

CRISIS IN FREEDOM

by Dale Ratzlaff

September 12, 1981, Watsonville, California

(Note: I have placed this on the web because I think it is still very relevant for those who are seeking answers to the truthfulness of the Seventh-day Adventist church. You can tell that even though I knew E.G. White was wrong on some things, I had not yet, at that time, considered her to be a false and deceptive prophet as I now do.)

This afternoon I would like to address myself to two separate and distinct areas: (1) the crisis in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole, and (2) the events surrounding my suspension here in Watsonville. Please note that in the first section I do not have the events of this church in mind, nor am I referring to any actions which the Central California Conference has taken, but I am addressing myself to the church at large.

This may be my last opportunity to speak to this congregation and I do not want my ministry to end before I have an opportunity to make a contribution to the church which I love and have given my life to serve.

The Seventh-day Adventist church is facing the biggest crisis in its history. I believe that schism is not only a real possibility, I believe we are seeing the polarization which will, if things continue as they seem to be going, split this church wide open. I have given much thought to this crisis and I believe that there is a solution to the problem. This solution will not be an easy one to implement, it may cause some pain and trauma but from my perspective I see no other way. I do not set this forth in a dogmatic way: I realize that many other minds may have even better answers, nevertheless, here is what I would propose would solve the current problems in Adventism:

1. Place Scripture back in its rightful position as the ultimate authority.
2. Foster a spirit of openness and free dialogue on any doctrine. "Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength." Counsels to Writers and Editors, Ellen G. White, p. 44. "No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." Ibid. 35.
3. Allow freedom of choice to follow personal conviction regarding doctrines which are not clearly delineated in Scripture.
4. Manifest a spirit of love to those who may choose to disagree with our own conclusions. Unless a spirit of love is demonstrated to those who may disagree with us, we are not in God's true church for Scripture clearly states: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35, NAS.

If there was ever a time in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church when it needed its theologians, it is now. Yet unless the above four proposals are implemented the theologian's of this church are emasculated, for the very nature of their task requires open dialogue and the evaluation of each other's conclusions. Unless there is an agreement as to what is the ultimate authority, no conclusions can ever be reached. Further, if these same proposals are not fostered

among the laity, the conclusions of the theologians will never be accepted by them and there will always be estrangement and suspicion between these two groups with the administrators caught in the middle making decisions from political pressure, rather than from truth.

It must be clearly seen that the real issue in our church is not the theologians, or pastors, or laymen who are asking the questions, rather the central issues of authority and freedom. The real issue, one which has consequences of far greater magnitude than 1844, etc., is the way in which these questions are being handled. The Seventh-day Adventist church claims to be God's remnant people with the unique task of vindicating the character of God, not only to the world, but to the universe! If I read Scripture right, I see God's character as one of openness, honesty, freedom of choice, and above all—love. However, when I look at the way the church is reacting to the questions that are being raised,—and here I am going to speak frankly—I see another spirit: one of cover-up, half truths, character assassination, and force, with decisions based upon political pressure rather than truth. If this trend continues, I fear for the future of our church. It appears to me that this church is marching down the road to Roman power with steady cadence.

If the administrators of this church really believe the “Dallas Statement”—the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church, then they themselves ought to be required by the laity to abide by these statements and recognize that the chief authority does not reside in the hierarchy of this church, but in the Bible. Note clearly what the “Dallas Statement” says about authority:

The Preamble states: “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed...”

Point 1 reads in part: “The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will, they are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines....”

Point 2 states that even the Holy Spirit works “in harmony with the Scriptures.”

Point 11 reads: “The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word,” (emphasis supplied). Note that even the church is to be in subjection to the Scriptures.

Point 17, dealing with the writings of Ellen White, reads in part... “Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience **MUST** be tested.”

The administrators are requiring the pastors of this church to abide by the “Dallas Statement.” Who, but you, the laymen, will require the administrators to abide by the same test? This is your task.

