

Ellen G. White and the Interpretation of Daniel and Revelation

Biblical Research Institute

The study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is important to the spiritual dynamics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has always been so. "Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists," declared Ellen White. "The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation should be carefully studied, and in connection with them the words, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" -*Gospel Workers*, p. 148.

Again she wrote: "When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart." -*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114.

Historicist Method of Interpretation

As every reader of the Bible knows, the books of Daniel and Revelation are written largely in symbols. Bible students, consequently, describe them as apocalyptic prophecy to distinguish from straightforward classical prophecy, such as we find in the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament. In these two apocalyptic books God reveals the sweep of the moral controversy which has convulsed our planet, focusing on the ultimate victory of His cause and the final doom of the forces of evil.

From the beginning Seventh-day Adventists have followed the *historical method of prophetic interpretation* to explain the symbols and their meaning. Sometimes this approach

is called the historicist method or the continuous historical method.

The historicist method accepts the assumption that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are intended to unfold and to find fulfillment in historical time - in the span between the prophets Daniel and John respectively and the final establishment of God's eternal kingdom. The year-day principle (a symbolic day = a literal year) is an integral part of this method inasmuch as it functions to unroll the symbolic time periods so that we are able to locate the predicted events along the highway of history.

Jesus used the historicist method for interpreting Daniel when He announced, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). In this affirmation of prophetic fulfillment He alluded to Daniel's 70 week prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) which foretold the appearance of the Messiah. Near the close of His life Jesus again referred to the same prophecy. This time, however, He pointed to another aspect-to "the prince that [should] come [and should] destroy the city and the sanctuary." (v. 26; see Matthew 24:15; Luke 21:20.) These events were to take place after His death and ascension. Their historical fulfillment occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The Protestant reformers (from whose roots we spring) likewise employed the historicist method. On this basis they concluded that the Papacy was the focus of several of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Following this method the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers came to perceive our own times, the twofold ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, our identity as a people, and our task. Our understanding of Daniel and Revelation became the distinctive frame to hold in place and to highlight the biblical truths we teach as a church.

Preterist and Futurist Methods of Interpretation

Sixteenth century Protestant interpretations of Daniel and Revelation shook the Roman Catholic Church. In response the Catholic Counter-Reformation introduced the initial

arguments for two different systems of prophetic interpretation: preterism and futurism. These moves served to deflect the accusing finger of prophecy away from the papal system.

Preterism (from the Latin, *praeter*, meaning "past") argued that these prophetic books met their fulfillment in the pre-Christian past or early centuries of the Christian era. Preterism eventually penetrated Protestant thought in the late eighteenth century and became the standard view of liberal Protestantism. Today, standard historical-critical scholarship places the composition of Daniel in the second century B.C. and sees its alleged prophecies as reflecting the person and times of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king of Syria. The book of Revelation is restricted to a Roman setting in the first centuries of the Christian era.

Futurism entered Protestant ranks in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The most prominent form of futurist interpretation today places the fulfillment of the bulk of Revelation (other than chapters 1-3) in a three and one-half year period of tribulation at the end of the age, commencing with a secret rapture of the church to heaven. The seventieth week of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 is detached from its setting and relocated as the last seven years of the world. Many conservative Protestants have adopted futurism (with additions and variations) as their standard system for interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

Rome shrewdly knew that a change in the method of interpretation would lead inevitably to a change in conclusions. It is easy to see that both preterism and futurism direct the prophetic spotlight away from Rome and her activities. Preterism and present-day historical-critical studies place all fulfillments in the past. Futurism defers the fulfillment of the bulk of Revelation to a future point - at the end of the world after an alleged secret rapture. (Historical-critical scholars also regard Daniel 11:40-45 as a prophecy that failed to materialize.)

Today, Seventh-day Adventists stand virtually alone as proponents of the historicist method of interpreting Daniel and Revelation, the method of Christ, Paul, and the Reformers.

