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The Impact of the Imminence of the Parousia on the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF THE IMMINENCE OF THE PAROUSIA ON THE
MISSION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

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Adviser: Laurentiu Florentin Mot

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE IMPACT OF THE IMMINENCE OF THE PAROUSIA ON THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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The imminence of the Parousia influenced the mission of Seventh-day Adventist church in all its history. The problem of this thesis is the extent to which the expectancy of the soon Parousia influences the concept about and the attitude towards mission in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Is Parousia the main motivation for the mission of the church or not? If Parousia determines the mission, what are the aspects associated with it that should drive the church mostly?

This thesis has a multidisciplinary approach: exegetical, historical and systematical. The study examines how the Bible history presents the impact of expectation upon the life and actions of the people of God. Then, some relevant historical facts are presented - factors that influenced the appearance of Millerism, and, later, the development of mission in the organized Seventh-day Adventist church mission that is influenced by the expectation of the second coming of Jesus Christ. In

the last part, the perspectives of the contemporary mission in Seventh-day Adventist church are presented, showing examples of extremism regarding the eschatological mission and showing, also, the possibilities of mission fields for cross-cultural mission. The expectancy of Parousia should offer a positive motivation for mission and the concept of the remnant should be seen in a larger spectrum. The views about sin, justification and sanctification, in eschatological background, are important in the manner in which they influence mission.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE IMPACT OF THE IMMINENCE OF THE PAROUSIA ON THE
MISSION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
Bogdan Platon
2017

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To my lovely wife Giany, and my dear children Riana and Marco

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KJV – King James Version of the Bible

LGT – Last Generation Theology

NAS – New American Standard Bible

NIV – New International Version of the Bible

NT – New Testament

OT – Old Testament

SDA – Seventh-day Adventist Church

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is founded on the close expectancy of the Parousia. Its mission exploded when believers considered that Parousia is at the door, but faded after being disappointed in their expectancy. The conception about mission has changed along the decades, one important factor being the fact that the Parousia had not been occurred.¹

Returning to earlier pages of history that preceded the Adventist mission, it may be observed that the second coming of Jesus was along the centuries after the Savior's ascension,² a doctrine that encouraged preachers to revolutionize the thinking about the eternal future, churches to act with enthusiasm and souls to convert without hesitation. Many missions and missionary agencies were developed by Christians being motivated by the expectancy of the second coming of Jesus Christ.³

¹ Gary Land, *Adventism in America*, Rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 58.

² From observes about the Christians from the early church that they “were convinced from inspired prophecy that pagan Rome, drunk with the blood of martyrs, would fall ere long” and in three and half literal years “Antichrist’s appearance was conceived of as but briefly preceding the day of judgment and the end of the world.” Also “the personal, premillennial second advent of Christ – when He will raise the righteous dead and translate the living saints, end the reign of sin... was the firm belief and expectancy of the pre-Constantinian martyr church.” LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers : The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 346.

³ “To engage in mission is to participate in the coming of the kingdom of God (...) Participation in God’s mission is no longer a somber duty. It becomes a joyous privilege and an adventure of passion and hope”. Tim Dearborn, "Beyond Duty," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 73.

Even from the earliest centuries of the church, the second coming of Jesus greatly influenced Christian theology. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage (200-258 AD),⁴ for example, Victorinus, bishop of Pettau in Upper Pannonia (d. 303/304)⁵ and others were prominent leaders of the early church and martyrs that believed that Jesus' coming is imminent.

Different interpretations of the eschatological events, connected with the idea that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come,"⁶ puzzled many theologians, especially missiologists, that struggled to picture their mission for the end time.

Hays⁷ considers that Jesus's prophecy about the fulfilling of the eschaton in "this generation" of His time⁸ is a conditional prophecy. His solution comes as a response to other theories of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer,⁹ "The Jesus Seminar,"¹⁰ N.T. Wright,¹¹ Dale Allison and Bart Ehrman.¹²

⁴ Cyprian believed that Jesus second coming is imminent when said: "since those occur which were foretold before, whatever things were promised will also follow; as the Lord Himself promises, saying, 'But when ye see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is at hand.' The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, is beginning to be at hand; the reward of life, and the rejoicing of eternal salvation, and the perpetual gladness and possession lately lost of paradise, are now coming, with the passing away of the world." Cyprian, "Treatise VII. On the Morality," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Sir Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1951), 469.

⁵ Victorinus said: "Behold, He shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.' For He who at first came hidden in the manhood that He had undertaken, shall after a little while come to judgment manifest in majesty and glory." Victorinus, "Commentary of the Apocalypse of the Blessed John," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh; Grand Rapids, MI: T. & T Clark ; Eerdmans, 1989), 344.

⁶ Matt 24:14

⁷ Christopher M. Hays et al., *When the Son of Man Didn't Come. A Constructive Proposal on the Delay of the Parousia* (2016), 20.

⁸ Matt 24:34//Mark 13:3

⁹ Weiss and Schweizer considered that Jesus was wrong about the placement of the Parousia in the period of that generation. Hays et al., 4-5.

¹⁰ The Jesus Seminar, through Steven Patterson, J.D. Crosnan and Robert Funk, considered that Jesus did not have the prophetic gift, but took these prophecies from John the Baptist and modified them. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹¹ Wright considers that this prophecy is not about the Parousia, but about the power that will be manifested at the Parousia of the first century, especially at fall of Jerusalem. *Ibid.*, 9-13.

¹² Allison and Ehrman understand Jesus in the same manner as Weiss and Schweizer and consider His declaration "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is near" as being mistaken. *Ibid.*, 15.

Rudolf Bultmann considered that human interventions cannot modify God's agenda related to Parousia: "Man cannot hasten the divinely determined course of events, either by strict observance of the commandments and by penance—as the Pharisees supposed—or by driving out the Romans by force of arms—as the Zealots fancied."¹³ He considered that God's plan about the second coming is completely sovereign and not related to what humans can do. On the other hand, Rossing¹⁴ is analyzing the necessity that the Christians intervene through social action, in a missiological approach, in this end time, because of natural disasters, like global warming.

In the SDA church, however, there are also two counterparts about this issue. On one side there are groups who consider that Parousia is not influenced by human attitude and manifest indifference about this topic,¹⁵ while on the other there are those who think that the church should have a special spiritual state of being, so that Lord may come.¹⁶ Last Generation Theology (LGT), that assumes this last idea, will be evaluated in third chapter of this thesis. Between these two opinions there are many other concepts developed by different groups of members, pastors or theologians, that depart from the mainline theology of the church and reject the eschatological prophecy understanding or are drawn by conspiracy theories.¹⁷ The main body of the church believes that the theology of mission should be based on the Bible, focusing

¹³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1951), 7.

¹⁴ See: Barbara Rossing, "Hastening the Day" When the Earth Will Burn? Global Warming, Revelation, and 2 Peter 3 (Advent 2, Year B)," *Currents in theology and mission*. 35, no. 5 (2008): 363-373.

¹⁵ George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 2012), 154.

¹⁶ M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed., *Christian Home Library* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), 316. Andreasen is presenting his idea that "It is necessary for God to produce *one* man who has kept the law. In the absence of such a man, God loses and Satan wins." The same thought applied at a later time, to a last generation that would be special, is assumed in Last Generation Theology, whose main points are exposed in Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close: Last Generation Theology in 14 Points* (Highland, CA: GCO Press, 2005), 51-112.

¹⁷ Knight, 154.

on the prophecy and on the message of the three angels from Rev 14, that is calling the church to proclaim the message to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people”.

The term *Parousia*'s main meanings are “coming”, “presence,”¹⁸ or “return.”¹⁹ Speaking about the coming of Jesus Christ as king of the eternal heavenly kingdom, the scene from Rev 19:11-16 might be evoked, where the victorious conqueror is seen coming as the voivode on white horse that is “King of kings and Lord of lords”. When this scene is combined with the one of Matt 24:30, “the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,”²⁰ there is no wonder that this expectancy was so powerful in the minds of those who waited Him. Although, as it was said, *Parousia* can be used in other circumstances, when it refers to Jesus it gains a special connotation as “His manifestation.”²¹

The concept of *mission* used in this paper refers not only to evangelism, as it was used in a traditional view,²² but also to every aspect that is part of the spreading the gospel, the “wholistic” mission, including social action (which is seen as a partner of evangelism). The mission of the church is not derived from what the church does, but from the nature of God himself.²³ This mission actually becomes *Missio Dei*.²⁴ A

¹⁸ 2 Cor 7:6; 1 Cor 16:17

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 315. Arnold Valentin Wallenkampf, *The Apparent Delay: What Role Do We Play in the Timing of Jesus' Return?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1994), 15.

²⁰ Unless otherwise stated, all the biblical passages are from the New King James version of the Bible.

²¹ Ki Kon Kim, *The Signs of the Parousia: A Diachronic and Comparative Study of the Apocalyptic Vocabulary of Matthew 24:27-31* (Seoul, South Korea: Institute for Theological Research, Korean Sahmyook Univ., 1994), 79.

²² John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 18.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁴ "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God." David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389-390. Moltmann also said: "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church." Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit : A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

local church can be called missional only when it understands that “the church itself is sent by God with a missionary mandate”²⁵.

The “imminence” conception is derived from biblical texts²⁶ that show the Parousia as a great event that should take place soon. As is stated later in this thesis, the imminence can be viewed through human and also through divine perspective.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this thesis is the extent to which the expectancy of the soon Parousia influences the concept about and the attitude towards mission in the SDA church. Is Parousia the main motivation for the mission of the church or not? If Parousia determines the mission, what are the aspects associated with it that should drive the church mostly?

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the church and missionaries can be motivated and motivate others for mission by a mature understanding of the timing of the Parousia. Should it be a positive²⁷ or a negative²⁸ motivation? A secondary purpose is to evaluate Jesus intention when He spoke in Mat 24:34 about “this generation” that will see “these things”, explaining about the Parousia that will come in a “day and hour” unknown to the angels and neither to “the Son”.²⁹

²⁵ Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), xviii.

²⁶ Phrases like “the day is at hand” (Rom 13:12), “the time is short” (1 Cor 7:21), “The Lord is at hand” (Phil 4:5), “the coming of the Lord is at hand” (Jas 5:8), “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet 4:7), “Surely I am coming quickly.” (Rev 22:20) show clearly that Parousia is considered imminent.

²⁷ The positive motivation could come from enthusiasm, joy, excitement when thinking about Parousia.

²⁸ The negative motivation could come from fear of punishment, desire to compensate a sinful life with mission.

²⁹ Mat 24:36. “The Son” phrase is present only in some versions of the Bible (New International Version, English Standard Version, New American Standard 1977, International Standard Version,

Methodology and Delimitations

This thesis will take a multidisciplinary approach, exegetical in the first chapter, historical in the second and systematical in the third. The first chapter will deal with some key texts that talk about the event of the equivalent Old Testament (OT) event for the *Parousia*, the coming of the kingdom, and the second coming in the New Testament (NT). The second chapter will present a diachronic study, with theological landmarks that highlight the important thoughts, attitudes and motivations of preachers and theologians regarding the connection between their expectation of the Parousia and the mission of the church. Lastly, the third chapter will deal with perspectives of mission in contemporary SDA thinking. An exhaustive exegesis and historical perspective goes beyond the scope of this paper. This study focuses on the main texts and aspects involved which are relevant to the present discussion.

Weymouth New Testament) and is absent in others (King James, New King James, New English Translation, Aramaic Bible in Plain English, Jubilee Bible 2000, Douay-Rheims Bible, Darby Bible Translation, Webster's Bible Translation, World English Bible, Young's Literal Translation).

CHAPTER 2

THE IMMINENCE OF THE SECOND

COMING IN SCRIPTURE

Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, this chapter seeks to find the landmarks in Scripture that talk about the imminence of the Second Coming. An exhaustive treatment of said landmarks goes beyond the scope of this thesis and it will not be addressed here.¹

The first part of the chapter will deal with the OT treatment of the subject, going through different periods of the people of Israel. Similarly, the second part of the chapter will analyze significant passages in the NT to describe the way Parousia was presented by Jesus and understood by the apostles.

¹ For more detailed treatment of the Parousia event in Scripture see Norman R. Gulley, *Christ Is Coming! A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1998). Here, in a systematic and almost exhaustive manner the subject of Parousia is presented, from the biblical perspective, like the solution for every problem generated by sin. See also: Ki Kon Kim, *The Signs of the Parousia: A Diachronic and Comparative Study of the Apocalyptic Vocabulary of Matthew 24:27-31* (Seoul, South Korea: Institute for Theological Research, Korean Sahmyook Univ., 1994); J. Stuart Russell, Edward E. Stevens, and Association International Preterist, *The Parousia : The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming* (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 2003); Herbert Lockyer, *All About the Second Coming* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998); H. Ray Dunning, *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995); John MacArthur, *The Second Coming: Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

In the Old Testament

In the OT there are very few glimpses of the expectation of the Parousia and often it is mixed with the First Coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom. The OT is not speaking specifically about the Parousia because the concept was not yet developed. However, there are similar OT concepts, like the arriving into Canaan and the expectation of the Messiah. Also may be found typologies that throw a projection on the mission in eschatological times.

Patriarchal Times

Since a “seed” that should come from woman is promised in the *protoevangelium* in Gen. 3:15, every mother in Israel could have potentially been the one to give birth to Messiah. The most significant aspect here is that the blessing of the “seed” is given in the context of the announcement of the curse, which means that this “seed” will free them from the effects of sin. Eve experienced great grief when she saw that one of her sons is a killer and the other one is dead. Later, however, with the occasion of Seth’s birth, she said “God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”² This expectancy of Eve could be a projection of the expectancy of the people from biblical ancient times, to which the flood brings an interruption.

Noah is called to proclaim the judgment of the Lord while he builds the ark. The ignorance of Noah’s listeners is not based on lack of information, but, as Reid says, “they chose to ignore and ridicule the message and the messenger.”³ Noah not only gave them a warning, but “he acted every sermon.”⁴ The seven days that passed

² Gen 4:25

³ G. Edward Reid, *Even at the Door* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Graphics, 1994), 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

after the door of the ark was closed until the actual beginning of the rain are a typology for the end of the time when, although the second coming is imminent, it is not rushed, thus creating the feeling of a delay. The faith of witnesses is tested in this time. At the end, God's judgment falls upon the impenitent people of the earth, as Noah prophesied. After the flood, God is making the covenant with Noah, and through him with humankind. God is assuring the people that he will not destroy the earth through the waters for a second time. This covenant takes the promise from Gen 3:15 and then, through Abraham, extends it for Israel, as a chosen people, that is, a witness of God's works.

Abraham received the same promise of a "seed."⁵ Paul is specifically mentioning that it is a singular seed,⁶ because not all the sons of Abraham were targeted; the seed should come from Isaac's genealogy,⁷ through Jacob⁸ and Judah.⁹ Abraham's mission began with the call from Gen 12:1-3 and continued with a process of discipline, by being separated¹⁰ from his society. He agreed to leave his father's house and be an honorable prince among the nations, fulfilling his call to be a blessing, while expecting the city of God. Jesus says that Abraham saw His "day."¹¹ Walter Kaiser states that this happened when he accepted to sacrifice Isaac on Moriah. Abraham had said before that he would return with the boy¹² which means that he believed that "God would raise the slain Isaac up from the dead,"¹³ as Paul says in Hebrews 11. Offering a substitute on Moriah, God showed that the seed will come in

⁵ Gen 13:16 (KJV)

⁶ Gal 3:16

⁷ Gen 21:12

⁸ Mal 1:2

⁹ Gen 49:10

¹⁰ Max I. Reich, *The Messianic Hope of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1940), 36.

