was here to weep the loss of a father in Israel, more dear to me than any earthly relative, or even the most precious of the servants of God.

"He is now beyond the reach of toil and pain," concluded Elder Himes, the faithful partner of Father Miller through their years of unremitting battle for what they believed was God's truth. "The haters of truth, and the enemies of the doctrine of the advent of our Savior, can never more give pain to his ear, or his heart, by their slanders or reproaches. He is beyond their reach: 'Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'"

In the same issue the *Harbinger and Advocate* printed a "Discourse on The Death of Father Miller" which had been "delivered" by O.R. Fassett, apparently at a memorial service for "our respected and beloved Father Miller." In the long and tedious exegesis of Revelation 14:13, Father Miller seemed to become secondary to Fassett's attempt to make an impression with his theological learning. Referring to Miller as "this devoted servant of God," Fassett cautioned "that we are in no wise disposed to canonize him . . . nor to eulogize him above what his real merit deserves" because "it was all of grace that he was what he was." Likewise he used the title "Father" "in no other sense than that of his age"; other usage of this word he left for the antichrist.

"In the life, views and labors of Father Miller, we discover an eminent, worthy and faithful servant of God," Fassett declared before beginning a lengthy sketch of his life. "Though Father Miller is dead," he concluded, "yet the truths he advocated, and to which he was instrumental in calling the attention of the church and world, still survive

A strange conclusion to the *Harbinger and Advocate* treatment of Miller's death was the reprinting from the *Advent*

Herald of a dream experienced by him in 1826, together with an extensive analysis of it in two other articles. Although Miller had had the dream on 4 November 1826, he had not "committed it to writing" until 17 January 1828. The dream had obviously made a tremendous impression on Miller for him to have remembered the precise details for so long before recording it. "It is due to Mr. Miller to state," the *Advent Herald* declared, "that he placed no confidence in dreams. Neither do we." Then why did they print it? "We give this as an interesting relic of our departed brother, who did not wish it published while he lived." The editor of the *Harbinger and Advocate* agreed: "We have no confidence in modern dreams, any further than to admit that they may, possibly, be given, sometimes, to benefit the individual who dreams. As a guide, in matters of faith, no confidence should be reposed in them." He reprinted this dream "for the gratification of Bro. Miller's numerous friends, as everything from the pen of this great and good man is eagerly sought and read by them."

There seems to be no justification for reproducing this dream here. It is an extraordinary combination of Biblical quotations and allusions, strange figures and symbols, along with the story of Miller's wanderings resembling those in "Pilgrim's Progress." There is no apparent significance for Miller's life or for Millerism. Neither Miller nor the two editors offers any explanation of the dream or interpretation of its weird symbolism; the extended comments by a Brother J.B. Cook are not at all helpful.

The final tributes to their fallen leader were a flurry of poems in Father Miller's honor. Although they will never be found in anthologies of great American poetry, genuine sentiments of respect and affection come through clearly. With comparisons to Noah, Moses, Elijah, and Paul, the "good man" and "reverend cham-

panion" was eulogized. In death this "fearless messenger of truth" to "a giddy, thoughtless, reckless world" had at last escaped from "insulting foes" who could no longer "distress" his soul. Two verses by Mary D. Rorty of Newark, New Jersey, exemplify the best of these poetic tributes to an "honored soldier of the Cross":

*A good man's fallen! fallen at his post,—
No base deserter from the sacred host;
Covered with honors, and with glorious scars,
The marks of Jesus Christ his servant bears.
Raised up by God, to tell this guilty age
Its course was well nigh finished—Satan's rage
Was raised against him. Yet, unmoved, he stood,
Like martyrs, faithful to the truth of God.*

The logical conclusion of this paper would be a statement from Ellen Gould Harmon White—ideally from one of her visions—at the time of William Miller's death. Unfortunately, her immediate reaction to Father Miller's death remains unknown. The inestimable debt owed to William Miller by SDAs was not acknowledged at the time of his death. The church paper of this struggling infant denomination (the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*) did not begin publication until November 1850. For the first volume editor James White (assisted by such future Adventist luminaries as Joseph Bates, J.N. Andrews, Hiram Edson, and Otis Nichols) was so overwhelmed with the burden of presenting the truth about the Sabbath and correct prophetic interpretation that Father Miller's passing went unnoted.

Sources

Sources for this article are available upon request.

Isaac Watts and “The God of Glory” A Second-Advent Hymn Dominates Early American Publication

by Kenneth Logan

Stellar poets are a rare lot in hymnody. Within the sparse constellation of such bards must shine the English ecclesiastic Isaac Watts (1674-1748), whose spirited psalm paraphrases and warm devotional hymns exhibit a noteworthy creativity.

Watts shown prominently on the horizon of a new day whose luster he heralded and abetted. The “old day” in English hymnody viewed only texts based directly on Scripture as worthy for churchgoers to sing. Devotional verse not derived from the Bible was not used. This understanding was not without advantage; it ensured a certain orthodoxy and theocentricity. But its limits must have stifled hymn-writers’ creativity, and it must have made it difficult for devotional hymn-writers to find acceptance.

Toward Freedom

Isaac Watts provided a compromise between the views of those insistent on the direct singing of Scripture passages and those desiring more tether in the selection of their devotional verse. His *Psalms of David Imitated*, published in England in 1719, used the framework of psalm “imitations” or paraphrases to stretch far beyond the boundaries imposed (or justified) by the biblical psalms. His freedom resulted in many “psalms” more convincing as lyrical verse invented than as Holy Writ traced. In addition, three books of Watts’s devotional hymns and a book of lyric verse, *Horæ Lyricæ*, cast his lot clearly with those with devotionalistic tendencies.

Across the Atlantic, as the American Revolution made possible quite another sort of freedom, American churches, singing schools, and private

devotional settings generated a steep demand for hymn-books. This demand was both for singable hymn-tunes and suitable texts, and Watts’ imported verse gained a firm foothold on American soil. Beginning in colonial days, spanning the Revolution, and stretching through the first decade of the nineteenth century, Watts’s psalm paraphrases and devotional hymns accounted for sixty percent of all published occurrences of texts allied with specific hymn-tunes in America. These 15,000 occurrences document an astonishing dominance of early American hymnody by the diminutive English preacher.

Not only the quantity but the breadth of hymn-book compilers’ choices confirms Watts’s primacy. Compilers chose an amazing 1,250 different stanzas of his poetry for tunebooks. Today, we expect that all stanzas to be sung with a hymn-

tune will appear printed with the tune, but typical early American practice was to print at most a single stanza with a tune. Publishers apparently expected other stanzas to be supplied from memory, by leaders, or from separate wordbooks. Thus, far more than 1,250 Watts stanzas actually resounded in early American churches, homes, and meeting houses for singing schools.

Many of these verses remain in common usage in America today, including such classics as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Joy to the World," and "Our [O] God, Our Help in Ages Past." However, Watts hymns that singers prefer now did not necessarily enjoy the favor of early Americans. For instance, of the three hymns just mentioned, only "Joy to the World" was outstanding in its American circulation into the early nineteenth century. Also, many hymns published often then are eclipsed today by other hymns. Watts's paraphrases of Psalm 50 are good examples: they were surely among the most-published of his psalm paraphrases in early America, but they are not in common circulation today.

One stanza of the paraphrase, on the topic of Christ's second coming, is the one stanza most published with hymn-tunes in early America. That Watts saw Psalm 50 as extraordinary seems to be implicit in his choice of it for an unusual profusion of four separate paraphrases. They were written in four different text meters, including Common Meter, Long Meter, and two unusual (Particular) Meters. My primary focus here will be on the Particular Meter

versions, which far outshone the Common and Long Meter versions in frequency of early American publication.