Counter-Reformation "Knocks" at the Adventist Door

In a very real sense the spirit of the Counter-Reformation is knocking today at the door of the Adventist Church and urgently pressing to enter!

Some Adventist Bible students propose that the church seriously consider the preterist and historical-critical positions that would regard these prophetic books either as fulfilled or as having failed in the past. Different approaches are then adopted to make such prophecies meaningful and relevant to the church today.

Preterist Variations

For example, some suggest that a prophecy may have *multiple* fulfillments. This approach would argue that the little horn of Daniel 8 could find successive fulfillments (in different ages) in Antiochus IV, pagan Rome, papal Rome, and even (just before the end) in Satan when he impersonates Christ.

Another approach asserts that Daniel's prophecies are not a revelation of God's foreknowledge. Rather, they were intended to be a statement of His purpose and were conditional on Israel's obedience. When Israel failed to accept the Messiah and was rejected by God as His agent, the original intent of Daniel's prophecies failed. Consequently, Daniel has no meaning for today's church unless later inspired writers make a reapplication of a given prophecy. On this basis the *preadvent judgment* scene recorded in Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 is forced to become the *erecutive judgment* scene of Revelation 20:11-15 because the latter passage is considered to be John's *reapplication* of Daniel 7!

A third spin-off of the preterist position leads some to take an idealist approach to Daniel and Revelation. This position argues that the books are to be viewed as illustrating (in symbolic form) the great controversy between good and evil - between God and Satan - from which only spiritual principles may be drawn. While such a struggle is evident, the idealist

chooses to go no further; he is unwilling to make specific application of the symbols to historical realities.

Futurist Variations

Other Adventist Bible students (ministers and laity alike) are taking a more futurist-oriented approach. They commonly claim loyalty to the historicist interpretations of Daniel and Revelation which we hold as a people. But there is a deep desire to make these prophecies relevant to current events. While some place certain prophecies after the close of probation for their *primary fulfillment* (such as the seven trumpets), it is more common to opt for a *dual fulfillment* in the end-time of certain selected prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. The only way in which to retain the church's historicist positions, they believe, and at the same time to make certain prophecies relevant, is to employ the *dual fulfillment device*.

But there is no consistency. Only certain chapters are reapplied. For example, some teach that the beasts of Daniel 7 and 8 are currently meeting another fulfillment in the activities of the United States, Russia, Iraq, and Iran. Some argue that the 1260 year time period is to have another fulfillment in the future on a day-for-a-day basis, while others have suggested a dual fulfillment for the 70 week prophecy.

These well-meaning persons who argue for a dual fulfillment of selected prophecies in Daniel and Revelation have one thing in common: *they all believe that Ellen White supports the dual fulfillment theory for the books of Daniel and Revelation.*

Seventh-day Adventists have always recognized from the biblical data itself that certain of the classical prophecies (in the major and minor prophets) give clear evidence in their contexts that a more complete fulfillment may be expected after a partial application (for example, Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit [Joel 2:28-32] and Malachi's prophecy of an Elijah message [Mal 4:5-6]).

However, we have never taken such a position on the prophecies of Daniel and

Revelation. To give dual and multiple fulfillments to these grand revelations of divine foreknowledge is to give the face of prophecy a nose of wax to be turned this way and that. Dual and multiple fulfillments rob these great prophecies of real significance and evaporate their contribution to our spiritual certainty.

The series on the seven churches is unique (Rev 1-3). When first written, these messages apparently had a direct application to the local situation (1:11), and they continue to carry lessons for the church in every age. But even in this special instance the Spirit seems to have intended only one true *prophetic* fulfillment. "The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." - *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 585.