¹¹ John 8:56

¹² Gen 22:5

¹³ Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995),

the future. Also, Jacob, in his prophetic blessing implies the idea of seed in connection to Shiloh, which usually is interpreted as Messiah¹⁴ and means “until he comes to whom it belongs.”¹⁵

The idea of the “seed” is repeated many times in genealogies and this reveals that the fulfilment of the promise from Gen 3:15 is expected. In the same time, the Pentateuch offers a sense of expectation of an ideal place, a Canaan, the kingdom that is to come as the *locus* for God’s reign. The patriarchs had this expectation and their lives confessed it in different forms.

Two passages in the NT shed light on the hope that the patriarchs had in the coming of the Messiah. The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, shows that they lived a life expecting a “city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God”¹⁶ (verse 10), and “did not receive the promise” (verse 39). The “good testimony” they received from God “through faith” (verse 39) is a proof that their life was changed according to God’s will, to the criteria of the kingdom of God.

Exile from Egypt

After the time of the patriarchs, the people of Israel stayed in Egypt for four hundred years. In their coming out of Egypt, the Bible mentions their hope for living in Canaan, the promised land. The preparing of the people of Israel to go out from Egypt, in the Passover rituals, getting ready to go on a long journey, with girded clothes and tighten shoes, shows that, from God’s perspective, it was not only a common walk in the dessert, but a new experience, a new life. They were to sanctify

¹⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology: A Study of Old Testament Prophecy Concerning the First Coming of the Messiah* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶ Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible Authorized King James Version* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

their hearts and cleanse their lives so that this could happen¹⁷. Their attitude as they were wandering through wilderness shows that they were reluctant to fully enter in this experience, and many of them were sifted away. God called them to enter into a covenant, gave them the Law on Sinai, so that they may be prepared to enter to Canaan. For all the forty years they spent wandering in the dessert, God made every efforts to shape their hearts so that they would fully surrender to Him, be converted, and become His witnesses¹⁸. Materialism, conflicts, rebellion, critique addressed to God's plan of salvation were, unfortunately, still dominant in their hearts.

The greatest trial for them should have been the greatest experience and part of their message. God's intervention at the Red Sea was the message¹⁹ that raised many questions in Jericho. Rahab with her house were saved because she had seriously considered who God is and what her attitude toward Him should be. That intervention at Red Sea became a mark of God's mighty power²⁰ and was part of His people's message for the future ages.

The escape from Egypt can be considered a typology for the last days' events on earth. A comparison can be seen with the plagues²¹. The presence of Christ between the pillar of cloud and fire can be compared with Michael, the archangel that intervenes in the end²², in the time of the oppression²³. Looking to their deliverance, the people must tell their story - those delivered from Egypt looking backward and those who will confess at the end of the time looking forward²⁴. As Davidson says, speaking about the typology in 1 Cor 10:1-13, "the wilderness events are thus not

¹⁷ "For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy." Lev 11:44

¹⁸ Deut 4:35

¹⁹ Josh 2:9-11

²⁰ Josh 4:23

²¹ Ex 8-11, Rev. 16

²² Exod 13:22; Neh 9:19; Dan 12:1

²³ Exod 6:6; Rev 13:12-15

²⁴ Deut 6:20.21; Rev 22:17

merely general examples – to be followed or ignored by the Corinthians – but pre-presentations or prefigurations involving a *devoir-etre*²⁵ connection with a specific fulfillment in eschatological ‘Israel,’ the Christian church.”²⁶

In the same manner as Christ brought the people of Israel from Egypt, He will lead His end time people to witness about Him and arrive safely at home.²⁷ At the Red Sea, the imminent death of the Israelites, at the hands of the Egyptian army, was transformed in an imminent victory and this pattern will be repeated at the end.²⁸ The judgment of the Egyptians can be considered a type for the final judgment of the earth, as it is shown in “the song of Moses” from Rev 15.²⁹ The song is a testimony about God’s victory over evil, His people witnessing about His eternal government and power.

The Period of the Kings

David offered himself to build a house for the Name of the Lord³⁰. As an answer, God made him a greater offer, saying that He will uplift a “seed”³¹ after him, will establish “his kingdom”, his throne being established “forever.”³²

The possibility that Solomon could be the chosen one is shattered by what happens later on, when he falls into idolatry, the kingdom is divided and both Judah

²⁵ From French, “must-needs-be”.

²⁶ Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical 'Typos' Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 275.

²⁷ Norman R. Gulley, *Christ Is Coming! : A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1998), 58-59.

²⁸ “They forgot the grand exhibition of divine power at the Red Sea. They forgot that while they had crossed safely in the path that had been opened for them, the armies of their enemies, attempting to follow them, had been overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. (...) The history of the wilderness life of Israel was chronicled for the benefit of the Israel of God to the close of time.” Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890), 292.

²⁹ Compare the image of the judgment from Rev 15 with Ex 15:1-21. Deut 31:19 shows that a song can be the mean chosen by God as a “witness”.

³⁰ 2 Sam 7:2

³¹ 2 Sam 7:12

³² 2 Sam 7:13

and Northern Israel are taken into exile. Crisis after crisis affects the monarchy, and it seems that their mission as the chosen people to represent God's will, has failed, and their expectancy of the Messiah would never have its fulfillment.

In the covenant between God and David there are three components that will be everlasting: a house, a kingdom and a throne.³³ In this context, David composes his messianic psalms that point to the Messiah. Psalm 2 show Him as uplifted, being the Son of God, king in Jerusalem, ruler over Gentiles. Psalm 16 show that Messiah would die and be resurrected, having a special relationship with God, the Father. Psalm 22 is offering an image of a suffering Messiah, while Psalm 80, again, shows Him as being seated near the Father, at the right hand. Psalm 110 says that He will be priest and king, ruling in the messianic kingdom. Composed in the pre-exilic period, it can be assumed that these Psalms gave great hope for the Israel exiled in foreign lands. The Messianic Psalms were an important part of Israelite's determination to later return and build the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The idea of a deliverer that should free them from the yoke of those who conquered them echoed until the time of Jesus, when the Messiah was expected to come as a warrior.³⁴

Isaiah's Prophetic Message

The prophet Isaiah is called to be a messenger³⁵ in Judah in a time of unfaithfulness and spiritual darkness, as may be found in the first five chapters of his book. In his mission, he must sometimes act his message.³⁶ His book has been called the gospel of the OT, having plenty of messianic prophecies.³⁷ Some of these had a

³³ See 2 Sam 7:16; Fruchtenbaum, 78. See also Kaiser, 182.

³⁴ Ps 2:5.12; Luke 4:18.21; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, vol. 1 (London; Minneapolis, MN: SPCK; Fortress Press, 1992), 304.

³⁵ Isa 6:8

³⁶ Isa 8

³⁷ Birth from a virgin in Isa 7:14; almighty ruler in 9:1-7; heir of the throne of David in ch 11; preparedness of his way in 40:3-5; the servant in ch 42 and 50; light of the world in 49:1-7; suffering in

close fulfillment,³⁸ but, however, the picture of the Messiah is much greater than just the local fulfillment. The Messiah is painted as having an individual mission - by suffering and in agony, He was to save His people.

The book of Isaiah, having in its center the work of the Messiah, can be considered a summary of the main content of the theology of mission.³⁹ It is assessed that, especially in the Septuagint version of Isaiah, are “signs of a developing messianism, especially in as far as royal messianism is concerned.”⁴⁰ In this book, God is the one who is expecting His people to return and follow the Messiah, thereby receiving a prosperous life⁴¹ as a testimony of His reign. The conditional prophecies, especially those from the last two chapters of this book, were not fulfilled at the first advent, but can be fulfilled at second advent at a bigger scale.⁴² They are offering landmarks of God’s re-creative power by stirring the hope and the expectancy of the people of God in the end of the time.

Jeremiah’s Prophetic Message

Among the prophets of seventh-century that prophesied in Judah “only Jeremiah gives what may be termed direct messianic prophecies.”⁴³ Jer 23:5-6 announces the coming of the “righteous Branch” that will make justice and bring peace. What is interesting is the name given to Him: “the Lord, our righteousness” (v. 6), which means that His righteousness can be shared with the people. This name is

ch 50, 52, 53; the healer and savior in ch 61 and 62; the revenger in ch 63; the master of the new creation 65; the Judge that receives worship in ch 66.

³⁸ Although the son of Ahaz is depicted as Emanuel, born from a virgin in Isa 7:14, and Cyrus is presented as Messiah in Isa 45, the expectancy of the Messiah exceeds these typologies.

³⁹ Isa 42:1-9; 45:22; 49:6-7; 55:5; 56:7; Bosch, 18-19.

⁴⁰ K. Hauspie, ed. *Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays by J. Lust* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2004), 189.

⁴¹ The prophecy from Isa 65:17-20 is considered a conditional prophecy.

⁴² See James Goetz and inc Resource Publications, *Conditional Futurism: New Perspective of End-Time Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2012), 36, 37, 39. Ulrich Berges and Millard Lind, *The Book of Isaiah : Its Composition and Final Form* (2012), 476.

⁴³ Kaiser, 186.

similar in meaning with that of Zedekiah, “Yahweh is righteousness”, but the character of Zedekiah was a disappointment for those who expected the Messiah in David’s genealogy. Chapter 30, a chapter of comfort, reiterates the coming of (a new) David (v. 9) that will come from their midst (v. 21) and will remake the covenant between God and the people (v. 22). Although Kaiser considers v. 9 as a proof that new David is a divine king because the people is serving him as they serve God, I consider that this is a forced argument, as it is possible to fit any earthly king in this context. The divinity of the Messiah should be searched in the larger context of the book. In Jer 29:5-10, both the delay and the hope of the deliverance are present. In spite of their slavery, Lord “presents a positive view of the future.”⁴⁴ God will deliver them from slavery, but in the mean time they needed to be active and prepare patiently. Commenting about the letter from the ch 29, Wright says: “The message of the whole letter could turn refugees, mourners and victims into resident missionary visionaries.”⁴⁵ Jer 33 repeats the promise of the coming of the righteous Branch of David showing that God’s covenant with his people is as sure as the nature laws regarding day and night. While the sons of David failed to represent God’s will, “the royal line and the priestly role will continue in the coming days when the Messiah himself appears.”⁴⁶

Jer 51 presents the idea of God’s vengeance (verse 6), while later mentions another important idea: “remember Jehovah from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind” (verse 50). The people would have a different motivation if Jerusalem was in their mind all the time, although they were slaves. Missing Jerusalem, being in

⁴⁴ John L. Mackay, *Jeremiah 2 Chapters 21-52. 2 Chapters 21-52* (Fearn: Mentor, 2004), 165.

⁴⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 297.

⁴⁶ Kaiser, 191.

Babylon, gave them reasons to react in a missiological way⁴⁷. The prophet Jeremiah transmitted to the people of Israel, that were on the path of Babylonian slavery, “let not your heart faint, neither fear ye for the tidings that shall be heard in the land”⁴⁸. This message was recapitulated in Jesus words in the Olivet Discourse, speaking to those who face the deceit of false prophets. The encouragements from Jer 51:46.50 are linked by the seventy years prophesied before⁴⁹ and through an appeal to a “triumphant imagination”⁵⁰ speak about a guaranteed restoration.

The message of Jeremiah is making the expectancy to remain alive in a time of deep crisis. The main motivation for the enslaved people was to return to their country, but for this they needed the Messiah. Jeremiah’s prophecy shows that in spite of the imminent Babylonian occupancy, the hope of their expectancy is not lost, God having a plan of a messianic era beyond their slavery.

Ezekiel’s Temple Vision

To the prophet Ezekiel God is presenting a plan of the restoration of the people, with a Temple with huge dimensions⁵¹, that represents the calling for the people in Babylonian exile, to enter into a renewed relationship, a new covenant of grace. In this message God may be seen as the One who is expecting an answer from his people, a reflection of their love to Him. As this never happens, the conditional prophecy remains unfulfilled.

This is another instance when God is shown as the One who wants to transform their lives from inside to outside, providing them with everything that is

⁴⁷ See Ps 137.

⁴⁸ Jer 51:46

⁴⁹ See Jer 29:5-13

⁵⁰ Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 530.

⁵¹ Ezek 45

needed for this to take place. Actually, entering in this process of transformation, of preparation, would give God the opportunity to work in them and to fulfill what He promised. That was a time when Messiah, the Anointed One, could come in the middle of His people,⁵² and their leaders could be the apostles. Generally, the nation Israel rejected this plan, and when he came, Jesus had as disciples just some simple fishermen.

The typologies that can be found in the OT show how God's intervention will be manifested in the same manner in the development of eschatological mission of His people. Thus the expectancy and the mission of OT Israel can be compared with the expectancy and the mission of eschatological Israel. It can be seen that in the OT the Messiah's expectancy determined both a positive and a negative response in the people's lives. After the OT perspective was presented, the following section will deal with this issue in the NT.

In the New Testament

In stark contrast to the OT treatment of Kingdom expectancy, the NT is replete with allusions and direct mentioning of the second coming. The difficulty of this section was to select those passages that have a greater relevance for the topic of this thesis. The mission before the Parousia holds the blueprint of God's loud voice manifested in the church in the three angels' message from Rev. 14:6-12.

⁵² In Ezek 45 and 46, the Prince is presented as a type of the Messiah.

In the Gospels

The Message of Jesus

The central message of Jesus proclamation was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”.⁵³ Repentance was a condition *sine qua non* for the participation as agents of the Parousia. Those who heard the calling were not only beneficiaries, but also “fishers of men,”⁵⁴ those who should spread the gospel of the second coming. Jesus used parables like the treasure hidden in a field, the pearl of great price, the household treasure, the yeast, the mustard seed, the sprouting seed, the dragnet, the prodigal son, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the sower, the harvest, etc., in which he spoke about the preparedness and the expectancy of the second coming. One can observe that, linked to the expectation of the coming, there was a necessity of conversion.

Jesus’ disciples were instructed to proclaim the nearness of His kingdom⁵⁵. In Matt 10:23, Jesus says: “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” In this verse, Jesus is apparently speaking about His coming in that generation, in the context of mission and persecution. When the disciples return they don’t have an account about hostility, which means they didn’t receive it, and implies that Jesus was referring to a broader space and time than that when the gospel was presented to the “lost sheep of Israel.”⁵⁶

Chapter 24 of the gospel of Matthew is very important for this study as the term Parousia is mentioned here for four times⁵⁷. Surprisingly for the common Jewish

⁵³ Matt 4:17

⁵⁴ Matt 4:19

⁵⁵ Matt 10

⁵⁶ Matt 10:6

⁵⁷ verses 3, 27, 37, 39

mentality of that time, Matt 24:14 shows that the Gospel should be presented also to the Gentiles, beyond Israel. The Spirit of the Father that will be manifest in their ministry⁵⁸ may be an allusion to the Pentecost from Acts 2.

In the last part of His life on earth, Jesus spoke about the kingdom that needs to come and the gospel that will precede its coming. In Matt 24:33-34, He says: “So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” So, in that time, when Jesus was speaking these things, He was at the doors and from that time until now He is still at the doors. As Davidson says, “the first advent of Christ has inaugurated the eschatological kingdom of God, and thus the NT realities involve an absolute escalation (Steigerung) of the OT events in the end-time community.”⁵⁹

The strongest sign that shows the imminent second coming, as Jesus predicted, was the spreading of the gospel until the end of the earth,⁶⁰ but I consider that this sign cannot be easily interpreted, given the subjectivity that can be implied in its interpretation. In this case, Jesus words about the spreading of the gospel as a sign of Parousia can be more an encouragement to be active and involved, rather than passively evaluate the signs.