Now I would like to deal with the events surrounding my suspension. No decision of this nature is made without some reason. It was not easy for me to accept suspension rather than promise to teach all the “Dallas Statement.”

I first realized that there were problems with our traditional understanding of the 1844 doctrine when I was a freshman in college. Elder Lowe, then chairman of the Problems in Daniel Committee, came to Pacific Union College and gave a talk to the religion faculty. The theology and religion majors were invited to hear his presentation. I remember him stating that he had, with a Hebrew scholar, read every important Hebrew manuscript seeking to find support for the rendering of “cleansed” in Daniel 8:14. He told us that there was none. In my junior year at PUC one of the religion teachers made the statement that the investigative judgment could not be

supported from Scripture. Another religion teacher said it could be and gave a presentation to “prove” it. However, his presentation was weak, full of unwarranted assumptions, and inconclusive. Later I went to this teacher to ask him some questions regarding the 1844 doctrine. His answer was a searching stare and then he said, “Dale, aren’t you a theology major, you should not be asking such questions.” I did not ask any more questions—at least from him.

While in attendance at the Seminary I took a class called “Atonement.” I was happy to see that in the course outline a section was given to 1844. However, as the year progressed, no answers were forthcoming. There was not time to really investigate this subject. On several occasions I asked different professors questions relative to some of the problems with 1844, and some admitted frankly that as far as Scripture was concerned, this doctrine had no support. Some even were surprised that I was still trying to find support for it. They had obviously concluded long ago it was a futile attempt.

In 1973, I was selected for ordination to the gospel ministry. I went before the Ordination Committee in San Jose and was asked all kinds of questions on many topics. Several questions were asked regarding the sanctuary. I remember very well of asking a question of the committee. I said something like this, “I do have some questions regarding the interpretation of Daniel 8, and if there is anybody in this room who could answer them for me, I would appreciate it. If you could tell me what was trodden down in 457 BC which was untrodden in 1844, I would like to know what it was?” No answers were given and the questions immediately moved to other topics.

In 1979, I heard a tape of the now famous, or infamous, forum at PUC, which was given October 27, of that year. After listening to that tape I came to the conclusion that I would have to study this whole thing out for myself. At that time I embarked upon as thorough a study of the 1844 doctrine as time would allow.

A little over a year ago at campmeeting time, I received a copy of the Glacier View Manuscript which had been duplicated and released by a church administrator. For the next six months or so, I worked my way through this as I found time. As I studied this manuscript, the Bible, the “Review”, the “Ministry”, and other materials, and listened to tapes, I found that there were more problems with the 1844 doctrine than I had known. I also found that there was good evidence that the church had known of these problems for at least twenty years.

Shortly after the Glacier View decision I began receiving materials from many different sources. I have tried to study both sides of the question. The theologians were seeking desperately, I believe, to have an open dialogue on these topics so that some solutions might be forthcoming. However, it was evident that to speak out on this topic or make suggestions in good faith, was seen as divisive and attacking the traditional teaching of the church. At this point many good, sincere, and dedicated Seventh-day Adventists went underground, continuing to study and search for truth. Again, let me stress that unless the questions are made plain, how can one find the right answers?

It was at this time that I began to share some of these materials with people who were asking me questions. Here I made some mistakes, and I admit it. However, I will say that those who were mature enough to handle some of these problems were able to work through them and it is my firm conviction that these people are so well grounded upon the Rock of their salvation that come what may. Including Walter Rea’s book, The White Lie, they will not be moved an inch in their religious experience. Others got wind that I had shared materials on the current issues with certain members of the Watsonville church and began to circulate rumors that I was fostering off-shoot materials, when in reality, I was only sharing materials from dedicated Christians who were also seeking answers to the perplexing problems facing our church.

