



To the Trusting Ones...

Was God punishing us?" Ellen asked this question because of the difficulty her family was having. "Did He inflict little Edson because I was holding him as an idol?"

For weeks now, disaster after disaster buffeted the White family. First, one-year-old Edson nearly died. Later, Ellen suffered from severe depression and despair that lasted for days. She thought God had left them.

After that, James got cholera. Then back to little Edson—he was sick again. This time his ailment was more like some sort of supernatural activity. He'd scream and fight the air with his fists.

"This must be Satan's work," James exclaimed. He prayed earnestly; and immediately little Edson quieted. James got cholera again.

For each disaster prayer was their best recourse. In fact, prayer proved to be the only effective remedy. Sometimes they prayed. Other times they anointed and prayed. Occasionally, results happened only when others prayed with them.

But why all this suffering and trouble? Why were they buffeted so?

The Whites were working diligently to publish a paper. This publishing effort began in June 1850 after Ellen said, "James, the Lord has shown me you must reprint the testimonies published by the leading Millerite Adventists in 1844."

"But many of them have given up their belief since the disappointment."

"That's just it." Ellen continued, "the republishing of their writings should make them ashamed for denying their faith. If the alarm had not been given by William Miller, no one would have awakened to see the true light."

"I see what you mean." agreed James. "We must continue to recognize that the *Millerite Movement* was directed by God!" After thinking for a few moments, he added: "Let's call the paper *The Advent Review*."

—Was God Punishing Us?

This was the paper the Whites were printing—and trying to continue to print—when the trials of sickness and discouragement pressed them down.

One day, while in vision, Ellen asked her angel about the troubles. “Was God punishing us? Did He inflict little Edson because I was holding him as an idol?”

“No Ellen. Satan did this. He wanted to sadden your hearts, and cause unbelievers to say, ‘where is their God?’ The purpose was to stop you and your husband from doing God’s work of publishing the papers.”

“Then we’re to continue publishing?” she asked.

“Yes. The paper will rejoice the hearts of the trusting ones, and will help build up God’s people in the faith.”

The Trusting Ones, what a nice name for a scattered flock; discouraged, disappointed and struggling—yet determined to remain faithful to God.

The Advent Review was not James’ first paper. He printed about a year before. In the first issue of *The Present Truth*, released in July 1849, James began with these words: “I hope this little sheet will afford you some comfort and strength. Love and duty have compelled me to send it out to you. I know you must be rooted and built up in the present truth, or you’ll not be able to stand in the day of the battle of the Lord.”

God directed both papers. Both papers were needed to help those who were disappointed in 1844.

—Preaching the Advent Near

Had you lived in the United States in the early 1840s you’d have heard the startling news the world was soon to come to a fiery end.

“From the rostrum and through the printed page the awesome announcement was made that the personal second coming of Christ would take place ‘about the year 1843.’ A well-defined religious movement was created through this preaching of the ‘advent near,’ as the distinctive teaching was described.

“The movement was launched by William Miller, whose name became a household term in most of America. Those who believed his views were soon known as Millerites.”¹

James White was a Millerite preacher. Feeling called to spread the news of Christ’s soon return, he left his usual work as a schoolteacher to conduct preaching services. He was soon credited with over 1000 conversions.

Like so many other Millerites, he eventually fixed his hopes on a date in 1844. That year, the date of the Jewish *Day of Atonement* fell on October 22; and that night, many excited and expectant believers stayed up late. They waited until the clocks tolled midnight.

Nothing seemed to happen. Profoundly disappointed, they had to face that something was wrong. They were devastated. The great day had passed, and Jesus had not come!

“In the days following... a tidal wave of negative emotion threatened to engulf and destroy the advent believers. Humiliation, confusion, doubt, disappointment—how could faith survive in such a maelstrom? With many of course, it did not.

“Yet there were hundreds who determined to retain ‘the blessed hope.’”²

For the faithful few the next several months and years proved to answer the bigger questions concerning the reason for their great disappointment—and the real meaning of the prophecy that came due on that date. But the faithful few still needed comfort and strength. *The trusting*

¹ Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*. p. 17. (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944).