Toward Apocalypse

The first Particular Meter version has nine stanzas. Of these, its second stanza—published with tunes ninety times to 1810, seems to have taken hold especially well in America. It reads as follows:

*Behold! the Judge descends;
his guards are nigh,
Tempest and fire attend
him down the sky:
Heaven, earth and hell,
draw near;
let all things come
To hear the justice,
and the sinner's doom;
But gather first my saints
(the Judge commands)*



Isaac Watts

*Bring them, ye angels,
from their distant lands.*

All but one of its other eight stanzas appeared in publications with tunes. Aside from its first stanza—a natural choice because it begins the psalm—its last stanza surprisingly received twenty-five publications with tunes:

*Sinners awake betimes;
ye fools, be wise;
Awake before this dreadful morning rise . . .*

A verse of appeal, perhaps it fulfilled a hortatory need that expanded the frequency of its publication.

As often-published as was this first Particular Meter version, it was Watts's second PM version that stood at the vanguard of all early American hymn publication history. Compilers allied its first stanza with tunes 216 times in 171 books, making it by a margin of approximately 45 printings the sacred stanza most often published with tunes in early American hymnody. While few of its fourteen other stanzas appeared in print with tunes, one

safely may assume that many, if not all, of the other stanzas were sung successively after the first stanza. The first four appear below:

*The God glory sends his summons forth,
Calls the south nations and awakes
the north;
From east to west his sovereign orders
spread,
Through distant worlds and regions of
the dead,
The trumpet sounds; hell trembles;
heaven rejoices;
Life up your heads, ye saints,
with cheerful voices.
No more shall atheists mock his long delay;
His vengeance sleeps no more!
Behold the day!
Behold the judge descends;
his guards are nigh;
Tempest and fire attend him down the sky:
When God appears, all nature shall
adore him:
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice
before him.*

*Heaven, earth and hell, draw near:
let all things come,
To hear my justice, and the sinner's doom;
But gather first my saints,
(the judge commands)
Bring them, ye angels from their
distant lands."*

*When Christ returns, wake every
cheerful passion;
And shout ye saints! he comes for
your salvation.*

*"Behold! my covenant stands forever good.
Seal'd by the eternal sacrifice in blood,
And sign'd with all their names;
the Greek, the Jew,
that paid the ancient worship, or the new."
There's no distinction here;
join all your voices,
And raise your heads, ye saints,
for heaven rejoices.*

CAMDEN

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
Psalm 50 2d Part P. M.

Oliver Holden (1765-1844)
P.M. 10.10.10.10.11.11

The God of glo-ry— sends his sum-mons forth, — Calls the south na-tions and a - wakes the north. — From

This system of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains the vocal melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: "The God of glo-ry— sends his sum-mons forth, — Calls the south na-tions and a - wakes the north. — From"

east—to— west his sov-'reign or-ders spread, Through dis-tant worlds and re-gions of the— dead. The trum-pet

This system continues the musical notation with the same two-staff format. The lyrics are: "east—to— west his sov-'reign or-ders spread, Through dis-tant worlds and re-gions of the— dead. The trum-pet"

sounds; — hell trem-bles: heav'n re - joic-es; Lift up your heads, ye saints,— with cheer - ful voic - es.

This system concludes the musical notation for this page. The lyrics are: "sounds; — hell trem-bles: heav'n re - joic-es; Lift up your heads, ye saints,— with cheer - ful voic - es."

This passage refers clearly to Christ's second coming: "When Christ returns." It conveys also the belief that Christ will come to us in a literal, physical, manner: the trumpet sounding, the tempest and fire attending the appearance of Christ with his "guards," and the command to angels to gather God's saints from distant lands all indicate this. The phrase, "No more shall atheists mock his long delay," implies immediacy, and seems to rule out the possibility that Watts describes a physical second advent occurring after a future earthly millennium. (Such a premillennial advent view is not to be taken for granted in early eighteenth century English theology. The views of English clergyman Daniel Whitby, who taught a spiritual "second coming" and a postmillennial advent, were dominant in English and American eschatology by 1750.) Christ is Judge of the living and the dead in the theology of Watts's passage, and the range of God's summons includes "regions of the dead." Finally, God's eternal covenant provides the basis for saints on earth, whether Gentiles or Jews, to rejoice.

This theological message springs to life in the verbiage—vibrant almost to a faulty fervidness—with which Watts unfolds it. The fulsome poetic meter, long lines of ten and eleven syllables, allows ample leeway for well-developed description. And Watts forthrightly invests the capacious lines with a sweep mingling image, monologue, and commentary.

Toward the Public

That tunebook compilers found Watts's Psalm 50 versions striking is implicit in the fact that no fewer than fifteen of the individual stanzas of these versions are in the tunebook repertory. The first American printings of stanzas were in 1763 in *Tunes in Three Parts*, a modest, anonymous, oblong Philadelphia tunebook. The late 1770s saw major American compilers/composers William Billings of Massachusetts and Andrew Law of Connecticut annexing "The God of Glory" for tunebooks.

This trickle expanded to a groundswell in the 1780s, when approximately half of the sacred tunebooks included it. At decade's end, all ten 1788

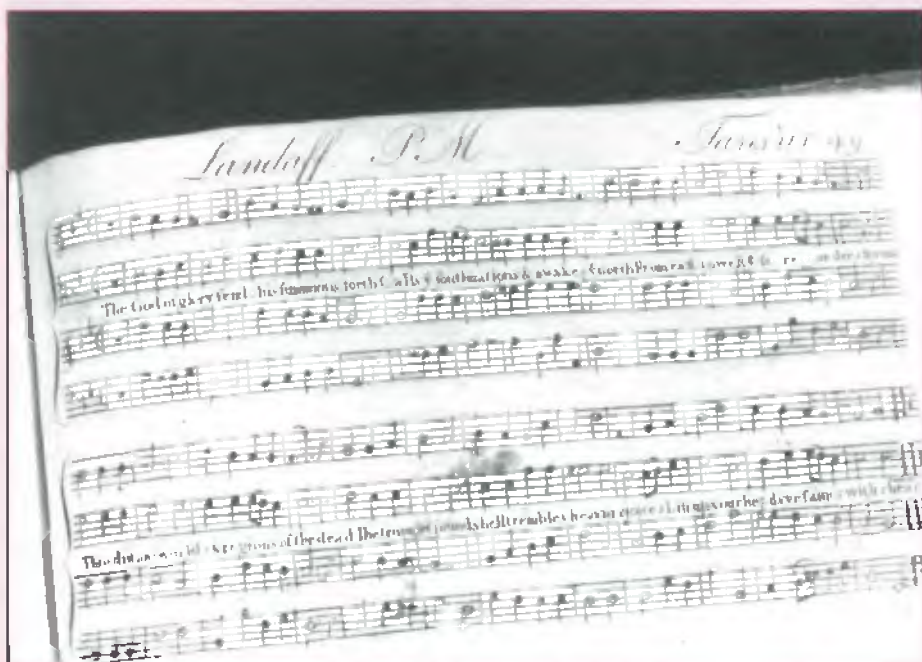
tunebooks surveyed contained it. The phenomenally successful and influential *Worcester Collection* (2nd. ed., 1788) included this text with two different tunes, heralding a trend repeated no fewer than sixteen times before 1811. Several major tunebooks included the text in all editions before 1811, including *The Federal Harmony* (six editions, 1788-1794); *Philadelphia Harmony* (ten editions, 1789-1808), and *The Village Harmony* (ten editions, 1795-1810). Many books of lesser prominence, apparently responding to public demand the following the lead of the major tunebooks, completed the range of publications of "The God of Glory."

Given that "The God of Glory" was a hymn to be sung, what hymntunes did hymnbook compilers join with it? Some 54 distinct tune names attach to nearly as many tunes associated with "The God of Glory" in these early American sources. Some tune names seem more hopeful than others, such as Archangel, Consummation, and Adoration. Other tune names focus on judgment, including Retribution, Doomsday, Tribunal, and several others. Many names are those of places, such as Pine Grove and Pennsylvania, while yet others are simply practical handles such as No. 4 or Psalm 50.