I then received a copy of Elder Fred Veltman's report to the General Conference. In this report he gave summaries of what four SDA theologians felt about the pending consequences of Walter Rea's book, The White Lie, which is soon to come out. The consensus of these four men was that this book would be devastating to the church, especially to those who held rigid views of inspiration for Ellen White. Having looked at some of Rea's materials myself, I felt it my pastoral duty under God to begin to prepare my congregation for this "devastating material." My plan was to attempt to broaden the concept of inspiration to allow for some of the problems that I knew were there. I did this on May 23, 1981, in a sermon entitled, "Up-date on E. G. White." (Tapes of this sermon are available upon request.)

For the most part the sermon was well received. More people gave positive comments on that sermon than on any other I have given in Watsonville. However, there were a few who, for one reason or another, had not really understood what I was trying to communicate. They felt I was attacking the Spirit of Prophecy.

Several weeks later Mrs. Ratzlaff and I went for a three week vacation. When we came back we found numerous rumors running rampant. It was charged that we had embezzled and misappropriated church funds. A church audit had already been requested. It was all false rumor, as the audit showed. While I was gone a sermon was given based on Lewis Walton's book, Omega. Also, one Sabbath afternoon tapes of a lecture by Lewis Walton were played for a group of people at the church. This added fuel to the rumor mill. Some felt I had attacked Ellen White in my sermon. Some knew that I had shared some materials relating to the 1844 question. All knew that I believed strongly in the gospel of God's grace. All knew that I believed and taught that one must always trust in the perfect righteousness of Christ, outside of our own lives, and never to trust to the righteousness that is worked out in our lives by the Holy Spirit. Putting these together, apparently concluding that the thesis of the book Omega was correct, a few people began to look with great suspicion at me, apparently supposing that perhaps I was teaching the omega of heresy.

This book, Omega, was promoted strongly at campmeeting. It was urged from the pulpit by officers of the Pacific Union Conference that if one had only enough money to buy one book, it should be Omega, for it had the answers to the current crisis. Many people purchased it. It was advertised in the denominational papers. It has an introduction by Kenneth Wood, Editor of the Review. Therefore, it appears to have been received as having the denominational blessing. However, many scholars know that the thesis of the book is untenable, and it was written, not in objective fashion, but to promote one point of view.

At campmeeting I was called in to talk with the executive officers of the Conference to answer the many rumors that were circulating, most of which were untrue or twisted completely out of context. During campmeeting I told Elder Cook that I could minister within the "Dallas Statement." I also said that I would stay off controversial subjects. He advised me that I should, indeed, stay off these subjects. I feel that I have kept this commitment. I have not preached or taught anything contrary to the "Dallas Statement" in any public meeting of the church or in any official Bible study of the church. I have continued to be honest with my convictions when people come to me personally asking questions regarding some of these issues.

After campmeeting some of the members of my church got wind that I had almost been fired. They started a statement of support with signatures of people who thought my ministry to be positive. This was done without my knowledge or support. That night at church board meeting I requested that they not share this with the Conference president as I had heard that conference presidents do not like petitions.

As more people apparently bought into the thesis of the book Omega, some refused to shake my

hand, some refused to let me call at their homes, some spread around that if people would as much as study with me they would be deceived.

Wednesday, September 2, 1981, Elder Cook called me and said that a group of 30 people had signed a petition demanding my immediate removal because of my off-shoot teachings. He also stated to me that some in this group were diverting their tithe away from the Conference until I was removed, and that at least one had withdrawn a trust from the Conference until I was removed. He assured me that he would not bow to this kind of pressure and wanted to know what I could do to “win them back.” I told him that we had an elder’s meeting that night and I would seek the counsel of the elders in solving this problem.

Thursday, Elder Cook called me and stated that he had received word from the Pacific Union Conference President, Elder Walt Blehm, that he must “take care of this situation.” As I had another appointment in San Jose the next day, we agreed to meet on Friday, September 4.