² R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Page 53. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), Prepared by the Department of Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

ones needed something to gladden their hearts. They needed something to build them up in the faith. To this context, James White directed his papers.

The Millerite Movement was a powerful manifestation of God's Spirit. The Lord began to prepare a time-of-the-end people for His final work on earth. A fantastic development of Bible truth followed—a testing message, a warning message, and a denominated herald of righteousness. All this was designed to prepare the inhabitants of this planet for the most terrible confrontation the universe will ever witness.

The forces for good and the forces for evil will eventually face off in full battle regalia. Time and providence will fully develop the issues on both sides. Two earthly armies will personify the characteristics of their respective leader. The battle will be on earth; and the battle will be for earth: and then Christ will come.

Throughout the formative years of the doctrinal, institutional, and organizational platform of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we have ever thought that the time was near at hand. Although the understanding of the final battle has become clearer over time, we've always believed that the final movements are underway—that time is most spent.

—A Movement Grown Cold

From today's perspective, hindsight about our historical urgency becomes increasingly difficult to square. Earth is one hundred and fifty-plus years older now; and again it seems that we have to face that something has gone wrong. New generations have come, and they too are passing away. Still, Christ has not come.

The Lord led the early Adventists to believe that He was preparing their generation to make that great final stand. But they are now gone; and their precious preparation for that stand now rests with them in the grave.

We are *several* generations later. Our people are showing the fading clarity that comes from a movement grown cold; and with the passing of time, the world-context has changed beyond recognition.

Seventh-day Adventists are strangely caught up in both the then and the now. While we appreciate aspects of our Millerite roots, we also embrace many aspects of this contemporary world we now live in. It's easy to understand why. We Adventists—along with our denominated church—have found a respectable place here.

We are proud of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs for good reason. We should be enthusiastic about our unique devotion to the Bible Standard. Our doctrinal platform is solid!

The strength and quality of our institutions marvel the world. Our hospitals and the caliber of our medical personnel are very impressive indeed. Our medical institution appears strong and healthy!³

Our schools lead the way among educational rivals. Adventist education scores an A+ when compared to every other venue!⁴

ADRA, God's Closet, and our many Community Services Centers, our focused mission work, Adventist Media—all these services and programs conducted around the globe are also all at the top of the class in each of their respective fields.

³ See Journey Films, *The ADVENTISTS 2*, a public television film about Seventh-day Adventist health work around the world. In the trailer: "Adventist also believe the body is the temple of God, something sacred to be care for. That has prompted them to build pioneering hospitals, to perform breakthrough medical procedures, and to promote a healthy lifestyle that has made them some of the longest living people on the planet, with Adventist living seven, up to ten years longer than others." The Adventist medical organization is the largest Protestant integrated network of hospitals and clinics worldwide—<http://press.adventist.org/en/>. Accessed 9-26-2018.

⁴ See Elissa Kido, *For Real Education Reform, Take a Cue from the Adventists*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 15, 2010. An outsider discusses how Adventist schools outperform their peers. Also See Journey Films, *The ADVENTIST*, a public television film that profiles the second largest private education system in the world.

We, as a church, function amazingly well in this modern setting. We are up to date. We're relevant; and according to a 2011, *USA Today* article,⁵ we're the fastest growing denomination in North America. The Lord has blessed, and it shows.

But not all of us embrace this new world equally well. With some there is a gnawing—an unsettledness—that goes along with the direction the world is going... and with the way we are going with it. This restlessness stems from our deep roots; from the various movements of yesteryear.

—Nervous Agitation

Those yesteryear movements were rooted in the notion that we were situated at time's end: an investigative judgment, a close of probation, a time of trouble, and then *Parousia*.⁶ So there is, deep within some Adventists, a kind of DNA subsystem that keep all the cells agitated and alert to the dangers of being swept down the stream of time. Our genetic matter somehow knows that passing time drags us farther away from 1844 urgency; and in the murky waters—now so distant from the source—we too are losing ground and failing to hold the fort. This adds to our sense of nervous agitation.