Another important phrase that shows light on the way the expectancy of the coming is connected to mission is found in Mark 13. Here, the phrase “these things” (ταῦτα πάντα) is key to the evaluation of the apostles’ determination for their mission.

The Meaning of “ταῦτα πάντα” from the Olivet Discourse

⁵⁸ Matt 10:20

⁵⁹ Davidson, 282.

⁶⁰ “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.” Matt 24:14

Jesus, as the greatest Prophet, tells one of his most controversial prophecies in Mark 13:28-32. Some commentators, as was argued in the introduction of this thesis, believed He made a wrong prophecy, others consider it unfulfilled because it was conditional and some consider it correct, but the time prophecy is seen as being fulfilled in different periods. One pertinent dilemma could be in seeing what was so wrong in the apostles' generation so that, being a conditional prophecy, it was not fulfilled in their time.

I consider that Jesus speaks with intertwined prophecies, answering the question "Tell us, when will these things be?"⁶¹ He wants to link His sovereignty in those events about Jerusalem's destruction with his sovereignty manifested at the second coming, giving them hope. Being the greatest Prophet⁶² He cannot be wrong or make a wrong prophecy. It can be seen that when He is presenting a prophetic truth, in some circumstances, just a part of it can be understood by His listeners.⁶³ For example, Ekkehardt Mueller sees Matt 24 as an exhortation for "the necessity of being ready and prepared because of this unknown date,"⁶⁴ of Parousia. As for the prophesied time, it is a matter of perception. From the present point of view, it can be considered that many years have passed since Jesus uttered this prophecy, but from the contemporary perspective of that time, none of the apostles waited more than a normal life-time, just as modern believers would.

In the context of 13th chapter of Mark there are many categories "these things" could represent: the destroying of the Temple (v. 2), the afflictions (v. 7-8.19), persecutions (v. 9.11-13), testimonies (v. 10-11), prophetic signs (v. 6.14-16.21-

⁶¹ Mark 13:4

⁶² Acts 3:22

⁶³ 1 Cor 13:9

⁶⁴ Ekkehardt Mueller, "But of the Time and Hour No One Knows - See Matthew 24:36," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* 88, no. 9 (2016): 6-9.

22.24-31), woes (v. 17), instructions (v. 5. 18.23.33.35-37) and explanations (v. 34). Verse 28 is somehow creating a gap in the text and seems to be broken from the previous passage. This parenthesis is very important to explain the core of the message.

The lesson, at first sight, seems to be: there will be signs, so be prepared and watch.⁶⁵ So this is not mainly a lesson about the coming of the kingdom because “of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”⁶⁶

A General Message of Encouragement

The context of this passage is one of encouragement and instruction for what will come. In Mark 13:5-13 there is an appeal to be calm and not to be troubled, but in 13:14-20 they are told to be alarmed and flee.⁶⁷ The evangelist is having not just “a simple historical interest for recording what Jesus taught on this subject”⁶⁸, because he is writing for his readers around mid-first century, to be instructed about what will come.

Analyzing the chronological order of the signs of the Parousia, Ki Kon Kim affirms that “the language is of the Jewish apocalyptic” and, for this reason, some considered the text as being introduced by Mark from “a non-Christian Jewish document.”⁶⁹ I consider that this could be possible for Mark in order to have a language that could constitute a bridge with his listeners’ understanding. Knowles says that “Even when the cosmos is plunged into chaos, God is in control. Jesus and

⁶⁵ Mark 13:33-37

⁶⁶ Mark 13:32

⁶⁷ Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 602.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 584.

⁶⁹ Ki Kon Kim, “The Signs of the Parousia: A Diachronic and Comparative Study of the Apocalyptic Vocabulary of Matthew 24:27-31” (1994), 4.

his promises will outlast heaven and earth. Nothing in life or death can harm those who belong to him.”⁷⁰ So, in his conception, this passage has the goal of encouraging those who remain after Jesus is taken up to heaven.

“Son of Man” or “The Coming”

The verse 29, in some versions of the Bible says *it is nigh/near* (KJV, NIV) and in some *He is near* (NAS). In interpretation, this would yield a slightly different result. As Evans observed, “the implied subject of ἐστίν, ‘is,’ is either ‘he,’ that is, the ‘son of man,’ or ‘it,’ in reference to the ‘coming’ of the ‘son of man’ (v 26).”⁷¹

Knowing or Not Knowing

Some scholars considered the utterance about not knowing the day and the hour in the case of Jesus being embarrassing because, in the Gospels, Jesus knows even the inner thoughts and the future.⁷² Evans says that “[t]he inclusion of the Son with those who do not know was an embarrassment for early Christians.”⁷³ Actually Jesus is not seeing this self-limit as a weakness, but this is an encouragement for the other because He became like one of us.

The Connection of “Generation” with “These Things”

“This generation” was interpreted by the scholars as being Jesus’ contemporaries, the Jewish people, the disciples, all humanity or Christianity. Some may see it as meaning “race,” that is, the Jewish race.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 463.

⁷¹ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2001), 334.

⁷² John 5:6; 6:6; 8:14

⁷³ Evans, 336.

⁷⁴ Kenneth Samuel Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), Mk 13:28.

When *ταῦτα πάντα* (these things) was interpreted as the return of Christ, *γενεὰ* (generation) was understood as the Christian era, but in other circumstances, in Mark, *γενεὰ* is referring to those from Jesus time.⁷⁵ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, speaking about *generation* (v. 30), state the following about the probable meaning of the passage: “This generation, namely, the Jewish people—see Deut. 32:5, 20; Ps. 12:7; 78:8, etc.—will not cease to exist until all those things which I [Jesus] predicted have happened.” The expression “all this” covers the events predicted for the entire new dispensation, including even the final tribulation and the Lord’s glorious return.”⁷⁶ Associating *the generation* with *the Jewish people*, it can be said that it is about the nation of Israel as *generation*.

Criswell sees here a difference between this passage and other that presents the second coming: “The coming of Christ depicted here is not the same as that presented in 1 Thess. 4:13–18 or 1 Cor. 15:51–58. Those passages refer to the translation or “rapture” of the church, whereas this passage refers to the “revelation” or return of Jesus Christ, which follows the Great Tribulation (vv. 14–23) and inaugurates the kingdom age (cf. Rev. 19:11–21).”⁷⁷

Speaking about the context of “these things” in chapter 24 in Matthew, Davidson says that “it refers to the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem and not to Christ’s second coming.”⁷⁸ Thus “these things” are connected to the destruction of Jerusalem⁷⁹, while *parousia* (coming) and *synteleia* (end) refer to

⁷⁵ See Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19

⁷⁶William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 538.

⁷⁷ W. A. Criswell, *The Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1991), Mk 13:24.

⁷⁸ Richard M. Davidson, "What Did Jesus Mean by “This Generation”,” in *Interpreting Scripture Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 290.

⁷⁹ Richard M. Davidson, "“This Generation Shall Not Pass’ (Matthew 24:34): Failed or Fulfilled Prophecy?,” in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley*, ed. Ron Du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2003), 310.

the second coming. Before 70 AD, all these categories of signs were present: false Messiah (Theudas, Menahem, Judas the Galilean, Simon of Gioras, John of Gischala⁸⁰), wars, natural disasters (famine, earthquakes, pestilences), and persecutions (Nero).⁸¹

As a preliminary conclusion, following the arguments from before, I tend to believe that Jesus is seeing in “that generation” those who were listening to him, especially the disciples that would not die until things from verses 5-23, especially those in verses 14-23, including the destruction of Temple, would be fulfilled. The expression “when you see” can be met both in v. 14 and 29.

Apparently, the main objection to the idea that the “generation” is not only that generation from the time of Jesus was because they were not witnesses to the coming of Jesus, the Son of Man and the Kingdom of Heaven. The question is if “these things” include the coming of the Son of Man and His Kingdom, or exclude them, being the fulfillment of these signs.

“These things” detailed by Jesus offer an answer to verse 4 in the same chapter. Those “things” that happened before and in 70 AD at the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple gave the disciples more courage to preach the Gospel in the entire world, better understanding the prophetic nature of Jesus’ message. In this event, they could see a prefiguring painting of eschatological events that will precede the second coming of the Son of Man. The day and the hour were not to be known by creatures, but were kept only in the Creator’s mind. Jesus is identifying

⁸⁰ Stein, 598.

⁸¹ Davidson, "What Did Jesus Mean by “This Generation”,“ in *Interpreting Scripture Bible Questions and Answers*, 291.

Himself with humans in this context. His incarnation meant some self-limiting processes, according to Phil 2:5-8.⁸²

The eschatological message of the Olivet Discourse is mainly given with the intention of showing that although critical times will follow, Jesus never renounced His plan of returning. Parousia will be fulfilled even if two millenniums passed, something that was hard to bear for the apostles and will be difficult to understand for Jesus' disciples in the twenty first century. The main task for every believer is focusing on preaching the gospel without worrying about the times. The Olivet Discourse is a pastoral message of encouragement for those who wait to see their Master, but can be disappointed in the time of crisis.

In the Epistles

The Apostles saw the time of the imminent coming of Jesus in their lifetime. There are plenty of passages⁸³ that speak about the Parousia that is near and this gave them a motivation to announce His coming as a delivery from the bondage of sin.⁸⁴ Although the time was passing, they did not give up to their expectancy.⁸⁵ The apostle Paul is speaking even about a counterfeited Parousia,⁸⁶ when he mentions the deceit of the Antichrist.

⁸² See also John 8:26,28,29; Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett Falconer Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), Mk 13:28.

⁸³ These passages speak about the fact that the second coming is at the door: "the time is short" (1 Cor 7:29), "they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11), "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6), "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess 4:15), "in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves [...]; from such people turn away" (2 Tim 3:1, 2, 5), "yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37), "be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord" (Jam 5:7), "the coming of the Lord is at hand" and "the Judge is standing at the door!" (Jam 5:8-9), "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:5), "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise" (2 Pet 3:9), "little children, it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18), "remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time" (Jude 1:16-18)

⁸⁴ Rom 13:12; 1Thess 4:17; Jas 5:8; 1 Pet 4:7,17

⁸⁵ Heb 10:37 "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry."

⁸⁶ 2 Thess 2:9

Peter considers that Jesus is not delaying His coming, but He waits for sinners to repent. 2 Pet 3:9 is an important verse for this study in showing that God's plan is not marked by confusion, adjustments or inconsistencies. It defines the nature of God from which His plans are devised. Also, John, in his first epistle, declared that they have a strong conviction that the last hour was in that time.⁸⁷ However, Epistle of Hebrews mentions that the ancient faithful men that waited for the revealing glory did not receive what they expected,⁸⁸ and, thus, the promise still remains and should still be expected.⁸⁹ Russell correctly states, about the apostles, that "[n]othing can be more evident than that they all believed and taught the speedy return of the Lord."⁹⁰

Generally, the apostolic passages that speak about the imminent Parousia have exhortations for those who seem to lose the confidence that Jesus is coming soon. The apostles felt the need to remind them that the kingdom is near and Jesus will come as He promised. Without fixing dates or periods, without using a prophetic prediction, they encouraged the people to be prepared in that generation because Jesus was at the door. The exhortation about the coming of the Lord is not intended to make them hurry, anxious, but hopeful. The event of Parousia is rather great, than frightful, for the faithful ones.

In Daniel and Revelation's Prophecy

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John is offering some direct and explicit passages about the imminence of the second coming,⁹¹ while the structure of the book

⁸⁷ "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." 1 John 2:18

⁸⁸ Heb 11:39

⁸⁹ Heb 10:23,37,38, cf. Hab 2:3

⁹⁰ J. Stuart Russell, Edward E. Stevens, and Association International Preterist, *The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming* (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 2003), 540.

⁹¹ "for the time is near" Rev 1:3; "Behold, I am coming quickly" Rev. 22:12

of Daniel is put together “in a way that gives insight into final events [as] [t]he first six chapters depict history and the last six, final events.”⁹²

In these two prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation, one can find an emphasis on the last day events, while the proclamation of the second coming of Jesus is boosted. Ellen White says:

Great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost, are to shine from God’s word in their native purity. (...) Those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God will bring from the books of Daniel and Revelation truth that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. They will start into action forces that cannot be repressed. The lips of children will be opened to proclaim the mysteries that have been hidden from the minds of men. The Lord has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.⁹³

It can be seen here, that this great power to proclaim will be received in the time of the end and those who know Jesus will be targeted by this holy influence. Even children will be God’s preachers in that time united with the rest of the people of God. They 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”⁹⁴ by studying Daniel and Revelation books. Seeing Christ as a High Priest in heavenly sanctuary, as it is mentioned in these books, can transform the disciples radically.⁹⁵ Only Christ as the supreme King of Heaven can defeat Satan, which brings suffering to this world.⁹⁶

⁹² Gulley, 64.

⁹³ Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School and the Church* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publ. Assoc., 1992), 472-473.

⁹⁴ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1944), 114.

⁹⁵ 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 12:1

⁹⁶ Rev. 12:7-10

Norman Gulley sees in the book of Daniel, “the theme of deliverance that holds the book together.”⁹⁷ All the decrees to death lead to a deliverance for the people of God and He is recognized as the mighty God by the others. There is a shift in the second part of the book to last day events that are explained partially through the prism of the historical chapters. This is a great encouragement for those who will live in the eschatological period of this earth, because the same protection the people of God had in the fiery furnace and in the lion’s den will accompany them during the great tribulation.⁹⁸

In the plain of Dura, three companions stood before the great king Nebuchadnezzar with courage because they knew the power of their Lord. The same will happen at the end of time in the new plain of Dura of this world when another image, of the beast, will be the test for the faithful ones.⁹⁹ “If the local deliverances were great, how much greater will be the coming global deliverance,”¹⁰⁰ says Gulley. God has the total control over these events and He is with those who represent Him in the last great appeal. In the final chapter,¹⁰¹ in association with these eschatological events, a blessing is uttered for those who spread the teaching of the righteousness, that are compared with the stars that shine “forever”.

In the same manner as the book of Daniel, Revelation can be divided in two parts¹⁰²: historical (first 11 chapters) and eschatological (chapters 13-22). Chapter 12 is the core of the great controversy, presenting already a glorious King, Jesus.¹⁰³ In Revelation, Jesus is already on the throne, commanding His army in the last battle. He

⁹⁷ Gulley, 64.

⁹⁸ Dan. 12:1

⁹⁹ Rev. 13:11-15

¹⁰⁰ Gulley, 64.

¹⁰¹ Dan 12:3

¹⁰² Norman Gulley associates the same pattern with the structure in the book *Great Controversy*, by Ellen White.