Elder Cook told me that the only way he saw for me to solve this situation was to admit that I had been teaching error and promise to teach the full “Dallas Statement,” which, he said, “I don’t think you can conscientiously do.” He said he did not think I would ever be happy working within the framework of the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist church. I assured him that I was indeed happy to work within this framework as long as I did not have to preach or teach the traditional 1844 doctrine. At this point he said that unless I agreed to teach the whole “Dallas Statement” including 1844, I would not be allowed to continue in church employment. I refused to resign, however, because I felt that I was not leaving the Adventist church, but it was leaving me. I had given the best of my life to its ministry, and was a fourth generation Seventh-day Adventist and I was not about to resign. At this point I was suspended. After I was suspended by Elder Cook, he told me, “Dale, your main fault is that you are too honest.”

I love the SDA church and feel deeply concerned over the way it is handling these issues. The church leaders and scholars have known for over twenty years that the traditional 1844 doctrine is fraught with problems. In order to come up with the traditional understanding of this doctrine, one must take Daniel 8:14 out of context, make over twenty assumptions and then the conclusion disagrees with Hebrews. Not only is 1844 exegetically untenable, historically it is just as bad. It was first predicted that Christ would come in 1843, and Ellen White stated that God was in the proclamation of this date. *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. I, p. 133.

This message failed and then they set October 22, 1844 as the date Christ would return to earth. He did not. To explain the disappointment they taught that the door of mercy had shut for those who had rejected the October 22, 1844 “truth.” Soon most of the Advent band gave up the idea that probation was in the past and thought its close yet future. However, Ellen White had a vision that confirmed to them that the door of mercy was indeed shut. She wrote, “Most of them received the vision and were settled upon the shut door.” (Bates letter.) However as time passed, it became evident that the door of mercy was not shut and they redefined their terms and included an open door of mercy. It was at this time, approximately 1850, that they began to teach that the investigative judgment started in 1844. Now many of our best scholars say that this doctrine is built on shifting sand.

History tells us that the church has dealt with this problem in only one way—cover up the evidence of the problems and fire anyone who brings them out in the open. It is time our church begins to face reality and recognize that there is indeed a problem surrounding the 1844 doctrine and quit wasting time and money dealing with the people who ask the questions, and either give some answers or quit forcing pastors and teachers to teach and preach what most of them know cannot be supported from Scripture.

It is my sincere prayer that my ministry and specifically this presentation will in some way

contribute to helping this church I love come to grips with the real problems. It is time that the church gives a little freedom and room for the many pastors and teachers who are aware of these problems who are now working under a cloud of fear, looking for other employment, or starting congregational churches. I know that many pastors and teachers are in this state of affairs, for I have had dozens of phone calls this last week pleading for me to bring the issues out in the open so somehow a little freedom will come back into the church. I know that there are conference presidents who have admitted in private that they do not believe in the investigative judgment, but who have fired pastors who believed the same thing because they brought it out in the open. I had a conference officer tell me that I should consider my pastorate merely as employment. My chief loyalty was to the denomination. I know of two pastors who have said in private that they will lie before speaking their convictions for fear of being fired. I know of a pastor who was asked by a conference officer if he believed in 1844. His answer was, "Why, sure I believe in 1844, don't you?" Then he told me, I believe in 1981 too! If the present "hard line" continues our church will be left with only two kinds of pastors—the uninformed and the dishonest. I believe that the administrators of this church are going to have to face the facts that their "hard line" position is a major factor in the developing schism within the church.

Well I know that after saying this my ministry in the SDA church is undoubtedly over, for I have done the unforgivable thing in bringing the problem out in the open. But may I appeal to you to bring your influence to bear upon the administrators of this church so that my stand for truth may not be in vain. You, the laymen of the church, must remember the biblical model which clearly shows that the leaders, or administrators are to be the servants of the laymen, not their masters. It must be made clear that the Bible places the determination of truth at the congregational level. We must never forget those in Berea who were counted as "more noble" because THEY TESTED the teachings of the apostle Paul BY THE SCRIPTURES. It is the congregation who must sit in judgment upon its teachers, otherwise, how could we fulfill the admonition of our Lord, beware of false teachers. Again, may I appeal to all who will hear or read this, that you bring your influence to bear upon your servants, the administrators of the church to:

1. Place Scripture back in its rightful place as the ultimate authority.
2. Foster a spirit of openness and free dialogue on any doctrine, remembering that "no true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." CWE p. 44
3. Allow freedom of choice to follow personal conviction regarding doctrines which are not clearly delineated in Scripture.
4. Manifest a spirit of love to those who, in seeking to follow their own convictions, may reach differing conclusions.