An anonymous European composed Landaff, the tune most frequently allied (54 times) with "The God of Glory." This tune appears in Figure 1 as printed in Massachusetts compiler Amos Albee's *The Norfolk Collection of Sacred Harmony* (1805). Another tune, Camden, by Oliver Holden, was not printed frequently, but is typical of many

Opposite Page: The author's edition of Camden as it appears in Thomas Atwill's *New York and Vermont Harmony* of 1804. (Those who wish to do so are free to copy and reuse this text.)

An elegant American edition of the hymntune Landaff with "The God of Glory" underlaid.



hymn-tunes of the ear. The author's modern edition of Camden, based on its printing in Thomas Atwill's *New York and Vermont Harmony* (1804) appears in Figure 2. Note that in both settings the melody appears in the tenor, the third voice from the top.

Alongside the central stream of publication of Watts's second PM version of Psalm 50, portions of other Watts Psalm 50 stanzas occurred in print in thin but broadening rivulets, especially in New England but also in the Middle Atlantic states.

Toward an Explanation

"The God of Glory" was published 216 times in America to 1810. Its nearest matches in frequency were three texts published with frequencies in the mid-to-upper 160s, while some two dozen other texts appeared more than 100 times each. What explanations can we hazard for the unparalleled dominance of a second-advent hymn text in early American hymn publication?

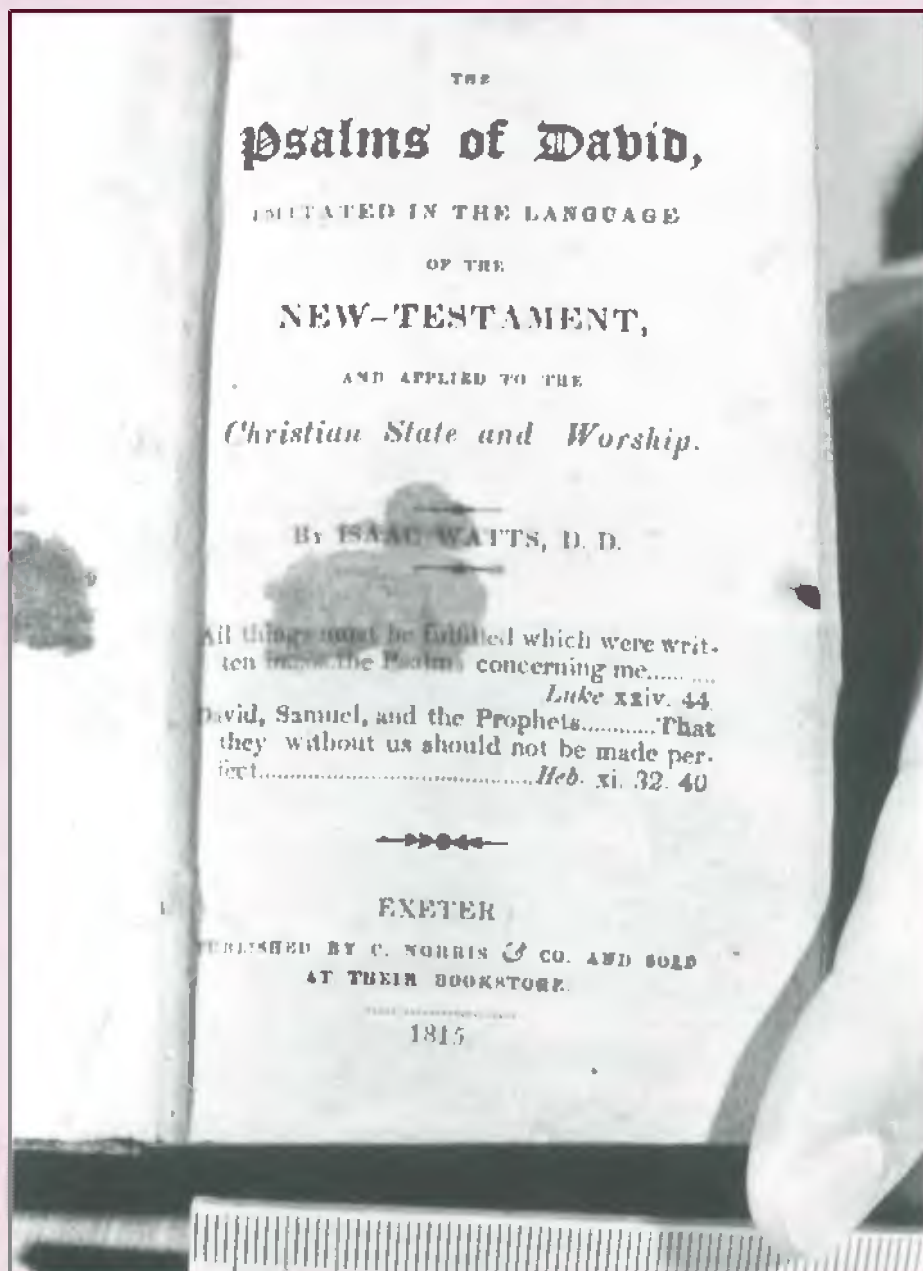
It seems only natural from an Adventist perspective to examine the message of Christ's imminent return as a possible primary factor in the text's board circulation. Proponents of such a view might explain the wide circulation of the second Particular Meter text as motivated by the religious sensibilities of church-goers and clergy, the activity of the Holy Spirit, or similar factors relating to spirituality and exhortation. But the evidence shows that several other Watts paraphrases of Psalm 50 circulated not nearly as widely as did Watts's second PM version. This means that the message of the hymn did not assure board circulation on its own, so it will be necessary to consider other factors as well.

One possibility is a "pigeon-hole" theory: a tunebook has pigeonholes or slots representing the need for a range

of text meters, and a book with all slots filled will have a better chance of commercial success. Two factors dilute the potency of this hypothesis as applied to "The God of Glory." First, the only texts in 10.10.10.10.11.11 meter in the entire tunebook repertory to 1810 are either Watts's Psalm 50 second PM version (various stanzas, 250 occurrences) or Watts's Psalm 93 PM (stanza one, 26 occurrences). Second, it follows that if

a 10.10.10.10.11.11 pigeonhole did exist, it was designed to accommodate a text from this very limited circle. This means that factors other than the unusual text meter may have been the attraction for tunebook compilers, factors such as imagery, message, and so forth.

Two additional hypotheses concern the association with tunes and with tunebooks. One postulates that a prominent tune or tunes largely deter-



mined the text's circulation. The other posits that the text's inclusion in one or more influential tunebooks determined its circulation.

Regarding the first hypothesis, easily the most prominent tune with which "The God of Glory" circulated, the previously-mentioned Landaff, occurs only five times with other texts: four times with internal stanzas of Watts's Psalm 50 and one time with a stanza of Watts's Psalm 93. As a hymn-tune apart from textual associations, Landaff ranks a prominent twenty-fifth, high in the top one percent, in publication frequency among the approximately seven thousand hymn tunes published in America from 1698 to 1810. Many textless publications of Landaff started with a German-language tunebook in 1753, followed several prominent colonial sources. Connecticut Yankee Andrew Law first allied this tune with "The God

of Glory" in *Select Harmony* (1779). Landaff by this time was so firmly established that its connection with the text may have facilitated the immediate proliferation of the text in other tunebooks.

Soon, however, the extraordinary mushrooming of some 50 other tunes to ally with the text eclipsed any claim of sheer monopoly that Landaff might have assumed. But it appears plausible that Landaff paved the way for this proliferation by bringing the text of "The God of Glory" to prominence.