¹⁰³ Rev 12:8.11

is coming soon as a victorious captain.¹⁰⁴ These pictures give great encouragement to the people that are spreading the last day's message, because they know that they are not alone, and that Jesus will be fulfilling His promises¹⁰⁵ In Jesus, not only the divine, but also the human victory is also assured.¹⁰⁶

In Revelation we have a structure based on Jesus walk in the sanctuary. From the beginning He is “in the midst of the seven lampstands.”¹⁰⁷ The menorah represents the message of the Kingdom of God, the Word and the light, proclaimed by Jesus and his followers.¹⁰⁸ This is an appeal “to become changed from scared saints facing final events to free saints rejoicing in a sure victory to come because of a finished victory already accomplished at Calvary.”¹⁰⁹

The sanctuary doctrine was the main subject presented before October 22, 1844. The Calvary has a special place in the context of the heavenly sanctuary doctrine and in the book of Revelation. In chapter 12 we have the climax of the victory in the great controversy between Christ and Satan in which the key element is the cross¹¹⁰. Next, this chapter will analyze the character of the final invitation of the church that collaborates with the Holy Spirit.

The Church-Spirit Collaboration in Rev 22:17.20

This subsection will present a more detailed analysis of these two verses from Revelation, as these concepts are of significance to the topic of this thesis, showing the connection between the Parousia and end time mission.

¹⁰⁴ Rev 3:11; 19:11-16; 22:7.12.20

¹⁰⁵ Matt 28:20; John 14:1-3

¹⁰⁶ Rev. 12:11

¹⁰⁷ Rev. 1:13.20

¹⁰⁸ Rev. 11:4

¹⁰⁹ Gulley, 68.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 69.

Rev 22 deals with the final realities: the final witness of Jesus Christ, the final beatitude, the final divine testimony, the final heavenly invitation, the final promise, the final prayer and the final benediction.¹¹¹ The last promise of Jesus “Behold, I am coming quickly!” (v. 7) is echoed by the final invitation in verses 17 and 20 “Come!”, the first invitation being addressed to every human being and the second to the Lord.

In the last verses of the Bible we see the warm appeal for the Church to collaborate with the Holy Spirit in the sharing of Holy Call. Actually in these two verses one can see the enthusiasm of sharing the Gospel, because the Church is illustrated as a bride. This comparison shows that the calling is a Good News message, a calling to the Wedding of the Lamb.¹¹² The greatest joy of those who collaborate with the Holy Spirit is given by the promise that Jesus is coming soon. The things that are repeated in the Bible emphasize the message. In the last chapter of the Bible, this promise of returning is repeated three times. The “churches” from verse 16 are the recipients of Jesus’ words and the living proofs of His work. This passage is not a controversial one, but I feel that it is fruitful for the present study.

These two verses contain the climax words of the final biblical message that is offering encouragement for those who patiently read the text to the end. Even John is astonished and tries to worship the angel (v. 8). The image of the Jerusalem city with the throne of God and the Lamb (v. 1-5), the last warnings to obey the prophecy (v. 6-7), the last testimony with the threefold promise of coming soon/quick (v. 7, 12, 20), the way to heaven that passes by the Cross (v. 14), the warnings not to add to or take away from the words of Jesus’ prophecy (v. 18-19) and the last salutation of grace, the grace of Jesus (v. 21), all this build the picture of the necessity of advent.

¹¹¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All About the Second Coming* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 209-211.

¹¹² Rev. 19:7.9

The first chapter of Revelation presents the image of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary¹¹³ administering the provisions of His atonement on the Cross and calling every human being to be a part of that group that have the benefits of His blood. This presence can be easily associated with that promised in the Great Commission from the end of the gospel of Matthew, which means that He is fully involved in the church's mission. In His lifetime, Jesus presented the testimony of His disciples as vital and mandatory,¹¹⁴ in a positive way, because He will guide them with His presence¹¹⁵ manifested through His Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶ The Pentecost was the greatest manifestation of the Holy Spirit that empowered those from the Upper Room to spread the Gospel “quickly” and efficient. This starting point is an encouragement for the chosen from all ages and especially for those that live in the end of time.

The collaboration between πνεῦμα (Spirit) and νύμφη (bride) is vital in the work of calling because the Spirit is associated with the inner part, while the bride, the people of God or the Church¹¹⁷, is having the exterior influence. The calling cannot be only in Spirit or only on the outside. The best is that both parts be involved. The verb ἀκούω (to hear), besides pointing to physical hearing, can also convey the idea of learning or obeying. The person who becomes a disciple is automatically called to spread the message further in a dynamic process. In verse 20, the verb μαρτυρέω (to testify) is related with martyrdom. Jesus is the first who is μαρτυρῶν (testifying) for them. The Lord is not slow, He is hurrying and is ταχύ (quickly). Bauer commenting the term ταχύ says: “the meaning of this adverb is “without delay, quickly, at once, in

¹¹³ Rev 1:10-20

¹¹⁴ Matt 10:32.33

¹¹⁵ Matt 28:20

¹¹⁶ John 15:26

¹¹⁷ Isa 62:5; Jer 2:32; Rev 19:7-8; 21:9

a short time.”¹¹⁸ This means Jesus will come fast, but also in time. His flight has no delay. He is eager to come.

Gaebelein sees here that “[t]he first two sentences in this verse (17) are not an evangelistic appeal but express the yearning of the Holy Spirit and the ‘bride’ (the whole church, cf. 21:9) for the return of Christ.”¹¹⁹ In my opinion, an appeal comes from yearning for something so both parts could be true.

The message is not addressed to those who need to hear only a good news of salvation, but to those who listen to the Revelation of Jesus. Gregg says that “those who hears refers not to the one who hears the voice of the Spirit and the bride, but to the one who hears the Book of Revelation when it is read in the churches.”¹²⁰ First of all, the message was addressed for those in the time of John the Apostle who were hearing the book being read in the churches. God is interested about their attitude.¹²¹ Everybody is accepted and the gift is “extended to all who are willing to receive it in simple faith,”¹²² because “λαβέτω suggests that though the supply is gratuitous, the responsibility of accepting and using it rests with the individual.”¹²³

Hendricksen sees two sources in verse 17: “Jesus appears to be the speaker and now announces that the response to his words comes from two sources, namely, the Holy Spirit and the church on earth. These two continue to utter their appeal for Jesus’ return with a request in the present tense that signifies ‘Carry out your plan in

¹¹⁸ Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 807.

¹¹⁹ Frank E. Gaebelein et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. With the New International Version of the Holy Bible Volume 12* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1981), 602.

¹²⁰ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Publishers, 1997), 503.

¹²¹ Rev. 1:3

¹²² John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary. An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 989.

¹²³ Henry Barclay Swete, ed. *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 306.

history with a view toward your coming.”¹²⁴ In my opinion, here there is a single source, Jesus, that is working through His agents, Church and the Holy Spirit.

The final appeal in Revelation is presented with the greatest hope given by he who is the Finality, Jesus Christ, as Kistemaker observes: “The call for the coming of the Lord is repeated in verse 20 as the last petition in the Apocalypse, ‘Amen, come Lord Jesus.’”¹²⁵ This shows that, for the Church, the promise of the second coming should be the greatest motivation for its existence and work. The urgency of the calling is stressed also by the implication of heaven and earth together. Kistemaker observes that the statement: “‘Let the one who desires take freely of the water of life,’ is also an evangelistic address.”¹²⁶

The spiritual service of the Church is not to be seen as only as a corporate one, but also individual, as its every believer should have this responsibility, because “the bride, that is, the church (...) expresses her longing for the return of Christ, her bridegroom. Not only the organic body of the church but also every individual believer who obediently responds to the prompting of the Spirit articulates this yearning. The invitation ‘Come!’ occurs twice to stress urgency.”¹²⁷

Kistemaker, when connecting this passage with 2 Pet 3:12a, considers that “God’s people have a part in shortening the time before Jesus’ return. Addressing the crowd after healing the crippled beggar, Peter told the people to repent in order to hasten the coming of Christ (Acts 3:19-21).”¹²⁸ Similarly, about AD 300, a Jewish rabbi wrote, “If the Israelites were to repent for one day, then the Son of David [the

¹²⁴ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors : An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 209.

¹²⁵ Simon Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), Rev 22:17.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and of the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 338-339.

Messiah] would come.”¹²⁹ This idea could give some perfectionists reasons to consider that they are triggering the coming of Jesus, which directly contradicts 2 Pet 3:9. Or as Ellen White says: “But like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.”¹³⁰

Beale, observed that here the Holy Spirit “speaks through the entire community of true saints and not just through prophets.”¹³¹ The priesthood, as was stated in the beginning by God,¹³² is restored not only to a tribe of Israel, but to all the people. It is interesting that after Jesus promise of coming the text doesn’t offer an explanation for the curious or a commitment from the people, but a prayer: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Stefanovic considers this as a response from those “who come to the realization of the importance of the central message of Revelation.”¹³³

Preliminary Conclusions

In this chapter Jesus has the greatest amount of direct speech than in all the book of Revelation. Jesus is keeping His promises and is witnessing in the presence of the Father for the sake of the salvation of His people, to come for them quickly.

Jesus is not late. He will be on time, even if the Church perceives it differently. God’s people are called to work, not to force Jesus come faster. Many times, Jesus,¹³⁴ as well as the apostles,¹³⁵ made an appeal for patience. This is a hint that the church

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 32. Although this thought is applied by Ellen White to the first coming of Jesus Christ, there are authors with which I agree, and who believe that this is a general principle of God’s way of working. See Franklin S. Fowler, *God’s Great Week of Time* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2006), 135. Jo Ann Davidson, “Delay and Promise,” *Perspective Digest* 20, 4 (accessed Mar 25, 2017, <http://www.perspectivedigest.org/article/180/archives/20-4/delay-and-promise>).

¹³¹ G. K. Beale, *Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), Rev 22:17.

¹³² Exod 19:6

¹³³ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 610.

¹³⁴ Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Luke 8:15

¹³⁵ Rom 5:3; 8:25; 2 Cor 6:4; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:22

needs to wait patiently for the second coming of the Lord. At the end of verse 20, there is a prayer: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” This prayer is not for Jesus to fulfill what He said, but is a creed and a reflection of the advent.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that throughout the Bible history, the people of God have been encouraged in their life of faith by the feeling of expectation. In the OT, this feeling was directed towards the Promised Land and the concept of “seed” (in the Pentateuch), and towards the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom (in later prophets), which is not immediately distinguished into the first or the second coming, but viewed as one coming that encompasses elements of both. God kept His promises even in the times when his people were not faithful to their covenant with God. In the time of the exile their first need was of a deliverer from earthly bondage. This need is echoed until the time of Jesus.

In the NT, the expectancy was explicitly directed towards the second coming of Jesus, because the first coming was already fulfilled as a result of the expectancy in the OT. The Gospels are replete with direct utterances by Jesus about His second coming. Repentance is linked to expectancy. The Olivet Discourse offers a message of encouragement toward action, especially for the times of crisis which tend to lower the feeling of the expectation of the Parousia. In the Epistles, besides more direct utterances of the second coming, the Bible writers mention how the expectancy should lead the church to mission. Revelation strengthens this point as it ends with the direct calling addressed to all the believers “to come” and to, also, call others to come in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

The next chapter will deal with the history of the expectation and preaching of the Parousia, emphasizing the period heading to and after 1844.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY OF JESUS SECOND

COMING EXPECTANCY

Introduction

In the following pages I will analyze the major factors that led to the development of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, trying to discern specific patterns related to the expectancy of the Parousia and its impact on mission. To fully grasp the roots of this movement this study will analyze the precursory history of the expectancy of the Parousia, going back as far as two centuries before 1844. It will also notice and detail the funnel effect¹ of the expectation of the Parousia until the great disappointment in 1844 and after, in the formation of the church and the development of a more organized form of mission.

Before the Advent Movement

Between 1800 and 1830 a second great religious revival took place in the United States, in a religious context that emphasized a renewed experience in personal spirituality. In this time, William Miller reconverted from deism to Christianity and became eager to understand biblical prophecy. He compared Scripture with Scripture and analyzed all the Bible using a concordance. Miller was not the only one who was

¹ The funnel effect can be seen in the fact that the preaching and study evolved from simpler to complex forms.

studying the imminent Parousia, following many biblical thinkers that will be presented in this chapter.

Among the Biblical doctrines, the one about the Second Coming of Christ has long been debated and has suffered a lot of alterations according to the times in which it was preached. It was at the forefront all along the history of the Christian Church from the times of the Fathers and going into the Middle Ages, and even during Reformation.² The words of Jesus about His return and the signs of this cosmic event were kept alive during all this period.³ A more fervent period was that which begun in the seventeenth century. There were a lot of interpretations and hopes about the Parousia. This study will review the most important names and trends of that period in order to better understand the way in which they were waiting for Christ's return and how that affected their missionary view.

In this context of waiting for the imminent Parousia, more and more mission organizations were developed.⁴ In many parts of the world (without a connection to each other) a fervor of preparing for the second coming of Jesus Christ entered many Christian denominations. Some did not believe in an agenda of second coming, but were absorbed so much in studying this subject that they were very much motivated to invest themselves in it. The advent movement was, at first, better organized in North America than in Europe.

² See Jean Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 260-266. R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 163-168.

³ See Francois Turretini, George Musgrave Giger, and James T. Dennison, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 3 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1992), 575-577. Gulley, 235-245.

⁴ In 1701 "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" is will begin its activity. In 1786 will begin Methodist missions among the heathen, and "The Society for the Establishment of Missions Among the Heathen" is starting its activity. In 1792 "Baptist Missionary Society" is founded by William Carey. In 1795 is formed "The London Missionary Society" to send missionaries in Tahiti. Next year are formed Scottish and Glasgow Missionary Societies. In 1797 "Netherlands Missionary Society" is founded. In 1798 "The Missionary Society of Connecticut" is sending missionaries to heathen lands from Vermont and Ohio. In 1800 "New York Missionary Society" is formed, etc.

The Seventeenth Century (1600-1700)

Paying close attention to the socio-political context of their times, many theologians reflected on the date of the second coming in this period. This was not a new thing, as it can be observed that the eschatological worldview of doctrine had continuity from previous centuries and swept the entire history of the Church.⁵

It is important to note, there, that there were two main lines of thought: one which followed the direction of eschatology and another which expressed interest in Pietism, with focus on an intense personal religion.⁶ These two currents of thought developed specific types of mission, the first one emphasizing academic discussion and the second one placing more importance on the development of a personal life of faith. Also, the second view registered some extreme views too, where the external mission⁷ was minimalized while more emphasis fall unto the internal mission.

Following the main Protestant leaders, plenty of personalities tried to explore the Biblical text and project a map of the future. This was not limited only to one denomination or to the work of the main theologians, but it went through the whole spectrum of people who searched the word of God. The main focus of this research was on the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation, already used for the interpretation of the signs.

G. Negrinus, for example, considered that, since the vision of Daniel 2120 years had passed, there are only 180 years until the end (going with the 2300-days prophecy). While in 1774, it was considered that the abomination of the Turks and the popes was to be stopped in the immediate future, the temple of God was still expected

⁵ Allen, 163-168.

⁶ Richard P. Lehmann, "The Second Coming of Jesus," in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Pub. Association, 2000), 918.

⁷ By external mission is understood the mission that is developed outside the church, while internal mission is done when the energies for work are consumed inside the church.

to be cleansed in the more distant future. However, in his conclusion he noted that “we hope that there is less time until the end.”⁸

R. Eglin considered that the end would come in the year 1636, twenty-five years after the conclusion of his written works, without explaining why he chose that date. P. Holstadius and Johannes Arndt spoke about 1625 as the year of the end of the world, while Johan Alsted finds the year 1694 as the beginning of the millennia of the righteous. Very interesting, the year 1666 was seen by the general public as the time in which Rome will be destroyed, when fire will fall from the sky and the world will end.