But is the assertion true that hidden away in the writings of Ellen White we may find the seeds of a new method of interpreting Daniel and Revelation - the dual fulfillment method? Is it possible that Ellen White in fact taught and endorsed the historicist method of interpreting Daniel and Revelation and at the same time inserted statements here and there from which the church could later construct a new method of prophetic interpretation? Let us not forget the valid truth that Rome fully recognized when her Jesuit theologians proposed new methods for interpreting Daniel and Revelation: *A change in method inevitably leads to a change in conclusions.*

In terms of prophetic interpretation the Adventist Church stands at a crossroads. The spirit of the Counter Reformation knocks on the Adventist door. The decision to open the door and to go the way an earlier Protestantism went is one option. In today's ecumenical climate the temptation to go that way is alluring. But there is valid reason why we should remain loyal to the prophetic faith of our pioneer fathers.

Ellen G. White's Historicist Position

There is not the slightest evidence that Ellen White intended for the church to follow any other method of interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation than the historicist method. In the clearest manner her comments on the book of Revelation present the historicist understanding that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unroll in history from the times of Daniel and John until the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God. For instance:

The book of Revelation opens to the world *what has been, what is, and what is to come*; it is for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. It should be studied with reverential awe. We are privileged in knowing what is for our learning. - Ellen G White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 954 (emphasis added).

In the Revelation are portrayed the deep things of God. . . . Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth's history, as well as to those living in the days of John. *Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new.* - *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 584 (emphasis added).

In these comprehensive statements Ellen White demonstrates how apocalyptic prophecy was designed by God to find sequential fulfillment as history unfolded. (1) Some of these prophecies have now met their fulfillment in past ages; (2) some of the prophecies are finding fulfillment now; (3) some focus on the final conflict in the controversy and have not as yet met their fulfillment; finally, (4) some portions of the prophecies relate to the new earth estate and will find fulfillment then.

Ellen White asserts that the book of Revelation is as important to last-day Christians as it was to Christians in John's day. "Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this

earth's history." This is not because she is proposing dual fulfillments of those portions of the prophecies already fulfilled. The implication of her statement is clear. The book remains relevant because the fulfillments of some of these prophecies "are now taking place," and others will shortly find fulfillment in "the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven." Furthermore, the present day Adventist may continue to learn spiritual lessons from past history and prophetic fulfillment. In this manner the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation continue to give encouragement, confidence, and motivation to last-day Christians even though large portions of these books have met complete fulfillment in past ages.

Ellen White does not discuss every portion of Daniel and Revelation in her writings. Her most comprehensive presentations are found in the well-known volume, *The Great Controversy*. For example, she presents a clear interpretation of the little horn (Dan 7); the dragon (Rev 12); the leopard beast (Rev 13); and the related time periods (3 1/2 times = 1260 days = 42 months = 1260 years of papal supremacy, 538-1798) as well as the two-horn beast (Rev 13) and the final conflict over the Sabbath and God's Law symbolized by the enforcement of the "mark of the beast" by the "image of the beast." (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 438-450). These views fully endorse the historicist method and the main conclusions and positions arrived at by our pioneers who employed this system. Her divinely guided writings confirm the prophetic foundation (derived from Daniel and Revelation) on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church rests today.

Do the Ellen G. White Writings Teach Another Method of Prophetic Interpretation?

The Adventists who are giving a dual fulfillment application to selected prophecies in Daniel and Revelation generally argue that they find Ellen White's endorsement of this method hidden in certain statements. These alleged keys to a new system of prophetic

interpretation are scattered throughout her large corpus of writings and have been brought to light only in recent years. We turn next to examine citations commonly used without attempting to be exhaustive:

Exhibit 1

The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecies of the eleventh of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfillment. -*Review and Herald* November 24, 1904, p. 94.

Argument: Emphasis is put on the phrase, "final fulfillment." It is suggested that if a prophecy has a *final* fulfillment, it must have had previous fulfillments.