The second hypothesis, that prominent tunebooks facilitated proliferation and popularity, seems even more plausible. Especially important among successful sources in the late 1780s for their role in the shaping of American hymn publication were the early editions of *The Worcester Collection*, starting in 1786. Worcester's publisher, Isaiah Thomas, was a sales-savvy pub-

lishing tycoon who formed a potent blend of the familiar and the new, the imported English and the native American, into such a successful formula that American music was irreversibly transformed. Not only did "The God of Glory" appear in early editions of Worcester, but also in many other prominent publications that followed Thomas's pattern.

It goes without saying, of course, that one must view the success of "The God of Glory" as compounded of many elements. It may well be that such factors as commercial drives and music's charms were required to keep a second-advent portent alive in early American ears. As a result, a literal eschatological perspective flourished in a common hymn well before William Miller's urgent second-advent call resounded during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

And reign his righteousness.

3 Let the whole earth his love proclaim
With all her different tongues ;
And spread the honours of his name
In melody and songs.

PSALM 93.—2d Part. C. M. [*]

The Messiah's coming and kingdom.

JOY to the world ! the Lord is come !
Let earth receive her King :
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth ! the Saviour reigns !
Let men their songs employ ;

Opposite Page: Title page of Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David Imitated as published in an American version* (Exeter, NH) in 1815. This thick book also contains the three volumes of Watts hymns within its vest-pocket-sized pages.

The beginning of a familiar Watts psalm paraphrase, "Joy to the World," as it appears in the 1815 Exeter edition.

A Woman's Struggle to Pioneer a Curriculum

By Susie Myers

Alma E. McKibbin, pioneer educator in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for three quarters of a century, developed a Bible curriculum when no materials or textbooks were available and became the first Seventh-day Adventist church school teacher—when no one even knew how to teach a “church school.”

Educational Millieu

Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education was widening to include the church's primary and secondary school-age children in the 1890s. No one knew yet just how to carry out radical principles that included developing harmoniously students' mental, physical, and spiritual powers; providing work-study programs; locating schools in rural areas; adding Bible and Christian service to the curriculum; and including farms and industries with schools. Since the church's educational mission emphasized service for God, the school curriculum—consisting of the fundamental subjects and

manual training—was to be based first on the Bible and secondarily on the book of nature.

Ellen White piloted these ideas at the Avondale school in Australia in the 1890s.



While there, she sent many reports to America designed to encourage church members there to implement holistic principles by establishing a school at each church where there as few as six children. The educational guidelines she advocated were printed in church publications and were widely read by both church leaders and lay people, including Alma McKibbin.

The question asked by many of the people who read White's counsel was, “How in the world are we to do it?” Churches were saddled with debt because of their commitment to higher educational institutions, and many argued that it was impossible for a small organization, consisting mostly of relatively poor people, to support an entire educational system. The depression precipitated by the Panic of 1893, a dearth of trained teachers, and the drought in California were only a few of the obstacles that threatened the growth of the Adventism's school system. But, in spite of many problems, church schools mushroomed from six in 1890 to 220 in 1900.

Experimentation with a Home School

In 1896, McKibbin decided quietly to implement some of the reforms White had advocated with three children, ages six and seven, at the home of friends who had taken her in after the recent death of her husband. With the parlor as their school room, small tables and chairs for desks, a blackboard, the Bible, and a weekly Sabbath School lesson, the experiment began. In eight months, the children were reading their Sabbath School lesson and portions of scripture.

The church members became excited about the children's progress and began laying plans for a church school for all of the children in the church. They decided to ask McKibbin to teach this school and to integrate biblically-based principles of educational reform into all the grades.

McKibbin was unenthusiastic about these hopes. Her health depleted from the stress of her husband's death and most of her hair gone, she looked at the sixteen- and seventeen-year-old young people of the church, taller than she was, knowing she was not a good disciplinarian. How she longed to teach just the young children. She had already begun planning what she would teach in the second grade, and she wanted to develop a church school curriculum gradually, one grade at a time. Her thoughts were troubled.

From remarks dropped now and then I felt they were going to ask me to teach. How I longed to do it! I thought of it by day and dreamed of it by night. But I knew I could not do it. I had no strength, no nerve, no brain left. It was impossible. Who was I to aspire to so great a task?

Why these principles were new, and nobody could give me a bit of help. I read everything that was written, but there was nothing specific, but there was nothing specific. There were principles, but how to carry them out?

I could not bear to refuse people who had been so kind to me, so, like Jonah, I just got

up and left, left the only home I had in this world and went to Los Angeles to a family, not Christians, for whom I had worked some years before, and endeavored to keep house for them. Work was too hard for me, and I was still troubled with dreams of a great work the Lord wanted done and no one to do it. I told Him over and over again, "You know, Lord, I want to teach, but I cannot. I am sick and tired, and I cannot remember, and I cannot study, and I do not know how a church school should be taught, and there is nobody to teach me.

I wasn't happy. Night or day, something was saying to me, "You should be teaching. You should be teaching a church school." I couldn't get away from it.

While McKibbin was struggling over whether to heed her calling to teach, the Centralia church in Santa Ana, Orange County, California, was scouting for a teacher. The members had had a sad experience the previous year. Instead of integrating the Bible with the whole curriculum, their first church school teacher had merely taught the children a Bible reading after school. She had also had serious discipline problems and had quit with no notice after only five months to marry one of her students. But the Centralia church refused to be discouraged, and determined to find another teacher.

When George Snyder, a college contemporary of McKibbin's, saw her in church in Los Angeles early in September, he took immediate action. After she ignored his note twice, he and the pastor followed her to her home and asked her to teach in Centralia. To her objections they answered, "The Lord will help you." The ministers refused to accept her unwillingness and said they would be back the next morning for her reply. She spent a sleepless night:

I have spent the last year thinking of nothing else; I will not waste another night thinking about it. But I did not sleep the night

through—not a wink. You know someone had written a long time before the world war a book entitled, The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World; well, there has been one more. It seemed that night as if the room was so dark and stuffy. It stifled me. Then I said to the Lord, "You know I cannot go. You know how I feel"—and I was too proud to fail. It is remarkable how much pride has to do with the decisions in this world. I am too proud to go and start a school and fail. I could not do that.

Then I said, "You know I would do it if I could." Then the darkness would deepen, and it seemed I could suffocate and desperation would come over me. It seemed as if the Lord would leave me and I could not bear that. There I was, all alone in the world. I had no relatives out here. I had lost everything. I had no home, only God.

At that thought I had begun to think over and over how I had been thinking for a year. How I would teach a church school if I had to do such a thing. Then the room would become lighter, and I would be confronted with the difficulties that would rise up. So it was, back and forth all night, and finally toward dawn I told the Lord I would go. That I would go and fail. That was all the faith I had when I started out.

The following morning she gave the two men her decision that she would "go and try and fail." "I went," she recalled later, "only because God called me to do it. I dared not refuse."

Centralia

Most Seventh-day Adventist church schools before 1896 structured their curricula much like those of the public schools. The school board might call in the pastor to teach a Bible class, or teachers might outline the Sabbath School lesson, but according to McKibbin, no church school boards in California specifically hired an instructor to teach their children in a way that integrated all of the educational reforms White was advocating, for no one

understood how to implement them. Centralia was different: its members wanted very much to implement the principles of educational change at their school.

When she arrived, the board requested that McKibbin teach everything required in the public school curriculum and everything suggested by White's principles of education (except gardening, because of the drought). She was responsible for all nine grades, but was not to combine grades in any subject area. She was not to use any public school textbooks except those for arithmetic, and she was not to hold back any child in spite of several months of schooling missed the previous year. As if all this were not enough, the board admonished her: "Above all things do not get behind the public schools in any subject. If you do, the children will begin to complain and want to go back to the public school."

Centralians had suffered a drought since 1895, when the nation was in the throes of a depression. Not only were the church members poor, but their church was beset with many problems. McKibbin later reflected, "I don't know of any people who were less qualified to start a school than they were."