If these four actions are implemented in the spirit of the gospel of love much good will come. Let me make it clear that I am not attacking individuals, only trends and policies, however, someone must bear the responsibility.

Let me say that I freely forgive those who felt it their responsibility to suspend me. Also, I confess that I have made my share of mistakes and I ask your forgiveness. It is my sincere prayer that each of us will rededicate ourselves to the Lord, surrendering are all to Him and be willing to follow His will into all truth.

"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall." *Education*, p. 57, Ellen White. I intend by God's grace to be that

man, will you?

It is not safe for a man to go against his conscience. Here I stand, may God help me!

“Laws and rules are being made at the centers of the work that will soon be broken into atoms. Men are not to dictate...The soul is accountable to God alone...None are to exercise their human authority to bind the minds and souls of their fellow-men. They are not to devise and put in practice methods and plans to bring every individual under their jurisdiction.

“Those who know the truth are to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and not themselves to try to work the Spirit. If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow-laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus. If men would act toward their fellow-men as to those whom Christ loves, if they would obey the commandment to ‘love thy neighbor as thyself,’ there would be sweet harmony among the brethren. How much better it would be if those who claim to be Christians would behave like Christians. How much better it would be if all would cease speaking of their own good works and ways, indulging their self-esteem; refrain from the putting forth of the finger, imagining evil, and using their influence to weaken, oppress, and destroy. If men will not come to the terms made by the leading workers they will not entertain them, they will rule or ruin. God has not appointed any man to do such work.” E. G. White, Review & Herald, July 23, 1895

I want to go on record before this congregation that I am in full harmony with this stand for religious freedom within a church that fights for religious liberty outside the church.

—Carolyn Ratzlaff

TRADITIONAL PROPHETIC DATING

AND THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGEMENT

(Summaries taken from Dr. Desmond Ford’s Glacier View Manuscript)

The great saving truths of the Christian faith never depend upon inferential reasoning from a single text. That God is our Creator, that Christ died for our sins that we might be forgiven, that salvation is through faith, that faith always bears fruit in obedience, that Christ will return to earth, that now He intercedes for us on high—all such truths rest on substantial immovable foundations of Holy Writ. Should certain texts on any of these topics be ambiguous, it matters not, for there are plenty of others which are not ambiguous. Pillars of the faith are firmly established, they do not rest on fluid, uncertain, equivocal interpretations.

When, however, we come to our traditional sanctuary interpretation of 1844 and the investigative judgement, such is by no means the case. It is dependent, not upon plain didactic statements from Scripture, but upon a prolonged series of assumptions and inferences—most of which are highly debatable. We set forth dogmatic conclusions where honesty should compel us to confess that the evidence is either ambiguous or contrary to our claims.

For example, consider our perilous dependence upon the following assumptions, many of which are interlocking in such a way that if one falls, so do the others.