Answer: There is no hidden dual or multiple fulfillment principle here. Ellen White is simply noting that the *last portion* of this long prophecy is about to meet its fulfillment. *Daniel 11 is about to be completed.* That this is the true sense of the passage can be seen by comparing her restatement of the same point five years later in an article entitled, "The Last Crisis." It reads: "The world is stirred with the spirit of war. *The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment.*" - *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 14 (published 1909 [emphasis added]).

Exhibit 2

We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick succession. Every element of power is about to be set to work. *Past history will be repeated;* old controversies will arouse to new life, and peril will beset God's people on every side. Intensity is taking hold of the human family. It is permeating everything upon the earth.

Study Revelation in connection with Daniel, for history will be repeated. - *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 116 (emphasis added).

The prophecy in the eleventh [chapter] of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. *Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated.* - Letter 103, 1904 (MR 1077 [emphasis added]).

Argument: A repetition of the historical events which fulfilled a given prophecy indicates that the prophecy itself will have a dual fulfillment.

Answer: Ellen White uses the expression, "history will be repeated," a number of times. But history and prophecy are two different matters. It does not follow that a repetition of a historical experience also means a repetition of the same prophecy. Such a conclusion distorts her meaning.

Ellen White is counseling us to study the prophetic fulfillments of the past - to study the principles involved - because similar issues will rise again, and God's people will have to meet them. "Old controversies will arouse to new life." We prepare ourselves for such issues by understanding the challenges involved in those past events. *History* will, indeed, be repeated, but not the same, specific prophecy that has already met its fulfillment in the past.

For example, Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:7 are two prophecies that deal with the persecution of God's people during the 1260 years of papal dominance in Europe. We know that persecution against God's people will be repeated in the closing era of human history because another prophecy says it will (Rev 13:15-17). But this repetition of persecution (repeated history) does not involve the repetition of the prophecies of Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:7. Studying the lives of the faithful and the issues they met in their times - and how they met them - can strengthen us to meet persecution in our own times should we face it.

Exhibit 3

The light that Daniel received from God *was given especially for these last days*. The visions he saw by the banks of the Ulai and the Hiddekel, the great rivers of Shinar, are *now* in process of fulfillment, and all the events foretold will soon come to pass. - *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112-113 (emphasis added).

This statement is linked to the angel Gabriel's explanation to Daniel after he had seen the vision recorded in chapter 8: "Understand, O son of man: for at *the time of the end* shall be the vision" (Dan 8:17).

Argument: Ellen White died in the first part of this century. Like Gabriel she is evidently pointing us to a future event beyond her time.

Answer: In citing this paragraph by itself (lifting it out of the context of her writings and evident beliefs), we may make it appear that Ellen White is here supporting a dual fulfillment of Daniel 8. In the chapter Gabriel specifically mentions the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Grecia as the fulfillments of the symbolic ram and goat respectively (Dan 8:20-21). This is now past history. Yet Ellen White appears to say that the visions Daniel saw in chapter 8 "are now in process of fulfillment," and since Gabriel also said the fulfillment would take place in the "time of the end," it would seem that a current or dual fulfillment of Daniel 8 is to be expected. However, such a conclusion ignores the historical setting in which Ellen White wrote the above as well *as the particular aspect of the vision* to which she referred when she said it was "now in the process of fulfillment."

Ellen White, along with the Adventist Church in general, believed that the period of papal oppression, the 1260 years, extended from 538 B.C. to A.D. 1798. This prophetic period is mentioned in both Daniel and Revelation under three different time symbols: (1) three and one-half times-Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14; (2) 1260 days - Rev 11:3; 12:6; (3) 42 months - Rev 11:2; 13:5. Accordingly, *Ellen White and the pioneers believed that the period of time*

which extended from 1798 to the close of human probation was to be designated as "the time of the end" the period spoken of by the angel Gabriel. The preadvent (investigative) judgment would take place in this period and would be announced on earth by the first angel's message (Dan 7:9-10, 13-14; Rev 14:6-7). Note Ellen White's clear statements on this point:

Daniel stood in his lot to bear his testimony *which was sealed until the time of the end, when the first angel's message should be proclaimed to our world.*-*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 115 (emphasis added).