McKibbin's living conditions were poor, too. Her room had no stove, which meant she would have to write lessons at night while suffering from cold. The lady who boarded her had been disillusioned by the school's previous sad experience, but when the church members met her objection of having no funds by asking her to board the teacher, she had been left without excuse. It was her secret wish for the school to fail. She advised McKibbin

not to unpack all her things, telling her, "You won't last two weeks. Nobody can control these Centralia boys." Then, every morning, she greeted McKibbin with, "Well, are you really going to try it another day?"

In general, church members had no respect for a teacher who "lived around," and treated her unkindly:

They really expected their teachers to be miracle workers, to produce a perfect something out of almost nothing, and, above all things, to change their children overnight into obedient, respectful, model boys and girls. In many cases they had almost lost control of their older children, and their zeal in promoting a school was their hope that a teacher, a Christian teacher, would do for their children what they had not been able to do.

She recorded a description of the schoolroom at Centralia:

The walls were unplastered . . . and the cracks between the boards were wide enough so that the children had been able to watch the courtship of their predecessor through them In the room were ten double seats, cast-offs from some public school. There were 35 pupils to sit in these seats. As this was a physical impossibility, we hunted boxes, chairs, and benches which frequently lost their equilibrium and tumbled over. My "desk" was a three-legged table. A fourth leg was provided in the form of a packing box which I arranged so as to form a "swivel" chair. For a blackboard we had one twelve-inch board painted with ordinary black paint. There was a stove which smoked when the [Santa Ana] wind blew and that was the only time we needed a fire. It was so dark in the room when dust was in the air that I sometimes opened the door, but the wind then blew

on my back and I took cold which resulted in a permanent neuralgia, from which I have suffered ever since.

In spite of her hardships, McKibbin set to work with a will. She asked the upper grade students to come in the morning and the younger ones to come at noon. When the younger children arrived, the older ones studied their lessons. She had no equipment, no library, no maps, and no help.

She faced a real difficulty in teaching Bible: not only were there no public school texts to be used for reference, but no church school texts, either. She had to write two lessons every night for bible and also outline a nature lesson. She described these times:

Besides I had to study each lesson in every subject before I taught it, because I had forgotten the things I once knew so well. I began to get my education the second time. It was hard and laborious. I taught from eight in the morning until six at night, and then sat up at night to get my own lessons.

During these difficult times, a doctor friend tried to persuade her to give up teaching church school:

I [had] taught two months. I was in the very hardest of the battle. When he came and said, "See here, you're sick," I was. I wasn't telling anybody, though. . . .

"Now you just give it up, and you come up to Oakland with me." He had a sanitarium. "I'll take care of you. You'll get well. And then I'll get you a position where there'll be a salary. And you'll have something adequate to eat. Now," he said, "the public schools were good enough for you and me. It [sic] did us no harm."

That was the wisdom of this world. I said, "No, my friend. God called me here and here I'll stay until he tells me I'm excused."

He says, "It'll cost you your life."

[With tears in my voice, I] said, "Maybe so. He called me here, and here I'm going to stay."

When she returned to Centralia that evening, tired and discouraged, but deter-



*To Mrs. Alma E. McKibbin,
whose influence has hallowed
the Mountain View School
city, and whose constant
sympathy and mature judg-
ment have guided our lives
into the life eternally
dedicated.*

mined to continue, dissatisfied board members confronted her with their grievances. Why wasn't she teaching physiology and agriculture? When she explained the books were delayed, they asked why she could not write her own physiology text until the new books arrived. It took all her courage to explain that she could not do more than the three lessons she was already writing nightly. She later commented on the difficulties at Centralia:

I lived on prayer; I did not have much else to eat as my board was light and not always that which I could eat. . . . I think the early teachers did the same thing. Sometimes it would seem as if the devil would just come and choke me around the neck, and the room would get so dark. I would have seasons of despair and discouragement until it seemed as if it would kill me. I was not a person of very great faith, but the efforts of the early work developed it.

Not long after this experience, a former schoolmate of McKibbin's who was now the principal of the public school in Anaheim invited her to spend a Sunday afternoon with him and his wife. He offered her a position in the public school, predicting that she would fail at teaching church school. He pressured her, scorning her salary and bringing every objection that he could to persuade her to join his staff, but she held her ground.

That year, she had many other struggles. She fought and conquered her discipline problems, losing one boy who never returned to school and mourning so severely over the loss that she had to take a six-week leave of absence to recuperate. When she returned, the trials continued, with boys covering the new blackboard with blood and with the school board running out of money, and thus finding it impossible to pay her salary. She had signed a contract for eight months, and when she walked into that "funeral" board meeting she witnessed long faces, crying, and weeping. They told her they could

not bear to lose their teacher after only five months.

By this time, Alma had gotten her "second wind":

I became fully convinced that the devil was trying to drive me away, and I finally ceased to pray that the Lord would let me go. I only said, "Lord, You keep me here for these eight months. . . . You uphold me for eight months, because I promised.

She managed to survive a diet consisting largely of walnuts, eating so many that it took years for her stomach to heal. She later wrote,

In spite of poor health and many other difficulties, the fact that I fulfilled my contract to teach eight months proves to me that when God asks us [to] do something for Him, He gives the strength and power to accomplish even a seeming[ly] impossible task.

J. Cecil Haussler's study of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church in California concluded from his interviews with McKibbin that her success at Centralia carried much weight in changing church members' attitudes toward church schools.

McKibbin left Centralia to go on teaching, writing, and promoting church schools in California. During the summer of 1899, she was called to instruct the first

teacher recruits in California regarding the running of a church school. The Bible lessons she had written on cold attic nights at Centralia were revised and first published in 1903. While continuing to teach church school, she proceeded to write Bible lessons for every grade, revising them through their fifty-plus years of use in Seventh-day Adventist schools all over the world.

Conclusion

It is left for the reader to evaluate how, in retrospect, Alma McKibbin could have expressed a commitment to the service of God more effectively. Probably few would question that she persisted in doing what she thought God wanted her to do, despite the most discouraging obstacles. It is to the value of such persistence that she refers in this moving passage:

I thought when I began teaching that I would see favorable results at once, but the years went by, two, three, four, and in the discouragement of my soul I had to acknowledge to myself that my pupils seemed no better than when I began, and in some cases even worse.

My health, never too good, broke down completely, and I was taken away to a sanitarium, and there after months of illness, I began to see the matter more clearly. It seemed the Lord spoke to me and said, "You did this work for Me, and did the best you knew how. I am responsible for the results. Do not say your work is either a failure or a success. You do not know."

Previous Page: At the end of her life, Alma McKibbin could look back on many fruitful years of educational service to Adventist young people.

Opposite Page: Alma McKibbin during her Mountain View days.

Southern California in Alma McKibbin's time. Centralia, where McKibbin taught, is located in the Anaheim area. A Centralia church representative met McKibbin at a train station in Buena Park and took her on a wagon to Centralia to begin her duties there.



Putting the Millerites in Context

By David Pendleton

This is the second edition of *The Disappointed*, the first having been published in 1987 by Indiana University Press. This collection of eleven essays grew out of a conference on the topic held in Killington, Vermont, in honor of Vern Cartner, a prominent Seventh-day Adventist scholar and one of the founders of *Adventist Heritage*. It is arguably the best introduction to the Millerite heritage of Seventh-day Adventists.

There certainly have been longer, more detailed works which chronicle, more meticulously and often times more painfully, this aspect of early Adventist history, such as LeRoy Edwin Froom's much discussed but little read four-volume treatise, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. And there have been scores of articles in the *Adventist Review* briefly outlining the Adventist-Millerite connection. So this work is not a first in its field. But here we have a handy volume which covers a broad range of Adventist-Millerite issues from a decidedly neutral theological stance. Its articles can be categorized into three groups: one group which introduces the reader to such important Millerite figures as,

of course, William Miller himself and Joshua V. Himes; another which seeks to understand Millerism in the context of nineteenth-century evangelical culture, abolitionism, and beliefs about the Millennium; and, finally, a third

Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds. *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. Illustrations selected by James R. Nix. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P 1992. Pp. 333, xx.

which compares and contrasts Millerism with various other religious movements of the day—e.g., the Shakers and Noyes's Oneida Perfectionists.