1. That Dan. 8:4 speaks of 2300 days (While Dan. 12 repeatedly uses the Hebrews word for days, it is not to be found in 8:14. Instead we have the ambiguous “evening-morning” which most apply to the evening and morning burnt offerings. Thus instead of 2300 days, if these exegetes are correct, only 1150 days are in view.)
2. That these 2300 “days” equal 2300 years. (Though it is quite impossible to prove that the year-day principle is a Biblical datum, and even if we could, days are not mentioned in either 8:14 or 9:24, so there is no basis to apply the principle in these instances.)
3. That these 2300 years begin centuries before the “little horn” began his attack on the sanctuary. (Though in the context, the 2300 has been understood by many as applying to the length of time the little horn is trampling the sanctuary underfoot and suspending its daily offerings.)
4. That the 2300 years begin at the same time as the seventy weeks. (Though there is no scripture to say so. The Hebrew *chathak* means “cut” or “decree”, and there is no way of proving that the cutting off of the 490 from 2300 is intended.)
5. That it is possible to be certain of the exact year that the seventy weeks begin. (Though exegetes have been agreed on this point. Is the decree like that of 9:23, a heavenly one from God, or one from an earthly king?)
6. That the decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Ezra 7 has to do with the restoring and building of Jerusalem? (Though there is nothing in Ezra 7 that says this. The context says that this decree, like those of Cyrus and Darius, had to do with the temple. The magistrates were to enforce the temple laws. See Ezra 6:14 which places this decree among the temple decrees.)
7. That the decree of Ezra 7 “went forth” in 457 BC when Ezra had arrived in Jerusalem and set to work. (Though Ezra never says this, and the decree had been announced at least six months earlier. There is nothing in Daniel to say that this decree should be dated from the time of its implementation rather than its enunciation.)
8. That we can show 408 to be the time when the restoration of the city was completed. (Admitted even by Adventist scholars to be an impossible task.)
9. That we can show that AD 27 was the date of Christ’s baptism. (A similarly difficult feat.)
10. That AD 31 was the date of the crucifixion. (Almost all scholars hold to other years, not this one. Evidence from Grace Amadon’s research, often used by SDA’s, is based on doubtful assumptions, as admitted by our own commentary.)
11. That AD 34 was the date of the gospel going to the Gentiles (Though there is no way of proving that AD 34 was the time of the stoning of Stephen, and Acts 13:46 presents the turning to the Gentiles at a much later date.)
12. That the 2300 days end with the beginning of the antitypical Day of Atonement. (Though the Day of Atonement revolved around the sacrifice for sin, an event we believe took place about eighteen centuries earlier. The divesting of his glorious robes by the high priest prefigured the incarnation of Christ which did not take place in 1844. The book of

Hebrews clearly applies the Day of Atonement in antitype to Christ's priestly offering of Himself on Calvary, though the Christian era is included as we wait for our High Priest to come out.)

13. That until this date was reached, Christ was doing that work prefigured by the first apartment outside the veil. (Though Hebrews tells us that the work of that apartment symbolized the ineffectual offerings of the Levitical era when men had restricted access to God, and experienced outward ceremonial cleansing rather than perfection of the conscience.)
14. That the work symbolized by the second apartment of the Sanctuary was not to begin till over 1800 years after the cross. (Though Heb. 9:8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19, 20; 6:19, 20 says Christ entered "within the veil" at His ascension.) The sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat took place immediately after its shedding.
15. That the sanctuary of Dan 8:14 means the sanctuary in heaven. (Though the context is about the sanctuary on earth.)
16. That "cleansed" is an accurate translation of Dan. 8:14. (Though this is certainly not the case.)
17. That the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement was cleansed from defilement occasioned by the confession of sin and ministration of blood. (Though Nu 19:13, etc., indicate that the sanctuary was defiled when a person sinned, regardless of whether confession was made. In most cases, blood never went into the sanctuary.)
18. That the cleansing of the sanctuary in 8:14 has to do with the sins of the professed believers in Christ. (Though the context has to do with a defilement accomplished by Antichrist, not the host of God's people who are suffering, not sinning, in the context.)
19. That this cleansing of 8:14 is also found in Dan 7 in its judgement scene, and that the latter also has to do with investigation of the sins of the saints. (Though again in Dan 7 as in 8, it is a wicked power which is the focus of the judgement.)
20. That Rev. 14:7 has to do with the same investigative judgement of the sins of the saints. (Though John never uses the word *krisis* other than in a negative sense—for unbelievers, and though the very next verse tells us that it is Babylon which endures the judgement, as the later chapters of Revelation also testify.)
21. That verses like Acts 3:19 point to the investigative judgement (None of such verses studied in context yield any such conclusion.)
22. That much depends upon Oct. 22, 1844, as the beginning of the antitypical Day of Atonement. (Though Oct. 22, 1844 was not the day observed by contemporary Jews, even the majority of Karaites. Neither is there evidence that the baptism of Christ, or the stoning of Stephen took place on the Day of Atonement, which would have been necessary if the 49 years, the 434, 490, and 2300 years are each precise in terminus. In contrast, observe that Ellen G. White could write: "I saw that God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843...Ministers were convinced of the correctness of the positions taken on the prophetic periods" 1SG 133. Observe she is talking about the 1843 terminus, not Oct. 22, 1844. Furthermore she is speaking of periods ending then, not just one period. Miller had over a dozen, including the 6000 years, the seven times, the 1335 days, etc.)