A French Reformed theologian, Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713) saw the persecutions of the Waldensians by the Austrians as being the final persecutions, while he interpreted the 1260 years as being fulfilled in 1710. Then he considered that the 1335 years of the book of Daniel would have been finished after 75 years, that is in 1785, and all Christians would have been united. Lastly, the German Reformed Heinrich Horch, a friend of Spener, had calculated the 2300 years beginning from 510 BC (considering the interdiction to rebuild the temple) and came to the conclusion that the end of the period might be in 1790.⁹

Concurrently, one can note that the same prophetic interest was manifested in the British colonies of North America. John Cotton (1585-1652), also known as the patriarch of New England said: “I will not be too confident, because I am not a Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet to foretell things to come, but so far as God helps by Scripture light, about the time 1655, there will then be such a blow given to this beast,

⁸ Petre Chiricuta, Aurel Savin, and Radu Comanescu, *Parusia Sau Despre a Doua Venire* (Bucuresti, Romania: Anastasia, 2001), 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-56.

and to the head of this beast, which is Pontifex Maximus, as that we shall see a further gradual accomplishment and fulfilling of the Prophecy here.”¹⁰

William Aspinwell (1630-1662), another theologian of the New World, wrote a book called *A Brief Description of the Fifth Monarchy* based on the prophecies of Daniel, coming to the conclusion that these monarchies will be conquered by the everlasting fifth monarchy of God when the millennium will begin. He considered the year 1673 as the time in which the 10 horns should be broken, “But as for the precise year, I dare not determine.”¹¹

As a conclusion for this first period, we can see that many were fascinated by the prophecies and wanted to understand them. The hard times in which they lived pushed forward the attempts to find out the date of Christ’s return. And to all of them, the conclusion was that it won’t be long until Jesus will indeed return. These people used the principle *Scriptura est sui ipsius interpres*.¹² However, they were not just an isolated group, as the study of biblical prophecies was enjoyed by the personalities of that age, such as Isaac Newton, John Milton, John Bunyan, Jeremiah Taylor or Matthew Henry.¹³ Their efforts were marked by their belief in the second coming of Jesus and this was a main motivation for their missionary zeal, which was rewarded with conversions.¹⁴

The Eighteenth Century (1700-1800)

The next century finds the population of Europe in a great religious fervor. The wars, the diseases and the natural catastrophes had created a climate prone to

¹⁰ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹² James T. Bretzke, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary: Latin Expressions Commonly Found in Theological Writings* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 127.

¹³ L. W. Munhall, *The Lord's Return and Kindred Truth* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898), 19.

¹⁴ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982), 368.

eschatological interpretation. The popular fervor was present in regions of France or in cities of Germany, and also in different regions of Europe and America. This also prepared the way for The Great Awakening in the New World.

In 1726, the preacher of the Reformed Dutch, pastor Theodore Frelinghuysen, started a new missionary work in New Jersey. He was a model for the Presbyterian pastors Gilbert and William Tennent, who, thus, soon started the revival in the Scottish colonies in the middle of the country. However, the main personality of the period was the Congregationalist pastor Jonathan Edwards (1702-1758).¹⁵

Edwards studied the Scripture, especially the book of Revelation. He sustained the fervent hope that God will do something special for the people of New England, but he was prudent about the beginning of the revival. That was until the whole region was enveloped, when he began to believe that those were special times: "'Tis not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture. (...) And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America."¹⁶ In spite of this hope, he came back to a more cautious opinion and even noted a date for the Millennium somewhere around the year 2000. He considered that this year would mark the beginning of the seventh and final millennium of world history.¹⁷ The missionary results were amazing, between 30.000 to 40.000 people and 150 new churches being added in New England. Thousands more came to the southern and middle colonies' churches. A new spirit came to the houses of this new converts and a new missionary zeal began.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 366-367.

¹⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 353.

¹⁷ Steven R. Pointer, "American Postmillennialism: Seeing the Glory," *Christian History*, 1998, 28.

¹⁸ Cairns, 368.

Another important religious movement of the period was the birth of Methodism, with the two Wesley brothers, John and Charles. It came as a separation from the Anglican church and a return to a more profound and intense religious experience. In that period, there were private gatherings in private houses looking for holiness and eschatological excitement and still keeping a Wesleyan membership. Some Methodists even believed that the true faith had been blotted out, so they turned toward an apocalyptic analysis of the apostate world. There were a lot of visions and dreams.¹⁹

John Wesley, the founder of this movement, in his main work, *A Plain Account on Christian Perfection*, does not place much emphasis on eschatology. He was circumspect about any metaphysical speculation. He thought that any preoccupation with eschatology may cloud the central issues of salvation. He focused on the development of the Christian character and, thus, speculations were not useful for such an endeavor.²⁰

Going back to the persons who calculated the date of the Parousia, one can see that the new century was still under the influence of such persons. William Whiston (1667-1752) saw the beginning of the Parousia and the beginning of the millennium for the year 1716. Thomas Burnet, went further, and made more exact calculations. He begins his calculations from 455 (the division of Rome) and added 1260 years to arrive at the year 1715. The 1290 days were concluded in 1745, and 1790 was the end of the 1335 days, the year of Parousia and the beginning of the millennium. These calculations of prophetic periods were considered, at that time, necessary in

¹⁹ Grant Underwood, "Millenarianism and Popular Methodism in Early Nineteenth Century England and Canada," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (2008): 83-85.

²⁰ Michael Lodahl, "Wesleyan Reservations About Eschatological Enthusiasm," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (2008): 50-51.

eschatological understanding, but had not a great influence in mission, raising some negative reactions.

The English Baptist pastor John Gill presents a classical protestant eschatology, mentioning some postmillennial²¹ features in a premillennial structure. He interprets the seven letters of Revelation 2-3 in such a way that he believed they were living in the age of the church of Sardis, which began with the Protestant reformation. The age of Philadelphia would bring the latter glory of the church and the age of Laodicea would precede the second coming of Christ. He noted some signs from the age of Philadelphia: the destruction of the two Antichrists (the pope and the Turk), the pouring out of the seven vials, and a general spread of the gospel and the full effusion of God's spirit.²² Gill, as it may be seen, links the Parousia with the mission of spreading the gospel globally. They are connected because of the prophecy made by Jesus in Matt 24:14 and now, Gill is introducing this idea in his commentary about the Revelation.

Back in Europe, one can see John William Fletcher (1729-1785) who in his work, *Letter on the Prophecies* (1775), reiterated the teachings of Isaac Newton and understood that he lived in the end times. He considered that Christ was going to come to destroy the wicked and to rise the righteous dead a thousand years before the final judgment. One can also note the words of Thomas Coke (1747-1814), a Methodist bishop: "Near, even at the door, is the great day of judgment. The period of time that yet remains we know is short; how short who can tell! We ought to be in

²¹ Postmillennialism considers that the second coming of Jesus will take place after Millennium, while premillennialism considers that Parousia will take place before the Millennium. These concepts are linked with Rev 20.

²² James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology a Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 103.

constant and hourly expectation of it. At the coming of Christ to avenge and deliver his faithful people, the faith of his coming will in great measure be lost.”²³

The seventeenth century brought two important events that were seen as signs of the Christ’s second coming. The first one was the earthquake of Lisbon of 1755, one of the deadliest catastrophes with a death toll between 10.000 and 100.000 casualties. The second event, maybe even more important than the first, was the arrest of pope Pius VI in 1798. Many saw in these two a fulfilment of the Daniel’s prophecies. A new interest in those prophecy appeared.²⁴

James Bicheno, a preacher of the Free Church, claimed that in 1795 the Gospel will be preached in the whole world and the Jews will be converted, and understood that the end is very near. In 1798, the German author Heinrich Stilling (1740-1817) concluded that if one counts 666 years from the year 1132, when pope Innocent III called the Holy Roman Emperor Lothar II as the pope’s servant, one would arrive to the exact year of 1798.

Thus, it can be noted that the seventeenth century continued the same trend of interpretation, many persons trying to find out the final resolution in the human history. Also, the arrest of the pope at the end of the century was considered by many a clear prophetic sign. However, the main religious bodies and their leaders were not that much impressed with this method, focusing more on living the Christian life in a genuine faith.

From the historical part observed until now, it can be seen that the interest in understanding more about Parousia exceeded denominational boundaries, being a characteristic among many serious researchers of the Bible. The books of Daniel and

²³ Munhall, 22-23.

²⁴ George R. Knight, *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 14.

Revelation were the main parts of the Bible that offered a deep insight in studying the Parousia. Every time this issue was studied, in the same proportion, the mission zeal grew²⁵ and many believers were motivated to spread the good news of Jesus returning, although not every time a great movement took place. Date calculations flamed the interest about the second coming for short periods, but after that, they lead to disappointment and unnecessary debates. Social and religious events, especially those linked with the papacy, were compared with signs from the apocalyptic writings of the Bible, and were used as arguments that the second coming is near. On the other side, pietism was considered a necessity for the preparation and the focus was on personal godly life and reform inside the church. Because of this orientation toward the interior of the church, sometimes, pietism was not a good catalyst for mission, especially when was oriented toward the individual life and not to proclamation.

The First Part of the Nineteenth Century (1800-1830)

The 19th century begins with an important event in the United States, the Second Great Awakening. Nathan Hatch notes that “judging by the number of sermons, books and pamphlets that addressed prophetic themes, the first generation of US citizens may have lived in the shadow of Christ’s second coming more intensely than any other generation since.”²⁶ This new religious awakening was different in few aspects from the first one. It was accompanied by a secular millennialism which saw the United States as a promoter of liberty and progress in the world. In the same time, it marked a separation from the intellectual trend of the period which was characterized by deism and an anti-Christian effort.

²⁵ See Ron Davies, *I Will Pour out My Spirit: A History and Theology of Revivals and Evangelical Awakenings* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 1992), 9, 133, 150-163.

²⁶ Knight, *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived*, 14.

After 1825, the movement had at its center the figure of the famous preacher Charles Finney with his success in upstate New York which later spread to the great cities of the East. Impressed by the spectacular effect of the evangelization, he said: “If the church will do her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years.”²⁷ In Europe, a special interest was manifested in understanding the 1260 days from Daniel’s prophecy which “would soon move on to closer consideration of the longest time period in biblical prophecy – the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14.”²⁸ The mission was, thus, oriented toward intelligent minds interested in these type of calculations.

While the way was prepared for the message of the second coming in that time, other influences opposing this message appeared with “the beginning of Darwinian evolution, the entrenchment of the historic-critical methodology in biblical study, and a widespread rejection of eschatology.”²⁹ This tended to brake the momentum of this great enthusiasm for the mission. These two worldviews, represented by those who studied the Bible, on one hand, and by those who accepted evolutionism on the other, gained adepts mainly from the undecided people, without mixing the two camps.

In this context of struggling for a better understanding of Jesus second advent, in 1800, after many afflictions and seven years of work, William Carey baptized the first convert in his missionary carrier in India. Inspired by the Moravian brothers and by the study of other cultures, he organized a missionary society and decided to go to India, while 86% of Christians were living in the global north. He learned Bengali and translated the Bible in this language. Problems appeared in the late 1830s when the

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ Richard W. Schwarz et al., *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 2000), 14.

²⁹ Gulley, 92.

zeal began to wither. There was an economical depression that brought down the American optimism of their power and their involvement in the birth of the millennial kingdom of God.³⁰

As a preliminary conclusion for this section, it may be observed that, in these years who preceded the Advent Movement one can see that the message of the imminence of the Parousia was disseminated through sermons, writings and camp meetings, offering the framework for a revitalized worship oriented to mission. Again, the tendency of establishing dates and periods for the second advent was present and this offered only short period enthusiasm. Some patterns like the manner of interpreting the prophecies with a greater accent on mathematical calculations, the way message was spread, the spiritual movements with their fervor that lead to revival, the mission organizations that were formed, all these linked or even generated by the imminent expectation of the second coming, are to be seen as echoed in the Advent Movement. It seems like the path was providentially prepared for something greater to take place. Further it will be analyzed what happened in Advent Movement.

The Advent Movement (1830-1844)

I divided the nineteenth century in different short periods to underline the next part that preceded the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist church and the development of its understanding about the mission.

Miller and the Millerites

The Parousia expectancy flamed the minds and hearts of Christians in every century after Christ's ascension. It was a much debated subject throughout the history of Christianity, with different aspects of it suffering alterations during different

³⁰ Knight, *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived*, 16-20.

periods. In the United States of America, more so than in Europe, an advent movement was at first developed, which magnetized masses of people to repent, sell their properties and invest for the proclamation of this good news. William Miller gave his first sermon on August 14, 1831, when he was 50 years old, in a Baptist church. He led the Advent Movement in United States for 15 years.

The Millerites, named also Adventists because of their belief in the Second Coming, numbering between fifty and one hundred thousand people,³¹ expected the greatest event in history and “those ten words had become in a large part of the Western world a rallying cry for a generation about to witness this event. What were the words? ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ Mat 25:6.”³² One can observe here their positivism in the motivation to evangelize the world with the gospel. Their actions were motivated by this expectancy of the bridegroom and they considered that they should transmit this message with great enthusiasm, because “it was their love for Jesus, their appreciation of what He had done for them that had made them so eager for His return in 1844.”³³

The mission of the Millerites was theologically driven by the prophecy in which they found the foundation for their enthusiasm to spread the Gospel to the ones that waited for the second coming. These recipients were not only that, but also the next propagators of this message. Whitney Cross, speaking about the enthusiasm and the credo of William Miller when he had completed his biblical study, writes his credo and of those who waited Christ coming:

I believe Jesus Christ will come again in his glory and person to our earth, where he will accomplish his divine purposes in the saving of his people,

³¹ Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed That the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2000), 513.

³² Jerome L. Clark, *1884: Religious Movements*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1968), 15.

³³ Schwarz et al., 175.

destroying the wicked from the earth, and taking away the sin of the world.

I believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near, even at the door, even within twenty-one years—on or before 1843.

I believe that before Christ comes in his glory, all sectarian principles will be shaken, and the votaries of the several sects scattered to the four winds; and that none will be able to stand but those who are built on the word of God.³⁴

Miller was not only endowed with a sharp mind, but he was also very firm, very solid in his convictions. Although, at first, he was shy and isolated, when he started his work, he showed himself as a good leader and preacher. He spoke not to have influence, but to share his personal belief. Larrabee says: “What Miller added to the traditional fire-and-brimstone mixture was the ingredient of mathematical computation as an ‘infallible’ method of unraveling mysterious prophecies. This appealed strongly to Yankee ingenuity, and challenged the competitive spirit of thousands of amateur Bible interpreters.”³⁵ This rational approach is to be seen later in common mentality and mission of the organized Seventh-day Adventist church.

There are some things that prepared the way for Miller’s message such as, economic factors like Panic of 1837, which continued into the 1840s, the Albury Parish Park conference in England (1826-1830), that had the subject of second coming,³⁶ more than one hundred books published in America before 1840 about the second coming, the sixteen articles wrote by Miller in *Telegraph* in 1832, and others.

Key Leaders

Two years after Miller started preaching, on November 13, 1833, America experienced the falling of the stars. This event produced a great impression and serious thoughts in many hearts. Many were touched and, among them, capable

³⁴ Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 43.

³⁵ H.A. Larrabee, "The Trumpeter of Doomsday," *American Heritage*, April, 1964, 100.