These articles are by both Adventist and non-Adventist authors, all of whom are professional historians. While they bring to bear the analytical tools of the profession, they are neither apologetic nor unfairly critical in their approach. They do not overlook the enthusiastic

and, as some might characterize them, outlandish practices of the Millerites; but neither do they focus on the bizarre and unusual. Rather, they seek to comprehend the Millerites in their own historical and cultural context, a context in which heightened spiritual awareness was contagious and unconventional religious practices were commonplace.

One example of this balanced approach is found in the first chapter, by David L. Rowe, who argues, and rather persuasively, that Millerites were comprised of a fairly diverse cross-section of society. While there were distinctive and unique individuals in their ranks, the majority were indistinguishable from their fellow Protestant Christians in lifestyle, profession, and economic standing. Rowe thus puts to rest the notion that Millerites were somehow completely detached from their religious environment. Indeed, they were the epitome of what was going on religiously at the time.

Another Millerite myth is dispelled by Ron Graybill in his chapter on the continuities and discontinuities between abolitionists and Millerites. It

has been suggested that Millerites were unique in their detachment from and lack of interest in the abolitionist movement and that their attitude might suggest that they had peculiar religious beliefs about African American or the relationship of slave and master. Not so, Graybill maintains. It is not that the Millerites were uninterested in abolition. Quite to the contrary, many were. But as a movement they were simply more occupied with the future than with the present, with the life hereafter rather than with the here and now.

These two chapters are but examples of the balanced, but nonetheless provocative and insightful, viewpoints included in this volume. Perhaps the best addition to this book is Appendix 2, wherein a most important Millerite trial—that of Israel Dammon—can be followed in detail. This transcript alone sheds much light on Millerite and early Adventist practices and customs.

The only criticism one might make about this volume is that it clearly leaves unaddressed several important issues and figures in the Millerite movement. But then another treatise on Millerism would have been created and the “handiness” of this volume would have been sacrificed. For to say something briefly is necessarily to leave some of the details out. Therefore, in all fairness I have to conclude that this volume is must reading for anyone even remotely interested in American religious history in general or Millerite and early Adventist history in particular. It does not have the encyclopedic coverage of a treatise, but it never was intended to. And encyclopedic works, while often cited, are rarely read. This volume can be and ought to be read in a single sitting. No other volume says what this one says in the space it has to say it in.

A Definitive History of Millerism

By Gary Chartier

George Knight, Professor of Church History at Andrews University, has written a readable account of the development of the Millerite movement and its more important descendants. He has two goals: “to set forth a comprehensive overview of Millerism” and “to explore possible reasons for Millerism’s surprising success.”

Knight sets the stage for his discussion by exploring the enthusiasm for prophetic analysis and speculation that consumed America in the decades immediately prior to the beginning of William Miller’s second preaching. He proceeds to detail the course of Miller’s life up to the beginning of his public career. Joshua V. Himes, Miller’s organizer and publicist, merits a chapter all his own. Other Millerite leaders—Josiah Litch, Charles Fitch, Joseph Marsh,

Elon Galusha, and Nathaniel Southard—are treated as a group. A noteworthy element of Knight’s discussion of prominent members of Miller’s movement is the attention he pays to Afro-American

and female Millerite lectures, including John W. Lewis, William Foy, Lucy Maris Hersey, Olive Maria Rice, and Elvira Fasset. Many prominent Millerite and Adventist leaders are depicted in the eight pages of photographs that appear in the book

(which also feature reproductions of the Millerites’ 1843 prophetic chart and a scurrilous anti-Millerite cartoon).

Knight follows the Millerites closely as they enter the year 1843, when Miller initially believed Christ would return. He examines their conflicts with other Christians during this tense period marked notably by the call to “come out of

George R. Knight. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Comprehensive Survey of Millerism and America’s Fascination with the Millennium in the Nineteenth Century*. Boise, ID: Pacific 1993. Pp. 384. Index.

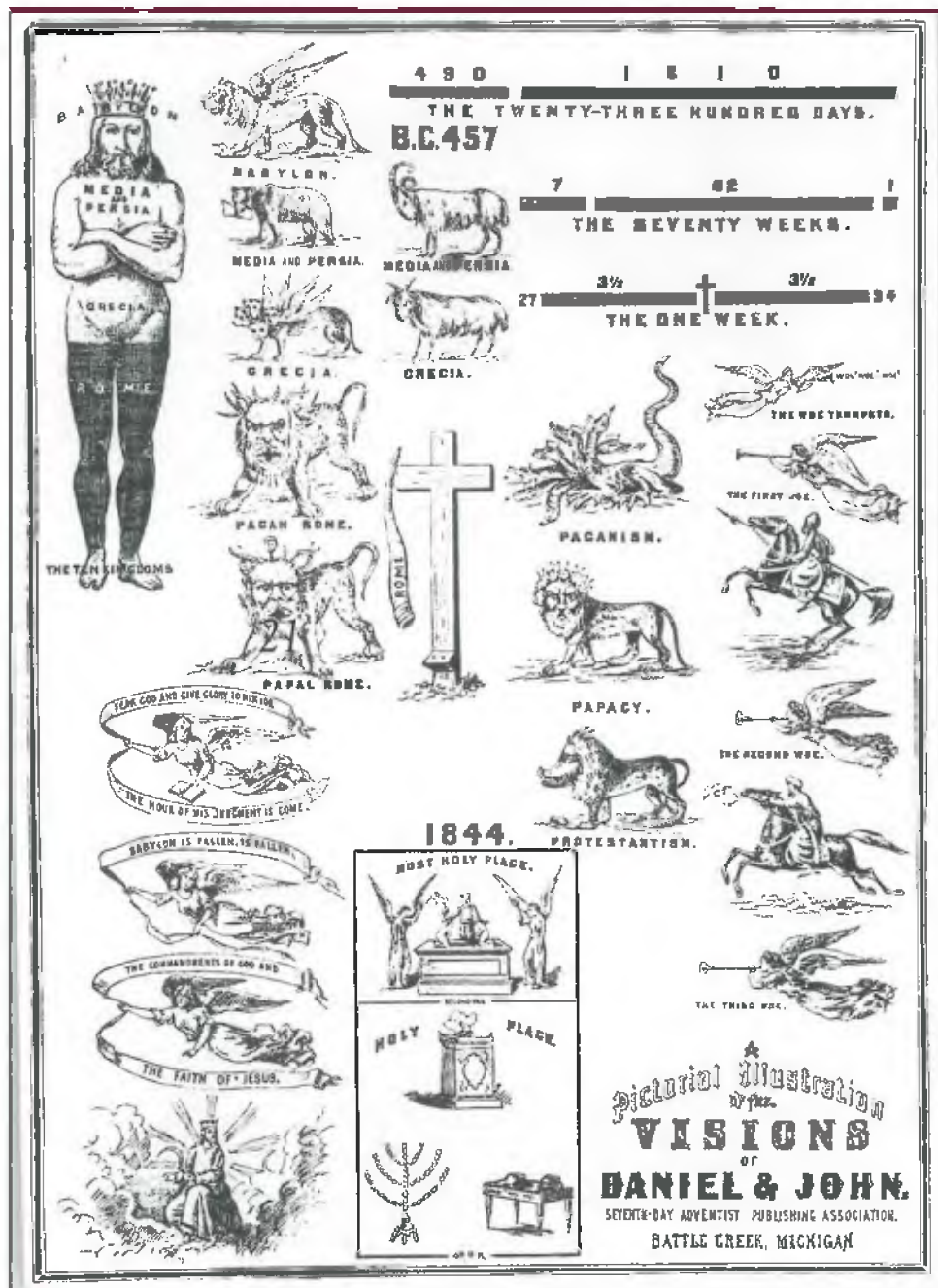
Babylon”—to separate from the established churches because of the Christian mainstream’s opposition to the Millerite movement’s message. (And not only its message: Knight notes that the Millerite leaders were accused of exploiting their followers’ religious ardor for their own financial benefit and of failing to demonstrate their commitment to their own message by the way they lived. Miller, for instance, was criticized for building a stone wall around his property and for retaining his farm at all during what he believed were the closing months of earth’s history.)