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E.G. WHITE QUOTES ON THE SHUT DOOR OF MERCY

The reformations that were shown me, were not reformations from error to truth; but from bad to worse; for those who professed a change of heart, had only wrapt (sic) about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, so as to deceive God's people; but if their hearts could be seen, they would appear as black as ever. The Present Truth, August, 1849, p. 22.

The excitements and false reformations of this day do not move us, for we know that the Master of the house rose up in 1844, and shut the door of the first apartment of the heavenly tabernacle; and now we certainly expect that they will "go with their flocks," "to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself (within the second veil) from them." Ibid. p. 64

The Bates Letter

The following letter from E.G. White to Joseph Bates, is perhaps the most revealing statement supporting the shut door and close of probation theory.

Gorham, Maine

July 13, 1847

Dear Brother Bates:

As James is at work and sisters are from home tonight thought I would employ me-self in writing a line to you. My health is quite good for me. My faith is still strong that that very same Jesus that ascended up into heaven will so come in like manner as He went up, and that very soon.

I have had many trials of late; discouragement at times has laid so fast hold upon me it seemed impossible to shake it off. But thank God, Satan has not got the victory over me yet, and by the grace of God he never shall. I know and feel my weakness, but I have laid hold upon the strong arm of Jehovah, and I can say today I know that my Redeemer liveth, and if He lives I shall live also.

O how good it would be to meet with a few of like precious faith to exhort and comfort one another with words of holy cheer from the word of God. The sheep are now scattered, but thank God they are about to be gathered to a good pasture.

O how sweet it will be to meet all the blood-washed throng in the city of our God. 'Tis then we'll sing the song of Moses and the Lamb as we march through the gates into the city, bearing the palms of victory and wearing the crowns of glory.

Brother Bates, you write in a letter to James something about the Bridegroom's coming, as stated in the first published visions. By the letter you would like to know whether I had light on the Bridegroom's coming before I saw it in vision. I can readily answer, No. The Lord showed me the travail of the Advent band and midnight cry in December, but He did not show me the Bridegroom's coming until February following.

Perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions. At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had. I know not what time J. Turner got his paper. I knew he had one out and one was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I had not read a word in it. I had been, and still was very sick. I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous. After I had the vision and God gave me light, he bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. I disobeyed the Lord, and instead of remaining at home, where the meeting was to be that night, I got in a sleigh in the morning and rode three or four miles and there I found Joseph Turner. He merely inquired how I was and if I was in the way of my duty. I said nothing, for I knew I was not. I passed up (to the) chamber and did not see him again for two hours, when he came up, asked if I was to be at meeting that night. I told him, no. He said he wanted to hear my vision and thought it duty for me to go home. I told him I should not. He said no more, but went away.

I thought, and told those around me, if I went I should have to come out against his views, thinking he believed with the rest. I had not told any of them what God had shown me, and I did not tell them in what I should cut across his track.

All that day I suffered much in body and mind. It seemed that God had forsaken me entirely. I prayed the Lord if He would give me strength to ride home that night, the first opportunity I would deliver the message he had given me. He did give me strength and I rode home that night. Meeting had been done some time, and not a word was said by any of the family about the meeting.