³⁶ After these years, 300 ministers of the Church of England proclaimed the speedy end.

people dedicated their talents for the spreading of the good news that Jesus is coming. Joshua Himes, who was 35 years old at that time, helped Miller organize better and enter into the big cities. He sensed “the urgency of the message” when he understood that “Christ would return about the year 1843.”³⁷ Josiah Litch was convinced after reading Miller’s lectures published in a book form and became a lieutenant of the advent cause starting to preach after a dream he had. In 1841, Litch presented the advent views and these discussions attracted even more interest. Eventually, even senators and representatives came to hear Miller, Himes and Litch in Washington D.C. In 1838, after he had hesitated for three years, Charles Fitch was also convinced by Miller’s lectures. He made a chart inspired by Habakkuk 2:2.³⁸ It seems he was the most loved among Adventist preachers of that time. These characters were very serious in applying the word of God as it was and very eager to proclaim the new discoveries, encouraged by the nature of the message.

Ellen White (still Harmon, at that time) was very young when she heard about the first angel message, shortly after being dismissed from the Methodist church with all her family. She was characterized as serious-minded girl. James White, in spite of a defective eyesight and discouragement from others, became a school teacher enjoying manual labor and, continuing his study of the Bible, he became dedicated for the warning of the world. In 1846, he married Ellen G. Harmon. Joseph Bates, a sea captain, was retired when heard first angel message. After that, he immediately renounced to use alcohol, tobacco, tea and coffee. All the money he had from an inheritance were invested in spreading the gospel of the second coming. John Andrews was fifteen years old at the disappointment of 1844 and, later, at twenty-one,

³⁷ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 16.

³⁸ Emma Elizabeth Howell, *The Great Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1935), 14.

he became a part in sharing the three angel's message, being also the first foreign missionary.

Although the movement in North America was better organized, in Europe “a great number of books on prophecy and the second advent were produced.”³⁹ Preachers like Robert Winter, who baptized a few thousand preaching the advent faith, Joseph Wolff, named “the missionary of the world,”⁴⁰ Lacunza, who was convinced of the soon second coming studying the Scripture, Edward Irving, James Hatley Frere, Henry Drumond, Horatius Bonar, George Müller, Bengel, Gaussen, all were convinced by and preached Bible passages like Revelation 14:6.7, Daniel 2, Joel 2:28-32, Revelation 21. The power of this message was reflected in the power of the mission they developed.

The Message

Speaking about the signs from Luke 21:25, in sun, moon and stars, *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* affirms: “these signs were specific, marking the end of the 42 months of persecution.”⁴¹ The contemporary authors saw these signs from the Olivet discourse as „no signs by which the end can be calculated. In fact they are not eschatological signs at all”⁴², because of the verse that said “but the end is not yet.”⁴³ Although some did not accept an exact time idea for the Second Advent, they “were convinced of the certainty and nearness of Christ's coming and their need of preparation.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lehmann, in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, 905.

⁴² George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1973), 326.

⁴³ Mark 13:7

⁴⁴ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *William Miller: Herald of the Blessed Hope* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1994), 20.

Charles Fitch (1805-1844) preached “at this very time of revolution”⁴⁵ in 1843 that “Babylon is fallen” so strengthening the call to “come out of her, my people.”⁴⁶ He prepared the way for those who accepted the message of the coming of the judgment to depart from the body “of those churches that had rejected the judgment-hour message.”⁴⁷

In his bible study, “Miller became convinced that the temporal millennium, a period when sin would be practically wiped out and universal happiness would prevail,”⁴⁸ although a doctrine popular in that time, was not from Scripture. Then, he arrived at the conclusion that the coming was “premillennial, and that the event, instead of being at some remote future time, would occur about the year 1843. The very thought thrilled him.”⁴⁹ Miller pleaded that “we are to be ‘continually prepared’ for the Advent.”⁵⁰ Miller insisted to those who considered a false message⁵¹ that its falsity should be proved with the Bible.

Based on comparing the 2300-day prophecy with the Jewish calendar, Miller considered that Christ would come “between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844”⁵². The publications were calling for the preparation to meet Jesus. The first disappointment for the Millerites came after March 21, 1844. Miller and Himes were equally frustrated, but they found comfort in Habbacuk 2:3 “though it tarry, wait for it”. Their enthusiasm was not so great anymore, but the work continued until August, 1844.

⁴⁵ LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 69-70. Babylon was understood as being the fallen protestant churches.

⁴⁶ Rev. 14:8

⁴⁷ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 20.

⁴⁸ Howell, 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ White, *William Miller: Herald of the Blessed Hope*, 9.

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

⁵² Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 21.

In August, Snow came with a new calculation, based on Karaite calendar, saying that the cleansing of the sanctuary should be connected with the Day of Atonement and would take place in October 22, 1844, after two months. The Adventists Millerites gain new courage to do mission and Nichol observes that they “saw no reason why they should not go forth again to proclaim to all men the soon coming of Christ.”⁵³ Their proclamation was full of enthusiasm saying “‘the Bridegroom cometh!’ Christ is coming on the tenth day of the seventh month! Time is short; get ready! Get ready!”⁵⁴ It can be observed that when they had a new target, in their understanding about the second coming, they started again to preach the uplifting message. As Schwartz and Greenleaf say about this period: “Adventist activities had resumed with increased vigor,”⁵⁵ making new plans to spread the gospel and trying to go in many directions with their lectures. Camp meetings were organized in many states from US⁵⁶ and “the bulk of Adventist believers welcomed the new message enthusiastically.”⁵⁷

Miller and Himes were very excited about this new interpretation and were having words of praise making all efforts possible to announce the great event. In spite of this, they and other leaders were reluctant to put their hope in a definite day. Miller said: “I am now waiting every hour for what I then looked for.”⁵⁸ George Storrs expressed his joyful faith in this event saying: “Beyond a doubt, in my mind, the tenth day of the seventy month, will witness the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. We are then within a few days of that event. Awful moment to those who are not prepared – but glorious to those who are ready. I feel

⁵³ Nichol, 208.

⁵⁴ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 23.

⁵⁵ Schwarz et al., 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁸ Nichol, 209.

that I am making my last appeal that I shall ever make through the press. My heart is full.”⁵⁹ It can be seen that their enthusiasm grew more and more and they could not retain this message only for them. George Knight notes that their mission was driven by the thought of their conviction that Jesus is coming soon: “In their conviction and exuberance, the believers put their all into a final effort to warn the world of its impending doom”⁶⁰ They didn’t think about provisions for the future days and resigned from their work, thinking that all their efforts and energies should be invested in warning the world.

After that day of October 22, 1844 passed, it seemed like all their energy passed to the scoffers that mocked them without fear. In their weeping they should have reconsidered their positions. Many left the movement and returned to their churches. A part of them under Himes’ leadership considered that on that date nothing happened in heaven. Some remained, finding consolation in prayer. The feeling that their expectation was not rewarded, led them to discouragement and isolation from society. Miller considered that every day he would expect the Savior’s coming to be “TODAY,” until He comes.

After October 22, 1844

When the great disappointment came, darkness surrounded their faith and their mission. Christ was proclaimed in an unknown power until then. Immediately after the disappointment those who remained united, after many left their rows, could hardly think about mission.

⁵⁹ Midnight Cry, Oct. 3, 1844, quoted in George Knight, *A Brief History*, 23.

⁶⁰ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 24.

The date of October 22, 1844 marks the beginning of the Adventist history. However, even after this, the trend to establish other dates for Parousia⁶¹ was not completely avoided and other dates were considered, like, for example, 1845 (one day – year of Judgment from 1844) and then 1851 (after 7 years) both proposed by Joseph Bates, 1884 (40 years from 1844), 1888 (blue laws), 1917, 1928, early 1930s (the last who were alive from the group of Millerites), 1964 (120 years from 1844), and others. Ellen White warned against the fixation of other dates.⁶² On long term, this was not a solution for their disappointment and not a help for the church's mission.

The “Shut-Door” and Next Steps in the Mission of SDA Church

The Sabbatarian Adventists considered that the door of grace was closed for sinners. It was from 1844 until 1852. This concept of “shut-door” was inherited from Millerites and sustained by the leaders of the future Seventh-day Adventist church, Whites and Bates. Knight considers that in this period they thought that “the evangelistic outreach of their movement was restricted to those who had accepted the Millerite message of the 1830s and early 1840s. The door of mercy had shut for all others”.⁶³ They did not want to reach people outside the movement. Their vision was very far from thinking to mission overseas.

Although this approach could be considered anti-mission, this time was very fruitful. Their resources were spent for internal needs until they built a dogmatic foundations and the members formed a nucleus for the future organized church. This

⁶¹ Jon Paulien, *As Speculation Builds, Let's Keep Our Eyes Focused on What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1998), 10-14.

⁶² “Different times were set for the Lord to come, and were urged upon the brethren. But the Lord showed me that they would pass by, for the time of trouble must take place before the coming of Christ, and that every time that was set, and passed, would weaken the faith of God's people.” Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 72.

⁶³ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 49.

was a time for the internal mission in which the group that remained together, after the Great Disappointment from 1844, crystalized its foundation. Although while in the Millerite movement, many of them had given up to do their usual labors and their fields had remained uncultivated, now, after a few years, Ellen White advised the leaders of the church to project institutions, like sanatoriums, schools, publishing houses, that will serve for the long term mission.

The pioneers believed that the door was shut for those that were outside the church, until 1852, when they considered that the door was partially open for those that were in USA and rejected the message of Jesus second coming. Then, starting in 1874, the church believed that the message should go to the other Christian nations and later, in 1890, to the entire world. After seventy years (1960) a new era began for post-colonial mission and thirty years later (1990) a new phase of mission from every-where to every-where.

In 1882, Ellen White made an appeal to the Adventist people: “We must renounce our own righteousness and plead for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us.”⁶⁴ Obedience is the effect and not the cause of the faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and merits. This was the message that prepared the way for the internal Seventh-day Adventist mission in 1888, by the proclamation of Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones. At this moment the old leaders of the church felt that they lost the main tool that gave uniqueness to their message: obedience by the Law. Actually, the new light ought to have helped them see more clearly that Christ and His righteousness was to be in the center of their message, while obedience was to be an effect of their relationship with Christ. The mission evolved after 1888 against the

⁶⁴ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1978), 219.

opinion of the skeptics. Between 1901 and 1930 the mission of the church developed under leadership of A. G. Daniells and William Spicer, the department of Foreign Mission Board being under the secretariat of the General Conference. In this period, the church believed that the message of the third angel should be proclaimed in all the world, as the prophecy said.⁶⁵ After a few years, in the mid-1950s “Adventism was truly a worldwide religious body,”⁶⁶ a mature church that wanted to enlarge its vision about the mission, and although the faith in the imminent Parousia was still alive, greater plans on long term were made for its mission.

If until now, the mission of the church was focused on closer areas, one could observe a change in focus starting with 1989. At this time Luis Bush presented, at “Lausanne II”,⁶⁷ the concept of the “10/40 window” (Middle East and North Africa), the number of evangelical missionaries increased from 3 to 15% and Seventh-day Adventist Church enlarged the missionary vision in order to sustain this area. Until now, the church did not focus too much on Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists because there were other groups considered closer to its understanding and easier to reach. The mission was directed mainly toward other Christians and Animists. Christians studied the same Bible, while Animists were open mainly because they don’t have sacred texts as the Bible, don’t have clergy and a formal doctrine, while they believe in a Supreme Creator and have moral concepts with similarities to the biblical ten commandments. Waiting for the Parousia, the church was challenged to do long term mission projects.

⁶⁵ Rev 14:6.

⁶⁶ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 135.

⁶⁷ In 1989, in Manila took place “The Second International Congress on World Evangelization” which is called shortly “Lausanne II”. It was a continuation of “First International Congress on World Evangelization” from 1974, held at Lausanne, Switzerland. Luis Bush, a prominent missiologist presented at “Lausanne II” the need of entering in the “Resistant Belt”, which was named after “10/40 window”.

As it was observed, at the beginning of the development of the SDA church, a certain manner to interpret the prophecies developed in which the discussions were in more concrete terms and with more logical arguments. The dedication of those from the beginning of Advent Movement was proportional with their conviction about the fulfilling of the prophecy concerning the imminent Parousia. Although the disappointment was a cold shower for those who were part of Advent Movement, the development of the group did not collapse. Taking advantage of this brake for reorganization, later the mission of the church began to evolve and to be adjusted with time.

Conclusions

The Advent Movement, which resulted in the formation of the organized Seventh-day Adventist church, was not started only as a great emotional movement, but as a serious endeavor to understand the prophecy, comparing verse with verse from Scripture. The new discoveries were not kept hidden, but were integrated as the centrality of the message that was to be spread. The belief of the imminent Parousia energized the believers and the first step was not to do an organization, but to reach new adepts.

In spite of the fact that many presentations were based on prophecy charts, not everybody was convinced by the calculations of time, but they felt a need to be converted and prepared to see Jesus. The main motivation was not a negative one, given by fear, but a positive one given by the solemnity and enthusiasm of staying in front of the King of Heaven.

In 1844, Adventist Pioneers left their jobs, their fields and other earthly obligations and invested their time and money to proclaim the second coming of Jesus. When the disappointment came, because the Parousia did not come as

expected, the mission stopped and the energies were consumed inside the believers group. But when the believers had a new light and could look forward to the destiny of their faith, the second coming, they started again to preach the message of the imminent Parousia. After a few years, they reached the conclusion that they needed to have an organized church with institutions and employees, which made the vision shift and the church to understand more and more that to expect Jesus and prepare with all energies for Parousia is not incompatible with serving in missionary institutions.

The Seventh-day Adventist church can be thankful for the history that preceded her beginnings, a history in which one can discover many lessons about mistakes and successes in spreading the news about second coming of Jesus. The extremes of unnecessary calculations and exclusive individually oriented pietism, without mission, could distract the missionaries from the complex character of mission that should be based on serving and leading others to meet the Savior. There are lessons that should be learned from the past in order to shape a successful mission for the future. What needs to be observed very clearly is that the new prophetic discoveries about Parousia were associated with mission and mission was very much inspired by the conviction that the “Bridegroom is coming.” The mission derived from the understanding of the message from biblical prophecies and, in the same time, the strong beliefs of this new church resisted because of its orientation toward mission.

The next chapter will deal with the perspectives for the mission in contemporary SDA church.

CHAPTER 4

PERSPECTIVES FOR TODAY'S MISSION

Introduction

The last chapter presented the history of the pinnacle of hope, that was tested by the great disappointment in the forming of the new Adventist movement and, later, the organized SDA church. This chapter will first describe the pitfalls of extremism regarding the expectation of the Parousia and the negative effects that these have on the mission of the church. The focus of this sub-chapter will be on the Last Generation Theology, as this theology, with its emphasis on wrongfully understood holiness, has the greatest potential in deceiving the current generation, especially lay people. The second part of the chapter, will offer a revised model of the remnant concept and how its mission is influenced by a correct understanding of the second coming.

Deviations in the Parousia Expectancy

Different factors like postmodernism, New Age, the Ecumenical Movement, the Charismatic Movement, the Sunday/Sabbath Law, the evolution theory, can influence the mission of the SDA church. On the inside, the SDA Church may face other threats: fanaticism, misuse of Ellen White's books, movements marked by extremism in piety or secularism, etc.

Further, I choose to analyze two extremes that can lead the mission of the church in a wrong direction: Last Generation Theology and Secular Adventism. I consider that these two currents have the potential to polarize many persons from the church spectrum and the mission of the church can be distorted.