Since 1798 the book of Daniel has been unsealed, knowledge of the prophecies has increased, and many have proclaimed the solemn message of the judgment near. - *The Great Controversy*, p. 356.

The message of Revelation 14, proclaiming that the hour of God's judgment is come, is *given in the time of the end.* -*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 107 (emphasis added).

The prophetic visions of Daniel and John foretell a period of moral darkness and declension; *but at the time of the end, the time in which we are now living* the vision was to speak and not lie. - *Testimonies*, vol.5, pp. 9-10 (emphasis added).

In the light of the above remarks it is evident that when Ellen White said that the visions Daniel saw (chap. 8) "are now in process of fulfillment" *she was referring to the great preadvent investigative judgment (Dan 7-8) that was going on in heaven in her day, and which will continue until the close of human probation.* She was not disclosing a hidden principle to lead the church to discover a dual fulfillment for the ram, he-goat, four horns, and little horn. The *aspect* of the vision which Daniel saw by the banks of the Ulai that is still in the process of being fulfilled pertains to Christ's Most Holy Place ministry of judgment prior

to His reception of the eternal kingdom and His second coming. On earth the messages of the three angels (Rev 14:6-14) continue to announce to global populations the urgency of the times: "the hour of [God's] judgment is come" (Rev 14:7).

Exhibit 4

The Sabbath question will be the issue in the great conflict in which all the world will act a part. [Rev. 13:4-8, 10 quoted.] *This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place* [Rev. 13:11, 15-17 quoted]. -Ellen G White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.7, p. 979 (emphasis added).

Argument: This passage is cited as "the clincher" to prove that Ellen White endorsed a dual fulfillment of the prophecies, and, in this instance, a replay of the 1260 year prophecy as 1260 literal days.

The reader is asked to observe that Ellen White quotes Revelation 13:4-8, in this passage. The text portrays the papal power under the symbol of a leopard beast with seven heads and ten crowned horns. The passage also includes the time element of its supremacy before its wounding: 42 prophetic months or 1260 prophetic days. The reader's attention is then directed to the statement following the Scripture passage: "*This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place*" (emphasis added).

From this two-point sequence the following position is reasoned: The 1260 year career of the papacy is past. But *now* Ellen White tells us that this "entire chapter" - including the 42 month time element - will [future tense] surely take place. Here is a clear-cut proof for employing a dual fulfillment principle to interpret Daniel and Revelation in a manner to render them relevant to our times.

Answer: This Ellen White statement needs only to be read in its setting to see that it provides no basis for a dual fulfillment of Revelation 13:1-10 or its time period. If the

commentary volume is available, the reader is invited to follow along as we sketch the contents of this two-paragraph selection printed as a comment on Revelation 14.

The context of the alleged "clincher" begins in a preceding paragraph in which Ellen White first quotes Revelation 14:9-10, the third angel's warning against the mark of the beast and its image. She then makes her point: "It is for the interest of all to understand what the mark of the beast is, and how they may escape the dread threatenings of God. *Why are men not interested to know what constitutes the mark of the beast and his image?* [emphasis added]. it is in direct contrast with the mark of God" She then cites Exodus 31:12-17 which states that the Sabbath is God's "sign" or mark, thus implying that the "mark of the beast" is something that is just the opposite of the Sabbath. She continues:

"The *Sabbath question* will be the issue in the great conflict in which all the world will act a part" (emphasis added). At this point she cites Revelation 13:4-8, 10. This passage provides the information by which one can identify the beast: its origin/power derived from the dragon; its special rule for 42 prophetic months; its persecution of the saints in that time; its blasphemy against Heaven; its captivity; and the fact that the world will worship and follow its lead again. On the basis of this data one can determine that the beast is the papal power. This puts the reader in a position to identify the mark and image of the beast as she urged him to do in the first paragraph of her statement.