Four chapters chronicle the period from the first Millerite disappointment—March 21, 1844—to the “Great Disappointment” of October 22. Knight explores the confusion and fanaticism that multiplied among Miller’s followers after Christ failed to return in the spring of 1844. He examines the development of the so-called “Seventh Month” view, according to which the Old Testament sacrificial system suggested that the Advent would occur on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar—the view that ultimately prepared the way for the Great Disappointment in the fall of 1844. And he provides a clear picture of the way in which the Millerite leaders responded when the perspective of the “Seventh Month” movement turned out to be invalid. George Storrs, one of the most active proponents of the “Seventh Month” message, decided by 1845 this message had been “a delusion’ based on the ‘monstrous perversion’ of certain texts of Scripture” (225). Miller himself continued to hold the view that he had correctly identified the year of Christ’s return through the year following the

Disappointment, but ultimately concluded that the “Seventh Month” movement had been in error.

The final portion of the book traces the growth of denominational structures among the Millerites in the wake of the Disappointment and offers some reflections on Adventism’s future that build on Knight’s analysis of its past. He describes

the birth of radical movements that defended, for instance, a completely spiritual interpretation of the Second Coming, or an “aberrant perfectionism” according to which believers—at least, some believers—were completely and forever free of sin. He notes that some of Miller’s followers found themselves attracted to Shakerism and other American commu-



nal movements. And he details the efforts undertaken by the Millerite leaders to contain the chaos their community was experiencing by making limited moves in the direction of formal organization. He devotes one chapter to the story of the Sabbatarian Millerites who became the Seventh-day Adventists.

The book's last chapter focuses on the major denominations to emerge from the Millerite movement. Knight spends the bulk of the chapter considering why Seventh-day Adventism has enjoyed the greatest success of any of these groups. According to Knight, several factors are relevant: There is a place within Adventism for both reason and emotion. Adventism was founded on the conviction that it had distinctive doctrinal truths to share with the world, and advocated distinctive lifestyle practices that served to create and maintain a sense of identity among its members. Adventism's organizational structure is designed to provide the coordination and unity necessary to the success of the church's global mission enterprise. Finally, Adventism has been driven by a sense of urgency derived from its perception that the end of the world is imminent. Its vision of the future, and of its place in that future, has inspired a vigorous commitment to mission. When he catalogues the challenges that confront Adventism as it seeks to sustain its vitality into the twenty-first century, Knight focuses on the potential loss of this prophecy-driven vision as an especially important cause for concern.

Well-documented, *Millennial Fever* evinces Knight's engagement with the standard published and unpublished sources regarding Millerism. It sacrifices neither scholarly seriousness nor popular accessibility; and it should prove a helpful guide to the Millerite movement to which

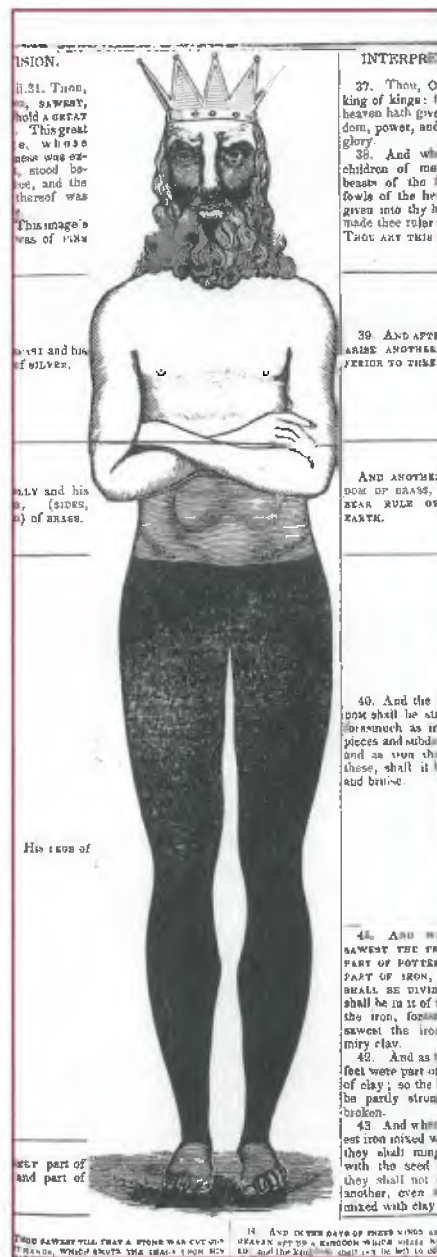
those interested in this fascinating chapter in the American past can turn for a fund of useful information.

While Knight writes primarily as a historian, it is clear that he is—appropriately—sensitive to the significance of Millerism's story for its contemporary heirs. Good history is never done in a vacuum. Indeed, it may be that his attempt to draw out his story's implications for Adventist readers today should elicit the most com-

ment. He has rightly noted the rôle played by urgent Advent expectation in the success of both Millerism and Adventism. He implicitly reaffirms the prophetic schema that underlies Adventism's sense of end-time anticipation. But while he has made a plausible case for the view that this anticipation is crucial to Adventism's success, his arguments do not directly address what seems to me to be the unavoidable paradox a book like his forces us to confront.

The very fact that *Millennial Fever* could be written and published at all points to the problem the church must face as it seeks to keep its sense of mission alive. For Miller, Himes, and the early Adventists, it would have been a sign of doubt in God's promises to suggest that their story would need to be told a century and a half after the Great Disappointment. But now a loyal and informed Adventist has done just that. The quality of this attractively produced volume, as well as its scholarly apparatus, point more subtly to Adventism's adjustment to the failure of the hoped-for Second Advent to arrive. One might even wonder whether the leisure to reflect on the Millerite past could be enjoyed by a community still possessed by the urgency Knight suggests is essential for Adventism's flourishing. It "is hard," Knight observes, "to keep people excited about the second coming for 150 years." It is harder still, surely, to do so when a movement has announced repeatedly during those 150 years that Christ's return is not only certain, but imminent.

Of course, *Millennial Fever* is not intended principally as a response to this challenge. What Knight has set out to do he has done well. His study of the Millerite movement will surely facilitate the ongoing attempts of its descendants to understand their identity and mission.



Sources for "A Feast of Reason"

Continued from page 21.

¹William Miller, *Apology and Defense* (Boston: Himes 1845) 2-3.

²Miller, *Apology* 3.

³Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Himes 1853) 63-5; cp. Everett N. Dick, "The Adventist Crisis of 1843-1844 (Ph.D. diss., U of Wisconsin 1930) 5-6.

⁴Bliss, Dick. David Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York* (Chico, CA: Scholars 1985) 3-8 attributes Miller's conversion to a series of psychological traumas: resentment of his father for depriving him of an education and later remorse for his rebellion; remorse for his youthful ridiculing of his grandfather, who died after nursing Miller back to health following an attack of spotted fever; and Miller's reflection on the human corruption—his own and others—he witnessed during the war.

⁵Miller, *Apology* 5-6.

⁶Miller, *Apology* 5-6.

⁷Rowe, *Thunder* 9.

⁸Rowe, *Thunder* 12.

⁹Miller, *Apology* 6.

¹⁰Bliss 76.

¹¹Miller, *Apology* 16-8; cp. Bliss 83-4.