Last Generation Theology

“Last Generation Theology” or “Final Generation Theology” is a movement inside Seventh-day Adventist Church, that tries to deal with the problem of sin and considers that before the second coming of Christ there will be a special generation of people that will have no sin. This will trigger the eschatological events: the loud cry from Rev 18:2, the latter rain, the sealing and the end of sinful history on this earth.

The seed of this theory seems to be found in Ellet Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones writings, then developed by M. L. Andreasen in the book “The Sanctuary Service” and by some other theologians and authors. The exponents of LGT are assuming that God will be vindicated and proved right through the perfection of His people from this generation.

I will further analyze the assumptions of LGT and their implications on mission, especially cross-cultural mission. The hypothesis is that the perfectionism recommended by this movement is dragging people to righteousness by works, a misunderstanding of grace, sanctification and eschatology, a misunderstanding of mission in general (internal and external), criticism against the church (especially against leaders), isolationism, extremism, fanaticism, etc.

“Last Generation Theology” Beliefs

One Perfect Man or Perfect Generation –
M. L. Andreasen

M.L. Andreasen stirred the minds of theologians and thinkers with this quote that seemed to challenge the way eschatology was understood in the SDA until then: “It is necessary for God to produce one man who has kept the law. In the absence of such a man, God loses and Satan wins.”¹ In another place, the same author speaks, in the chapter named “The 144,000”, not only about one man (generic, human being), but of a generation: “In the last generation God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning.”² Saying that it is necessary, means that God cannot end the salvation plan without this condition. As Woodrow Whidden suggests, it can be asked: Will God “wait interminably until He get vindicated by His professed people?”³

By saying that Parousia cannot take place until human beings are living this perfection means that the Creator depends on creatures to fulfill His promises. In the same time, it is considered that the church does not need to focus on mission, but search personal sanctification and when it achieves this state, then it can go to proclaim the gospel. Maybe this could be considered a marginal idea, but as George Knight, the Adventist historian, discovers, Andreasen’s appeal was very strong and “became the denomination’s dominant (but not exclusive) theology of the 1940s and 1950s.”⁴

¹ Andreasen, 316.

² Ibid., 318.

³ Woodrow Whidden, *Repairers of the Link: The Humanity of Christ Debate* (unpublished work), Center of Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 133.

⁴ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 2000), 149.

Last Generation Theology in Kirkpatrick's View

Larry Kirkpatrick is one author who sustains this theology and wrote many materials in the last years in which presents the logic in this system of thinking. He shows their conception of the plan of salvation in the pages of an article from *Adventist Today*:⁵

1. In the end sin will “be eradicated root and branch”
2. “Jesus is central to our salvation.”
3. “We are injured by sin” and need “to be healed.”
4. “Jesus invites our participation in his divine plan for ending the sin problem. Beliefs shape actions.”
5. God is known “by the judgments He makes.”
6. “God at last points to a people and says ‘Here are they that keep the commandments.’”
7. God’s last generation, “Seventh-day Adventists are appointed to demonstrate” that they love the law of God. This group is “in the center of stage.”
8. The cleansing of the Sanctuary (Dan. 8:14) is the cleansing of His people of sin.

Observing these points, it can be seen that the main preoccupation is solving the sin problem. Every point is preparing the way for the other. From the fourth point on the way is prepared to say that human can have a contribution to God’s dealing with sin. Point seven is introducing the idea that Seventh-day Adventists need to

⁵ Larry Kirkpatrick, "The Last Generation and Daniel 8:14," *Adventist Today*, Spring 2009, 12-14.

demonstrate that they are those who can keep the law, being cleared by sin, as stated in point eight.

This perfectionism is affecting the idea of continual dependence to the Savior, making the saints to look like perfect statues to be admired by others. Explaining the main core beliefs of LGT, in his book, *Cleanse and Close*, Kirkpatrick is presenting 14 points⁶ from which I want to emphasize four:

No. 5: “Through the Process of Sanctification, the Character of Christ is Perfectly Reproduced in Us.”⁷

No. 6: Obedience is “a condition for the salvation,”⁸ “necessary and causative for salvation.”⁹

No. 11: We are “delaying the second coming”¹⁰ through our sins. In this situation God cannot cleanse the sanctuary, because He cannot cleanse us.

No. 12: “God will wait for the maturing of Christian character in a significant number of people as the chief condition determining those events, such as latter rain, loud cry, sealing and Sunday law.”¹¹

As it can be observed, these four points underline the idea that personal obedience is to be regarded as causative for salvation while the eschatological events cannot take place without humans who are perfected in their character. The exponents of this belief consider that the remnant church is delaying Christ coming by being unprepared to become perfect.

“Last Generation Theology” Assumptions

After studying this theology, Whidden¹² concludes that, in their opinion, God is vindicated by: 1. Jesus taking a sinful nature (“post-fall”), 2. God having in “last generation” a perfect generation who demonstrates that obeying the law is possible.

⁶ Kirkpatrick, 51-112.

⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹¹ Ibid., 112.

¹² Whidden, 133.

Although they pretend that Ellen White is sustaining their opinion, she doesn't speak about a special last generation that should be in a perfect state.

One important text for this theology is Rom 8:19: "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God." Here, however, the Bible is not speaking about a "last generation" and also, it doesn't speak about the vindication of God's character either. In this verse, the biblical text speaks about every faithful human being from every generation along the ages.

The second text is Mat. 5:48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." The word "perfect" here is τέλειοι, from τέλειος means fully developed, mature, full grown, not necessarily that the person is in a state in which cannot commit sin.

Last text is Rev. 22:11: "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." Their assumption here is that the process of being made just is as they explain it, that cleansing the sanctuary means cleansing of the people and they should be perfect in accordance with the ten commandments.

Critique of "Last Generation Theology"

The Perfect State of the Last Generation
vs. Dependence on the Savior

The main observation that can be made to this theology is that it reads the Bible and the writing of Ellen White with some prefabricated glasses, with some assumptions that can fit in the text, but in reality they are not there. On long term, this view can have some bad consequences on somebody who seeks salvation and on, more important, on the mission of the church too. The focus of LGT is on the personal state related to the law. This event should happen in the last generation of saints that

will be on stage as a proof of God's perfection. If the main focus is not on Jesus Christ and on His sacrifice, this perfection is the worst nightmare of a sincere person searching the salvation. As Kurtz and Ketcham would say: "Trying to be perfect [by yourself] is the most tragic human mistake."¹³

The Bible presents Jesus' words that encourage not to a perfect state, but a continual perfect dependence on Him: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."¹⁴ Because of this challenge of LGT, theologians started to study more two very important subjects, the sinful nature of human being and prevenient grace,¹⁵ subjects that cannot be developed here because of the scope of this paper.

I consider that the soteriological unsolved problems of LGT can hinder the missiological focus and the main interest is in a wrong direction, toward self, instead of being directed toward saving others. Their theories are not favorable to a great vision about the mission of the church and are not targeting the fulfillment of Matt 24:14 and Acts 1:8, the gospel in all the world. The consecration of the church should have as effect a greater impact in mission, not an implosion of the energy necessary for mission.

Implications for Missiology and Possible Solutions

The idea of a higher standard of righteousness for the last generation, different than for the other generations, is discouraging, because will create a feeling of

¹³ Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Modern Wisdom from Classic Stories* (New York; Toronto: Bantam Books, 1992), 5.

¹⁴ John 15:5.6

¹⁵ The grace that comes before personal choice, that is manifested in the time when the human being is dead in sin (Eph 2:1; Rom 5:8).

powerlessness in those who seek salvation when they feel that the focus is on their state, not on Christ's grace that works for salvation.

I consider that the main problem of LGT is not that they touch upon subjects like sin, perfection, eschatology, last generation, vindication of God's character. The main problem is rather the way these topics are presented and, thus, their eschatological scenario can be counterproductive for faith and mission. The focus on personal state, external behavior, humanity's role in triggering the end time events, may discourage those who can be reached in missional efforts.

By conditioning the second coming of Jesus Christ by the human condition this theology offers a pessimist perspective about the arriving of this time and creates a spirit of anxiety, often directed against others, as if because of them Christ did not come. Speaking about Enoch, that lived in hard conditions, Norman Gulley says: "Devotion, not duty, guided his steps. Relationship, not rules blessed his life. Christ, not a creed, gave him the victory. As Paul later said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21)."¹⁶

I conclude this section by affirming that the way the matter of sin and salvation are presented has a great influence upon the mission. The sin is to be overcome by dependence, not independence on Christ. In the same time, the church cannot bear the burden of triggering the second coming of Christ by a perfect state. The salvation is not to be presented like a personal struggling, numbering the sins, but as a relationship with the One that can cover the sinner with His garment and keep the sinner pure by His blood in the face of the Father.

¹⁶ Norman R. Gulley, *Satan's Trojan Horse: God's End-Time Victory* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 2004), 225.

Another very important aspect is the cross-cultural mission. In the cross-cultural mission, the Seventh-day Adventist church approaches people who are from Muslim, Buddhist, Hinduist countries, etc., that cannot be approached with the same traditional methods as used with other Christians. In their theology of mission, Seventh-day Adventists affirms that the sincere person, from a foreign culture that couldn't know verbal truth, can be saved by God. Edward Reid in his book "Even at the Door" affirms: "I believe that many who will be saved have yet to hear the true message for the first time."¹⁷ If God wouldn't give a chance to those who didn't have the possibility to hear the verbal truth about the way of salvation, then an eternal question would remain about His mercy and justice for them. Anthropological studies demonstrate that the target of missional efforts should not be the behavioral aspects, but the inner worldview of a person. While LGT is pointing to the external behavior of people, being preoccupied by how they perform in their life of faith, a true missionary would point to their heart, to their hidden worldview, and faithfully contextualize the gospel for them.

One of the most important aspects of the subject discussed is that mission might not be going further when the church is preoccupied with itself. The danger is the tendency to remain in a "shut-door" attitude towards cross-cultural mission. Directing its attention to itself, the church is becoming discouraged and blocked in pessimism. Focusing on Christ, it has hope about salvation and power to work in mission in new fields that need the gospel, as He worked.

¹⁷ Reid, 220.

Secular Adventism

The Adventist lifestyle changed along the years and it is not the same as a decade or two ago. In this section I will not plead for keeping the traditional lifestyle, but will analyze the factors and possible direction for end time mission in this context.

A starting question can be: In what manner the biblical spiritual life is identified with the day-by-day lifestyle in some Adventist circles and how this influence the actual mission? Fernando Canale, in his book *Secular Adventism?* is presenting what he personally observes, a tendency for an increasing number of Adventists that “are adopting worldly lifestyles”¹⁸ which means secularism.

Secular Factors

Canale, observes some exterior factors that influence the SDA church like: “the secularization of the Western culture, the intellectual crisis in Adventist thinking, the practical frame of mind of Adventist leadership, the protestantization of Adventist theology and practice, and the Evangelical doctrine of justification by faith.”¹⁹ Departing from main SDA doctrines resulted in the departure from the main motivation of existence of the SDA church: proclaiming the present truth, expecting the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ.

The secularism of a part of SDA church members can be seen in practical issues, but its roots are on the theological understanding and the effects are on the missionary area. Because of adopting the Protestant justification, daily sanctification remained somewhere in the background, and the effect is the breach of Adventist principles related to creation, keeping the Sabbath, modesty, music, dance, jewelry,

¹⁸ Fernando Luis Canale, *Secular Adventism? Exploring the Link between Lifestyle and Salvation* (2013), 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

alcoholic beverages, etc. Another aspect is the lack of the sense of community as secular members don't feel that they should serve and be personally involved in mission together with the other believers, and they (rarely) participate to the worship services only for their own benefit. Staples states about the effect of the lack of the sense of community that: "Individualism undercuts the deep and lasting bonds of community."²⁰ Without a strong community liaison the projects for mission suffer of lack of resources, especially human resources, the church does not look as the "body of Christ" and is not attracting people.

All these factors are offering a wrong model of Christian living for the new converts and those who are interested in the Adventist faith are discouraged in adopting this ambiguous spirituality. Associated with all this one can see a lack of interest in sustaining financially the mission in close areas or overseas. One can also observe that "the decrease in mission giving throughout the years evidences lack of inculcation of the importance of mission."²¹ Churches that are influenced more by secularism are consuming the energies inside and do not have a strong desire to reach other people and areas.

The Conception about Parousia and End-Time Mission

When Adventism is influenced by secularism, the effect is that the conception about Parousia is that it will take place somewhere in indefinite time, but not in the near future. There is a lack of sense of urgency and of the need of preparation. The struggle is to combine the worldly preoccupations with a shallow spirituality, without

²⁰ Russell Lynn Staples, *Community of Faith: The Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Contemporary World* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1999), 72.

²¹ Abraham Guerrero, "Structure and Mission Effectiveness: A Study Focused on Seventh-Day Adventist Mission to Unreached People Groups between 1980 and 2010" (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2013), 174.

immersing in the task of living for the kingdom of God, expecting every day for Jesus and involving in His work of making disciples.

Fixing periods about Parousia, like “No more than one year and Jesus will come” in some zealous appeals in the church, can push to this attitude of reluctance and skepticism about the imminent Parousia, in the minds of the others. This attitude is not new, as Russell speaks about the time of first Christians when after the passing away of the generation from the time of Jesus, some manifested an “eschatological skepticism [that] was grounded in rational arguments regarding the improbability of divine intervention in human history,”²² considering that the Parousia was probably mistaken. In this context, the goal is to live a “good” spiritual life on this earth, but without earnestly doing the mission. In the biblical epistles one can see that the texts about the imminence of the Parousia have exhortations for those who seems to forget that they live for the kingdom of God, not for this world. The Apostles needed to remind them that the kingdom is near and Jesus will come soon.²³ It seems that by having the motivation of Jesus coming, the conscience is kept aware to “walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”²⁴

Possible Solutions

Mission is very much influenced by the conception of justification and sanctification. When these two are divorced or when justification takes the place of sanctification the result is a superficial spiritual life and, implicitly, mission is affected. A strong conviction about the imminence of the Parousia could help

²² Staples, 140.

²³ 1 Cor 7:29; 1 Cor 10:11; Phil 1:6; Heb 10:37; 1 John 2:18; Jude 1:16-18

²⁴ Rom 13:13

revitalize even the secular Christian mind in such a measure as to revive the mission. Russell says that there is a need of “incorporating Adventist themes of mission and the nearness of the Second Coming.”²⁵ These two, intertwined, can be the key for secularized churches. As Jesus taught, the conception about Parousia makes one neglectful of the duty or determined to work diligently for Him.²⁶

One cannot “make disciples”²⁷ if one is not personally a disciple. As Canale says: “Christ’s gospel commission assumes His disciples know what discipleship means and how disciples are made”²⁸ Spiritual discipline is essential in this context and its result should be making other disciples. Even spiritual Adventists “are perhaps more inclined to emphasize personal spiritual pilgrimage within the context of corporate commitment to a world missionary task”²⁹ which means that needs to be made a step further in immersing in world mission.

The simple lessons of Christian kindness and encouragement for the present time should be mixed with the profound doctrines that are found in OT and NT, because “proclaiming Christ doctrinally requires nothing less than a change in the ministerial paradigm currently operating in most Adventist congregations.”³⁰ The imminence of Christ’s coming is a fundamental doctrine that needs to be emphasized when the secularization of the church occurs and this will influence the church’s existence. Implicitly, mission will flourish in this situation.

In conclusion, although the secular tendency exists in different aspects and measures in the church, the mission may be revitalized by a healthy discipleship, by healthy doctrines and by having the belief in the imminence of Jesus alive.