After citing Revelation 13:4-8,10 (providing the information for identifying the beast), Ellen White says, "This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place." She then immediately quotes (*by way of explanation*) Revelation 13:11, 15-17. These verses foretell the rise of the two-horn beast (vs. 11) and the institution of the image of the beast and the enforcement of the mark of the beast under penalty of boycott and death.

Thus, it is quite clear that when Ellen White says, "This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place," she is not saying that Revelation 13:4-8, 10 is going to have a dual fulfillment. To force such a meaning is to wrest the statement from its context.

Her topic is not a dual fulfillment of Revelation 13:1-10, or of its time period. Rather, her subject is "the mark of the beast" and its end-time enforcement. That is the thrust of both paragraphs of this selection. The only purpose for citing Revelation 13:4-8, 10 is so the reader may identify the beast. If he can identify the beast, he is in position to identify its mark which, she says, is just the opposite of God's sign. Thus with the beast and its mark in place, she points to the prophetic forecast dealing with the image of the beast and the enforcing of the mark and the crisis that will surround that issue in the future.

Exhibit 5

Statements pertaining to Christ's discourse in Matthew 24. The following items are usually noted: "When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration." - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628. "But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days." - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 631. "This prophecy will again be fulfilled" - *The Desire of Ages*, 633. "The prophecies that received a partial fulfillment in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a more direct application to the last days." - *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* pp. 120-121.

Argument: It is inferred from these statements that Christ's prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem will find a second fulfillment in the destruction of the world. Thus, it is claimed that, according to this exhibit, Ellen White really taught dual fulfillments of apocalyptic prophecy.

Answer: Here is the setting for the several citations from *The Desire of Ages* and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* regarding our Lord's Olivet discourse (Matt 24):

Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. *He mingled the description of these two events.* Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the

sight. In mercy to them *He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves.* When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond the event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history. - *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628 (emphasis added); see also p. 631.

It should be noted at the outset that Ellen White clearly understood that our Lord's discourse *dealt with two distinct events.* One event had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem, and one had to do with the Second Coming and the end of the world. He blended His description of the two because the two judgments had similarities. Because these two events are blended in the one discourse, the prophecy has value for us in the end-time of the world as well as for the disciples then. There is no principle of repeated fulfillments being enunciated here. Each event which our Lord discusses has its own one-time fulfillment in its own time slot - the fall of Jerusalem, and later at the end of the age, the fall of the world.

Thus we may say that both the contents of our Lord's course and the comments of Ellen White in *The Desire Ages and Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* indicate plainly that Matthew 24 is *not* a single prophecy with a dual fulfillment. *Rather, it is a twofold prophecy dealing with two distinct events (one event viewed as a symbol of the other, due to certain similarities), each event to be fulfilled at its respective time.* Consequently, neither Matthew 24 nor the Ellen White comments on it provide a sound basis from which to derive a principle of dual fulfillment for the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

Exhibit 6:

The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. - *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611-612.

Argument: The prophecy of the early rain (Pentecost) to have a dual fulfillment in the outpouring of the latter rain.

Answer: Ellen White comments on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are similar to her comments on Matthew 24. Immediately preceding the paragraph cited above, Ellen White quotes Hosea 6:3 and Joel 2:23. Both passages predict *two events*: a former and a latter rain, just as the natural rainy seasons occur in Israel from which the biblical imagery is taken. Thus, these prophecies which she cites met a fulfillment at Pentecost (early rain) and will naturally meet another fulfillment (latter rain) as the work of the gospel comes to its finale.