¹²Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Datem 1990) 48.

¹³Arasola 24.

¹⁴Arasola 34. Mede drew upon methods used by scholars such as Joachim of Fiore (1130-1202) and John Wycliff (1324-84).

¹⁵Arasola 29.

¹⁶Arasola 35.

¹⁷Arasola 46.

¹⁸Arasola 40.

¹⁹Arasola 40-1.

²⁰Le Roy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review 1946-54) 4: 392-405.

²¹Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization*

of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale UP 1989) 6.

²²Hatch, *Democratization* 42.

²³Hatch, *Democratization* 182-3.

²⁴George Marsden, "The Bible, Science, and Authority," *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: OUP 1982) 81.

²⁵Marsden 82-3.

²⁶Marsden 83.

²⁷Marsden 84.

²⁸Marsden 90.

²⁹Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1950) 297-8.

³⁰Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple UP 1987) 101.

³¹Theodore Dwight Bozeman, "Baconianism and the Bible," *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P 1977) 138-43.

³²Bozeman 56-7.

³³Bozeman 56-7.

³⁴For a brief historical survey of millennialism and its emergence in the nineteenth century, see Ernest Sandeen, "Millennialism," *The Rise of Adventism*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper 1974) 104-18.

³⁵Froom 83-5.

³⁶Sandeen (118) notes several events portending cataclysmic change, including the American and French revolutions, Roman Catholic Emancipation (1828-9), and the Great Reform Act (1832).

³⁷Froom 100-1.

³⁸Froom 102-3.

³⁹Froom 103-7.

⁴⁰According to Sandeen, reliance on biblical authority remained strong in the nineteenth century. "Not only was faith in the authority of the Bible not yet undermined by higher criticism; it would also appear that respect for scientific discoveries and mathematical exactitude had been rather simplistically transferred to fields such as prophetic interpretation" (114).

⁴¹Anon., "The Tendency to German Neology," *Signs of the Times* [Millerite] 5.16 (June 21, 1843).

⁴²Arasola 169.

⁴³William Miller, *Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843* (Troy, NY: Kemble 1836) 5-6.

⁴⁴Miller, *Evidences* 4-5.

⁴⁵William Miller, "Second Coming of Christ" 1, *Signs of the Times* [Millerite] April 15, 1840.

⁴⁶Rowe, *Thunder* 67-8. Miller refused to set an exact date until, because of the "wide acceptance" and the "probability of convincing evidence" of the October 22, 1844, date, he accepted this date in early October 1844 (*Apology* 25).

⁴⁷Froom 323-4, 331-2.

⁴⁸Elon Galusha in the Dec. 19, 1844, *Midnight Cry*, qtd. in David Rowe, "Elon Galusha and the Millerite Movement," *Foundations* 18 (Jul.-Sep. 1975): 259.

⁴⁹Rowe, "Galusha."

⁵⁰In emphasizing the "rational appeal" of Millerite methodology, the "scandal" of Millerism, the setting of an exact date, should not be overlooked; see Eric Anderson, "The Millerite Use of Prophecy: A Case Study of a 'Striking Fulfillment,'" *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, *Religion in North America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP 1987).

⁵¹Hatch, *Democratization* 184.

⁵²Miller, writing in *The Signs of the Times* [Millerite] 4.10 (Nov. 23, 1842): 79.

⁵³Miller, writing in *The Signs of the Times* [Millerite] 4.10 (Nov. 23, 1842): 79.

⁵⁴Miller, *Apology* 6.

⁵⁵Joshua V. Himes, *View of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology* (Boston: Dow 1841) 112-5.

⁵⁶Miller, writing in *The Signs of the Times* [Millerite] 4.10 (Nov. 23, 1842): 79.

⁵⁷Miller, *Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston: Mussey 1844) 7.

⁵⁸Arasola 57.

⁵⁹Himes 13.

⁶⁰Miller, *Apology* 25-8.

Charles Teel, Jr., is Professor of Religion and Society in the School of Religion at La Sierra University and Founding Director of the university's Stahl Center for World Service. He holds an MA from the SDA Theological Seminary in systematic theology and Christian philosophy; a PhD in the sociology of religion from Boston University; and an MTh from Harvard Divinity School. His article in this issue is based on a presentation at the university's October 22, 1994 weekend which marked the 150th anniversary of the Millerite Disappointment—the presentation drawing upon on a more extensive treatment of the subject in "Bridegroom or Babylon? Dragon or Lamb? Nineteenth Century Adventists and the American Mainstream" in *Adventist Heritage*. . . He is the author of numerous articles and the editor of *Remnant and Republic: Adventist Themes for Personal and Social Ethics*.

Fritz Guy is University Professor of Theology and Philosophy at La Sierra University, where he has spent the balance of his professional career—retiring as President in 1993. He has also served as a pastor in the Southeastern California Conference, an Assistant Editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, and a faculty member and administrator at Andrews University. As a member of the Sanctuary Review Committee that met in 1980 at Glacier View, and as a long-time student of Adventist sanctuary theology, he is especially well-qualified to discuss the development of Adventist thinking about Jesus' heavenly ministry. He received a PhD in Christian theology from the University of Chicago in 1971, and is the editor of *Meeting the Secular Mind: Some Adventist Perspectives* as well as the author of the forthcoming *Present Truth: Adventist Theology in the Contemporary World*. His article is adapted from a presentation given at a La Sierra University Church seminar held on October 22, 1994, to commemorate the Great Disappointment.

At the time his review of *The Disappointed* was written, **David Pendleton** was Associate Dean of Students at La Sierra University, from which he graduated in 1989 with a BA in history and political science and in 1990 with an MA in religion. He holds a JD from the University of Southern California, and is a member of the California and Hawaii bars. His contribution to this issue of *Adventist Heritage* reflects his long-standing interest in the relationship between religion and culture.

Gary Chartier is Managing Editor of *Adventist Heritage* at La Sierra University. An alum of the University (BA, 1987), he went on to earn a PhD in systematic theology and Christian ethics from the University of Cambridge, England, in 1991. His recently completed book, *Believing Together Today*, is the second attempt by an Adventist scholar to interpret the Apostles' Creed, a popular and ancient Christian confession of faith; his other research interests include such issues in theological ethics as friendship, divorce, and homosexuality.

Frederick G. Hoyt is Professor *Emeritus* of History and Political Science at La Sierra University. He studied history, religion, and physics as an undergraduate at La Sierra, returning to his *alma mater* after teaching at San Pasqual Academy and attending Claremont Graduate School, from which he earned a PhD in history. His scholarly interests include US-Phillipine relations (he conducted research for a year in the Phillipines as a Fullbright Scholar) and the New England context for the development of Millerism and Adventism.

Anne Freed currently teaches Christian ethics at Pacific Union College. Following her receipt of a BA from PUC in 1988, she began graduate study in religion. After attending Loma Linda University, Newbold College, and Andrews University, she received an MA in religion with a major in theology and a minor in missions from Andrews in 1992. She spent one year at Baylor University in Waco, TX, in a doctoral program in religion before going to PUC.

Kenneth Logan is Assistant Professor of Music at Canadian Union College, where he teaches music history and organ as well as other areas of music. He was an interim full-time faculty member at Walla Walla College from 1991-3. His undergraduate degree is in piano performance with honors from Andrews University (1980); he earned a master's degree in organ performance from Andrews in 1984. He holds the DMA with honors in organ performance from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Originally from Maryland, he is a published handbell composer (Augsburg-Fortress 1991). In 1988, he commenced an extensive study of poetic texts used in sacred music in early America to 1810, in association with eminent American musicologist Richard Crawford. Among his other musical interests are computer music notation and musical performances assisted by electronic media.

Susie Myers has taught at Newbold College and Andrews University, serving at the latter institution as Assistant Professor of Teacher Education. She holds a BA and EdD (1991) from Andrews, and an MA from the George Peabody College for Teachers.