²⁵ Staples, 156.

²⁶ Matt 24:48; Luke 12:45.

²⁷ Matt 28:19

²⁸ Canale, 177.

²⁹ Staples, 156.

³⁰ Canale, 119.

Imminence of the Parousia and Contemporary Mission

The SDA church recognizes its unique call in the world mission, that is, being called to proclaim a return to biblical truths that generally are avoided in other Christian churches, like obedience to the law of the ten commandments, respecting the seventh-day Sabbath as holy, recognition of the time of investigation judgment in biblical prophecies, receiving of the three angel's messages, etc. In this effort, it should not be forgotten that the mission is not personal, but its *Missio Dei*.³¹ The person who is waiting for the Advent should not forget that God is the first who is waiting and preparing the way for the second coming. As Wood says: "It is selfish, also, to consider the Second Advent merely from our own perspective, not from God's."³² Ellen White expressed it very clear in the following words: "Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. (...) Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all."³³

The Great Commission, mainly seen in the passage from Matthew 28:18-20, is presented also in other gospels and has multiple nuances. It can be seen as a command given to those who are disciples and in the same time under-shepherds that make other disciples, but from another perspective it can also be seen as a promise from God that he will lead the mission of this world and will assist His missionaries. Seeing the Great Commission as a promise, the motivation becomes positive, disciples

³¹ Bosch, 389-390.

³² Kenneth Wood H., "Hastening the Advent," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 6, 1976, 2.

³³ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 263-264.

viewing themselves as partners with God in the greatest plan of salvation. The same principle can be applied to Matt 24:14 where God shows what will happen in the eschatological period, the gospel that is spread to every human being seen as condition of God's lovingkindness that is imparted to everyone.

The concept of partnership with God in the end-time mission replaces the frustration associated with the fact that because Lord did not come, as the missionary work was not being fulfilled, the church is in a permanent guilty state having done insufficient efforts. The solution is not an increase in personal struggle for mission, but more dependency on the Redeemer that can finish this ministry.

Do Humans Delay the Second Coming?

Norman Gulley affirms that even in the New Testament there is "a development from immanency to delay"³⁴ and he gives as example the difference between the language from 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians,³⁵ Despite all this, the immanency theme is not left out, being present until the end of Revelation.³⁶

The main question about this aspect points to these almost 2000 years since Jesus promised He will come and the lack of fulfillment of this prophecy. Is humanity responsible for triggering this great event? Many are tempted to put the burden of the Parousia on human's shoulders. Parables that present a delay, found in the NT,³⁷ are used as an argument for the fact that Jesus second coming is delayed. It is true that God is preparing a way and, in this context, he is preparing a people³⁸ to give testimony about His plan of salvation, but can this great event rely, in an absolute

³⁴ Gulley, *Christ Is Coming! : A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-Day Events*, 540.

³⁵ See 2 Thess 2:1-3 "as though the day of Christ had come", "that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first". Ibid.

³⁶ "Surely I am coming quickly." Rev 22:20.

³⁷ The two servants (Matt 24:45-51), the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13),

³⁸ 1 Pet 2:9.

sense, on human preparedness? In this case it would be possible to fail forever and “Christ may never come.”³⁹

As it was shown before, the event depends not on human, but on God’s providence, not on human works, but on God’s grace. God can compute “both His foreknowledge and human hastening and delaying”⁴⁰ and He “is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish.”⁴¹ Jesus said⁴² that the Father knows the day and the hour when His Son will return.

Although from the human point of view⁴³ one can see a delay about Jesus coming, this is only “from our perspective, not His.”⁴⁴ God’s people is called to be “serious and watchful”⁴⁵ in prayers, and as Jo Ann Davidson says: “the ‘last days’ are not to produce nervousness or anxious preoccupation”⁴⁶.

In Searching of Perfection by Serving Others

Because some religious groups searched an “end-time perfection” and struggled for many years without success, many Christians and many Adventists gave up this battle and some even gave up their faith.⁴⁷ They refrained from the external mission, considering that the mission should be done only internal, in the church. The result was discouraging.

For a healthy vision about mission, Seventh-day Adventists need a healthy and balanced view about the Christian perfection. Perfection is not achieved struggling by

³⁹ Gulley, *Christ Is Coming! : A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-Day Events*, 542.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ 2Pet 3:9.

⁴² Matt 24:36.

⁴³ Matt 24:48; 25:5.

⁴⁴ Marvin Moore, *How to Think About the End Time* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2001), 66.

⁴⁵ 1 Pet 4:7

⁴⁶ Davidson, ADD PAGE NUMBERS

⁴⁷ See Moore, 170-171.

only personal efforts. If it is seen in an ego-centric way, as a tool for self-image, perfection is showing the wrong picture. Perfection does not entail independence in relationship with God, but a closer relationship with Him.⁴⁸

The real perfection is pointing to Christ and His desire to save humanity. Serving others in mission can give a clearer view of personal faith and a healthier conception about perfection, rather than the ascetic self-oriented one. From this point of view, the end-time mission, in expectation of the Parousia, can be a good way for a good disciple to exercise perfection, not in isolation, but in service to others.

The Concept of the Remnant and its Mission

Historically, Seventh-day Adventists saw themselves as being the remnant church⁴⁹ and this should not be contested, their calling fitting in the historical remnant framework. Moore considers that “in spite of the objections of those who say that claiming to be the remnant is arrogant, I still believe we [the SDA church] are a people specially called by God to carry out a special work for Him in these closing days of earth’s history.”⁵⁰ However, in the last few years, theologians proved that the remnant can be viewed not only in this perspective.

The idea of remnant needs to be enlarged and the great spiritual movement, that will happen before Jesus second coming, should be seen in a broader sense than before. Adventism means more than Seventh-day Adventist church and more than Christianity. From the beginning, Adventists recognized the dual nature of the church: visible and invisible. The promises of God, made with millenniums before, in Gen

⁴⁸ John 15:1-5.

⁴⁹ Frank M. Hasel, “The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez, (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 159; Cf. P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission* (1995), 168.

⁵⁰ Moore, 200.

12:3 or Exod 19:6, will be fulfilled not only inside the visible Adventist church, but also in the invisible one.

In his article about the remnant and the end-time mission,⁵¹ Jon Paulien emphasizes the fact that one can find three types of remnants in the Bible: historical, eschatological and faithful. If Adventists, institutionally, would see themselves, in relationship with other people, as *the remnant*, in an exclusivist manner, this would neglect not only other sincere people who need salvation, like Naaman or the widow of Zareptah,⁵² but also the plan of God that is shaped in a inclusivist manner.⁵³ What defines Adventism is not the label, but the faith revealed in the Bible that prepares for the second coming.

Ellen White reveals that “notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion.”⁵⁴ This passage shows two things: that there are also followers of Christ in Babylon and that they are part of His body, the present remnant, not only scattered sheep that will be part of the remnant in the future.

The remnant church is using its institutions for social work like charity, religious freedom, social advocacy and these methods are efficient methods that open doors and hearts for the gospel. Roy Branson states that a greater emphasis should be put on this because “a social ethic drawing on apocalyptic consciousness would decide what changes to pursue in society, particularly on the basis of justice and

⁵¹ Jon Paulien, "The Best Is yet to Come: A Vision for the Eschatological Remnant," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (March 31 2007).

⁵² See Luke 4:23-27

⁵³ Isa 56:1-8

⁵⁴ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 390.

freedom from oppression.”⁵⁵ There are voices⁵⁶ that say that this should be the main goal of the mission in the end of time for the remnant. On the other hand, biblically speaking, the remnant means much more. “While the remnant should have some social impact and must condemn evil in all its forms” says Frank Hasel, warning against a specific tendency, “this new approach radically redefines the concept along sociological lines and neglects the fact that the biblical remnant is fundamentally a religious entity.”⁵⁷ In Revelation,⁵⁸ it is showed that the remnant is the entity that manifests loyalty to God’s principles, by worshiping Him, believing in Jesus and keeping His commandments.

Now (2017), SDAs consider that the main task is to focus on mission to the least evangelized, in cross-cultural mission, mainly to reach Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and secular people. The challenges of urbanization and religious distribution make this church to modify its focus understanding that 2/3 of the unreached people live in areas with 25% of the church members. Only by building relationships with these religious groups the method of Jesus that “mingled with”⁵⁹ them can be followed at a higher level.

Although the SDA church focused until now, in a traditional manner, on Christians from other denominations or specific non-Christians like animists, it considers that it needs to develop new methods with proper tools and training to creatively evangelize these groups. On its highest level, that is, the General

⁵⁵ Roy Branson, “Second Advent” in Charles W. Teel, *Remnant and Republic: Adventist Themes for Personal and Social Ethics* (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University, Center for Christian Bioethics, 1995), 155.

⁵⁶ Charles Scriven, “The Real Truth About the Remnant,” *Spectrum* 17, no. 1 (1986): 6-13.

⁵⁷ Frank M. Hasel, “The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez, (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 172.

⁵⁸ Rev 14:6-12.

⁵⁹ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1942), 143.

Conference, leaders are forging plans for infrastructure development, to employ long-term missionaries for these areas, and volunteers that understand the vision. The church needs to leave the comfort zone more than before, and devise new methods, while the message stays the same.

Conclusions

This chapter has first presented a wrong model of interpretation of the imminence of the Parousia as it is found in LGT. LGT believes that the last generation of believers should prove their righteousness by their own obedience and this is the condition for Jesus to come. The danger is that the global mission is hindered because of internal unnecessary tensions in the church. Instead of concentrating on external mission, LGT proposes to concentrate on internal reform.

Secondly, the influence of secularism in the church is more acute in this time and it changes the lifestyle of church members. The understanding of the issue of the imminent Parousia, as a core doctrine, brings a new perspective upon life and influences the mission of the church.

As it was presented, the Parousia cannot properly be delayed by human plans, with the exception of personal perspective. This is a too greater burden to be put on human shoulders. The concept of the remnant, although in essence remains the same as it was understood in traditional thinking in the SDA church, can be reevaluated as to encompass the Adventism that exists outside the SDA visible church. The concept of mission needs to be developed in order to strategically reach other religious groups than Christians and Animists. There is a need for a greater effort to seek new paths to reach the worldview of these groups.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis was prompted by the numerous examples of extremism that some members of SDA church fell prey to regarding the eschatological mission of the church. The problem was that there was a need for a clearer definition of the influence of the expectancy of the Parousia on the SDA mission. Thus, the purpose of this thesis was to show how the members of the church were to be motivated (negatively or positively) for mission by their expectancy of the second coming.

To achieve this purpose, it was necessary to explore some of the most significant passages in the OT and in the NT that talk about the expectancy in those periods. The essence of the Parousia can be traced as far back as the patriarchal period, although it was mostly like an ideal. The waiting for the “seed” was part of the chosen people’s faith after the promise was given in Eden, in the *protoevangelium*. The patriarchs were witnesses that God will fulfill His promise and will restore the righteousness of the people by repentance or by judgment. Continuing to the period of the exile, the first chapter showed that there is a resemblance between the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt to the final eschatological deliverance of the people of God from all evil. Once the people entered the land the expectancy shifted to the establishment of a prosperous kingdom. The Son of David was to come and subdue all the nations of the earth under His rule. Thus it can be seen, considering also Isaiah’s, Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s prophecies that the plan of salvation was much

greater than the people could perceive at that time. God's mission (*Missio Dei*) was still alive, even in the critical time for His people.

New elements of this plan were revealed to the authors of the NT. In the gospels, Jesus is constantly warning the people not to lose hope and be vigilant, working towards the second coming. Speaking about the imminent coming related to that generation, Jesus wanted to keep their attention focused on this great event and not be discouraged by the fall of Jerusalem, including the scattering of the Jewish people. There is a shift from the centripetal model of mission of the OT toward another model, mainly centrifugal, in the NT. This concept is further developed in the epistles where the apostles are driven by the hope that the Parousia will take place in their lifetime.

In the apocalyptic books, the concept of the great controversy is developed in a dramatic scenario that has its resolution at the Parousia, through the establishing of the eternal kingdom and resetting of God's government. The language of the apocalyptic books is one of fulfillment which strengthens the hope that mission will have accomplished its goal.

Once the biblical basis of the Parousia has been set, the focus of this thesis needed to shift to a historical study. Thus, the second chapter described how many preachers along the centuries were influenced in their preaching by their longing for the second coming of Jesus. The chapter focuses especially on the centuries before the great revival of the nineteenth century. The Millerite's movement came on the background of many preachers of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries who were fascinated by the study of prophecies. The Millerite understanding of the second coming, however, was not a smooth one. They experienced several disappointments before the Advent movement was metamorphosed into an organized church, the SDA

church. Thus, this chapter brought into view how the historical remnant entered the scene of the eschatological mission with a unique identity and message.

The first two chapters set the biblical and the historical background for a fuller understanding of the contemporary setting and of the challenges of the mission of the SDA church. The last chapter explored the challenge that the LGT and secularism bring to the mission of this church in the context of the imminent Parousia.

Last Generation Theology brings a biblically distorted concept of preparedness and holiness in their idea of proving one's worthiness through perfect obedience. The dangers of this view are in deviating from the divine shared righteousness to a perfection achieved by human effort. Mission wise, this danger translates into an implosion of the mission as its focus shifts from the exterior of the church to the interior of the church.

Another factor that influences the conception about the imminent Parousia and the mission associated to it is the secularism that is affecting the SDA church. To respond to this tendency, the church must keep the balance between activating in practical mission and immersing itself into understanding the fundamental doctrines, the imminence of Parousia being one of the most important.

In contrast, the model of the relation between the Parousia expectancy and mission, that this thesis advocates, is described in the last part of this chapter. The correct understanding of righteousness is based on its connection with serving others. The true concept of the remnant is larger than the historical remnant and is encompassing the Adventism outside the visible borders of the church.

As Jesus didn't come yet, and the SDA church still has a mission to finish, while this world and the church are expecting this to happen, there is a need to focus again the attention to Jesus' imminent coming and to His promises about this.

While one can advocate that the SDA Church has a unique role in the end-time mission and the identity of this church should not be diminished through an institutional ecumenism (even for missionary purposes), in the same time, the vision about the work that will be made in the end-time should be enlarged. God has a much greater plan than we can conceive. His tools are not limited to the historical remnant, but He is using, just as many times throughout history, many people and churches in spite of their mistakes.

Adventism is more than a church. It is a movement, a spirit of preparing for the great event of Parousia. This movement touches so many churches and so many people. The role of the Adventist church is to be a leader in this movement and promote the biblical way so that other persons and churches adopt it. The Adventist pioneers were very open in the first years when they proclaimed the imminent Parousia and, because of this, numerous people from other denominations adopted the new discoveries of the kingdom that is at the door and the bridegroom that comes. The Adventist movement was not an isolated event, but was providentially prepared by God, by inspiring cultural thinking and using preachers and theologians to put brick after brick so that the history will meet the great proclamation from before 1844. These should be great lessons that would inspire the next Adventist movement that is presumed to be much greater than that of the pioneers of SDA church. God is preparing a way in the Muslim world, in the Hindu environment, in the Buddhist culture and to the end of the world.

Instead of fences, that could represent an ancient Israel symptom from before, and especially after, the Babylonian exile, bridges should be build, recognizing that God put many gems of His revelation in other religions and their sacred books. Of

course, this is not an invitation to syncretism, but rather to openness, to courage, to a greater vision.

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