Summary: These six exhibits give a fair sampling of the kind of statements some Adventist Bible students are using in an endeavor to find Ellen White support for a dual fulfillment principle. Honesty and a sense of fairness should prevent us from wresting the writings of one who stands as a strong exponent of the historicist method to teach a contrary theory of dual or multiple fulfillments. As we have seen, when the alleged statements are fairly examined, we find there is no dual or multiple fulfillment principle present to be used as a tool to explain the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

Ellen White and Dual Fulfillment Proponents

In the 1890s a few Adventists were suggesting future fulfillments of the three angels' messages (Rev 14). Ellen White reproved such attempts and regarded their proponents as misled.

In our day as in Christ's day, there may be a misreading and misinterpreting of the Scriptures. . . .

There are those who are searching the Scriptures for proof that these messages are still in the future. They gather together the truthfulness of the messages, *but they fail to give them their proper place in prophetic history*. Therefore such are in danger of misleading the people in regard to locating the messages. They do not see and understand the time of the end, or when to locate the messages. -*Evangelism*, pp. 612-613 (emphasis added).

I have not been able to sleep since half past one o'clock. I was bearing to Brother T a message which the Lord has given me for him. *The peculiar views he holds are a mixture of truth and error. . . . The great waymarks of truth, showing us our bearings in prophetic history, are to be carefully guarded, lest they be torn down, and replaced with theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light. . . .*

There have been one and another who in studying their Bibles thought they discovered great light, and new theories, but these have not been correct. The Scripture is all true, but by misapplying the Scripture men arrive at wrong conclusions. . . . Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. *Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future*, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined.

From the light that the Lord has been pleased to give me, *you are in danger of doing the same work presenting before others truths which have had their place and done their specific work for the time, in the history of the faith of the people of God. You recognize these facts in Bible history as true, but apply them to the future*. They have their force still in their proper place, in the chain of events that have made us as a people what we are today, and as such, they are to be presented to those who are in the darkness of error."

The leadings of the Lord were marked [to our pioneers], and most wonderful were His revelations of what is truth. Point after point was established by the Lord God of heaven. That

which was truth *then* [author's emphasis], is truth today. But the voices do not cease to be heard - "This is truth. I have new light." But these new lights in prophetic lines are manifest in misapplying the Word and setting the people of God adrift without an anchor to hold them. - *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 101-104 (emphasis supplied).

Conclusions

In this survey on Ellen White and the interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation three points and out:

1. Ellen White clearly endorses the historicist method for interpreting the prophecies of these two important books.

2. The Ellen White writings contain no dual fulfillment principle hidden in random paragraphs to support the current practice of reapplying certain prophecies in Daniel and Revelation to the present scene.

3. Ellen White disavows attempts to give such prophecies a dual fulfillment. "Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined." -*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 102.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize that we are living in "the time of the end," the closing era of human probation. In harmony with the historicist method, we, along with Ellen White, have traced the unrolling of the prophetic scrolls of Daniel and Revelation. The prophecies which have been fulfilled in the past give us a firm confidence that God will fulfill the few remaining portions. These focus primarily on the final conflict between Heaven and the powers of darkness over the seal of God and the mark of the beast. What mistaken zeal would constrain us now to alter our method of prophetic interpretation? What is the nature of the impulse which prompts some among us to speculate how certain prophecies must be replayed again with fulfillments that are considered more important than the "first" fulfillment to which such persons continue paying lip service? We believe such speculation, if followed, will

ultimately leave "the people of God adrift without an anchor to hold them." -*Selected Messages*, book 2, p.104.

In the light of this survey we may be sure that if Ellen White were alive today, she would deplore the strained interpretations being urged upon the church as a result of employing the dual fulfillment concept. Furthermore, we may be sure she would request that her writings not be used to support such an error. And we may be sure that she would add: If you want to know what the Lord has revealed to me regarding Bible prophecy, don't try to deduct a hidden principle from a paragraph here and a line there. Rather, read my volume, *The Great Controversy*, where the major lines of Daniel and Revelation are treated. Here is the prophetic truth for our times.