The organic basis of this subsystem is our history; and integral to our historical root-system is Bible prophecy. Adventism goes far beyond a string of righteous doctrines, or a collection of impressive institutions. It's more than an assembly of fine people doing great things to improve the lives of others around them. We are a historic movement based on Bible prophecy! Our past squares with the ancient scrolls; and the seer's pen has traced our future in advance.

So why then do we feel that dull, ever-present anxiety? Why do we sometimes panic? It is because as we are watching the world charge toward Armageddon; we are seeing the church slip away from her historic identity, throw off her prophetic expectations, and become too wise for yesterday's counsels. When the world needs us the most, we are forgetting who we are.

We do a great job teaching our doctrinal system. We are marvelously evangelism minded. We support our institutions and mission fields. Most of our churches seem strong. But somehow, we do not pass along the defining sense of our Spirit-led past, and the guiding thrust of our prophetic future. Without these, we risk becoming a machine with no soul.

Ellen White emphasized the importance of our staying in touch with the movements of our past. "We have nothing to fear for the future," she warns, "except as we forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching, in our past history."⁷

Even as you read these pages, evidence is mounting that this old earth is in the pangs of its final moves toward Armageddon. Multitudes think it plausible that our generation, really could be the last. Has the time come to reignite the old fires? Do we need to bring the old boilers back to full steam? Are we ready to crack open the old pages of our history; and blow the dust off the faded covers of those old-fashioned red books? Let's open the sacred pages of God's precious Word, and vigorously search for light and timely instruction. This world hasn't much time left. Surely God hasn't forsaken His plan or His faithful; but the big question is, have we? What if the trumpet never gives its certain sound—only because we refuse to press it to our lips?

⁵ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, *Adventists' back-to-basics faith is fastest growing U.S. church*, updated 3/17/2011, (http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-18-Adventists_17_ST_N.htm), Accessed 3/19/2019.

⁶ *Parousia* is a Greek word meaning "presence after absence," applied in the New Testament to the Second Coming of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,8; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 John 2:28.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*. Page 196.

—History is About to Repeat

The big movements of yesteryear were like test flights. They were the trial runs of past generations trying to get off this planet and head for the better world. The stakes have always been high, but never more urgent than now. With chart and compass in hand let us aim our craft toward that small, white cloud in yonder sky! History is about to repeat itself. The midnight cry is soon to sound again.

It is to these ends I dedicate this book. Here are the goals:

- We will glean nuggets from the story of our history that clarify the nature of our mission and the prominent issues of our time.
- Jesus told His disciples He would teach them to be fishers of men. We will learn the essential characteristics of fishing His way.
- The Sabbath is intrinsically linked to the Three Angels' Messages. Its significance embraces not only worship. We will discover the Sabbath is a protocol for service, and will be a three-dimensional test.
- It is easy to paint the picture of who God is using only our favorite colors. We will see that a vital part of our work involves clearing up the mistaken identities that most of us assign to Jesus Christ.
- Prophecy tells us that a terrible storm is coming upon the church, the United States, and then the entire world. We will see how this fits into our mission and our message.
- The final presentation of truth on this decaying planet will fully polarize the last generation of people into two competing ideologies. We will probe the fundamental principles at play in this critical development.
- Our personal involvement in proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages is important to those who hear us. We will also see how it is also vital to preparing our own souls for the final battle—and for the close of probation.
- We will propose a tactically spot-on approach to achieving our mission in contemporary times.

To *the trusting ones*... whoever you are, this book is for you! If you are disappointed that the Lord hasn't yet come, or discouraged because the church is less than it ought to be—this book is for you. If your DNA is in a state of nervous agitation because of how and where the world (and church) is heading, or you know little about Adventism's prophetic heritage and mission—this book is for you. Maybe you once knew more than you can now remember. If you would like a reminder, this book is for you.

I pray it will rejoice your hearts and build you up in the faith. I am no James White, but I too, can sincerely say I hope this book will afford you comfort and strength. Love and duty have compelled me to write it for you. I know you must be rooted and built up in the present truth, or you'll not be able to stand in the day of the battle of the Lord.

—Bill Holt, author