Very early next morning Joseph Turner called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all. After I had got through he said he had told out the same last evening. I rejoiced, for I expected he was coming out against me, for all the while I had not heard any one say what he believed. He said the Lord had sent him to hear me talk the evening before, but as I would not, he meant his children should have the light in some way, so he took him.

There were but few out when he talked, so the next meeting I told my vision, and the band, believing my visions from God, received what God bade me to deliver to them.

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February, 1845, while in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others. Many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. I had known nothing of their difference. Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest and Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power, setting the truth home to their hearts.

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.

Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door. Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected him to this earth to deliver His people on the tenth day of the seventh month. I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest.

I had but very few privileges in 1842,3, and 4. My sisters both went to the camp meetings in New Hampshire and Maine, while my health prevented me from going to but one, in Maine. I knew the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man. I knew not how to write so that others could read it till God gave me my visions. I went to school but very little on account of my health. I do not think I went to school a day after I was twelve years old, and did not go then but a few days at a time, when sickness would cause me to take to my bed for weeks and sometimes for months. The first I wrote anything that could be called writing was after I had been sick the prayer of faith was put up for me, and healing. (Here the sheet ends and the remainder of the letter is gone.)--Letter 3, 1847. From Ellen G. White and The Shut Door Question, by A. L. White, 49-51.

One short quotation from her husband, James White, shows his complete harmony with her above testimony.

“When she received her first vision, December 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine, (where her parents then resided) had given up the midnight cry, and shut door, as being in the past. It was then that the Lord shew (sic) her in vision, the error into which she and the band in Portland had fallen. She then related her vision to the band, and about 60 confessed their error, and acknowledged their seventh month experience to be the work of God.” *A Word to the Little Flock*, May 30, 1847, p. 22.

THE CAMDON VISION

(This is the suppressed vision that Ellen White and the SDA church apparently tried to destroy and wish they had)

Camden, N. Y June 29, 1851

The Lord shewed (sic) that he had, in answer to prayer, removed his frown from this band, and that they could have the smiles of Jesus, if they would live very humble, and walk carefully before the Lord, and know that in every step that they took that God was guiding them, and the band would be strong and would be a terror to their enemies; and the band must press together. Then I saw Bro. Wing and Bro. Hyatt—that the enemy had been trying to destroy them—that they were praying for light upon a few texts of Scripture, and the more they prayed the darker they grew, and the enemy was shutting down a network of darkness over them: and just about as they were getting entirely shut in, they were delivered—the net was broken, and they escaped. I saw the true light on these texts etc. I saw that this rebuke was given by Jesus to the Pharisees and Jews, who were filled with self-righteousness, and would only speak to or greet those who were just as full of self-righteousness and hypocrisy as they themselves were and they entirely neglect and pass by those who did not make quite as much, and who did not receive greeting in the market as they did. I saw that it did not in any apply to this time—that we are now living in. Then I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies, but that should not cause us to pray for the wicked world, whom God had rejected—when he prayed for his enemies, there was hope for them, and they could be benefited and saved by his prayers, and also after he was a mediator in the outer apartment for the whole world but now his spirit and sympathy were withdrawn from the world: and our sympathy must be with Jesus, and must be withdrawn from the ungodly. I saw that God loved his people—and, in answer to prayers, would send rain upon the just and the unjust—I saw that now, in this time, that he watered the earth and caused the sun to shine for the saints and the wicked by our prayers, by our Father sending rain upon the unjust, while He sent it upon the just.

I saw that the wicked could not be benefited by our prayers now—and although He sent it upon the unjust, yet their day was coming. Then I saw that scripture did not mean the wicked whom God had rejected that we must love, but he meant our neighbors in the household, and did not extend beyond the household; yet I saw that we should not do the wicked around us any injustice:—But, our neighbors whom we were to love, were those who loved God and were serving him.