

## REVIEWS

# Millenarianism and Adventists

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THE ROOTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM: BRITISH AND AMERICAN  
MILLENNARIANISM 1800-1930

By Ernest R. Sandeen

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Historians of fundamentalism have assumed that fundamentalists are different from other conservative Protestants and that fundamentalism is "merely a reaction against the liberalizing tendencies of modern thought," especially evolution and biblical criticism (p. x). The only attempt to explain why some Christians react strongly against these forces, while the majority have not, is that of H. Richard Niebuhr in 1944. He identifies fundamentalism with rural America and modernism with urban and industrial America.

Sandeen has shattered this traditional view with a book of impressive scholarship. He argues that fundamentalism existed before, during, and after the controversies of the 1920s that included the Scopes trial and the schisms in the Presbyterian and Baptist churches. He separates the fundamentalist movement from this fundamentalist controversy and shows that fundamentalism is a "self-conscious, structured, long-lived, and dynamic entity with recognized leadership, periodicals, and meetings" (p. xiii). This movement was essentially millenarian in origin, drawing its leadership largely from Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist ministers and operating outside sectarian lines by means of Bible and prophetic conferences, particularly the annual summer meetings in Niagara, and from periodicals such as *Truth* and *Watchword*.

Sandeen begins his history of the millenarian movement with its revival during the era of the French Revolution. He traces its growth and development in Britain and America to midcentury, and then shifts his emphasis to America for the remainder of the book. The influence of British millenarians in America is emphasized throughout, especially the influence of John Nelson Darby, whose theory of futurism, or dispensationalism (which regarded an any-moment Second Coming of Christ as a secret rapture), after 1844 replaced the Millerite historicist position tied to the prophetic timetable that is so familiar to Seventh-day Adventists. Thereafter, until 1890, the millenarians battled to prove themselves respectable Bible students and to escape association with William Miller's Adventists, who were pictured in the popular mind "as a band of fanatics ready to don ascension robes" (p. xvi). By the end of the century the millenarians had succeeded in making their views widely known and had obtained the

respect of conservative Protestants and their cooperation in an effort to stem the tide of liberalism.

As a result of this endeavor and because of their defense of an infallible Scripture — defense so necessary to their literal interpretation of the Bible — the millenarians acquired the name fundamentalists. But the alliance with the conservatives failed. Modernism was not contained, and the conservatives eventually turned their backs on the millenarians, choosing broad churchmanship and general evangelical harmony in preference to accepting the strict subscriptions and inevitable schism that the fundamentalists demanded. Already feuding and separating because they could not agree on how to interpret the inerrant Scriptures, the fundamentalists withdrew. But the movement did not die out. It flourishes today under another name, evangelicalism, and has rallied behind such national leaders as Billy Graham.

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This book provides especially interesting reading for Adventists, for the part dealing with events before midcentury is also part of Adventist history. Sandeen shows how much Adventism was a part of the larger theological ferment and how many beliefs dear to Adventists came out of this period. After 1840 there was the progress of a movement which, though similar to the Adventist movement in many ways, had given up historicist premillenarianism for the dispensationalism of Darby and lacked the unified organization that distinguished developing Adventism.

Sandeen has provided new material that may significantly revise one's view of fundamentalism. He has argued his case with skill and with an elaborate apparatus that makes disagreement difficult. Included is an impressive annotated 25-page bibliography that provides lists of periodicals, primary sources, and secondary works on nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century millenarianism.

The bibliography suggests many topics for study by Adventists who are interested in their own history. Sandeen's references to Francis D. Nichol and LeRoy E. Froom are of special interest to Adventists. Nichol's *Midnight Cry*, the main source for Sandeen's comments on Miller, is identified in the bibliography as "a good study of William Miller." Although he never refers to Seventh-day Adventism in the text, on Froom's *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* Sandeen writes:

No simple citation of this monumental work will suffice to give credit to the achievement of this scholar or to warn the unwary of the pitfalls into which he may fall by following Froom's guidance uncritically. *Prophetic Faith* is denominational history in the old style, which is to say it is a defense of Seventh-Day Adventist doctrines as the apostolic truth passed down through the centuries without interruption or depletion. Although never acting the part of the bigot or writing polemic, Froom nevertheless produced a strongly partisan history, championing openly the cause of historicist premillenarianism against allegorizers, millennialists and future premillenarians. Furthermore, Froom has no concern with anything but history of dogma, and even dogma is narrowly construed. The result is that the work is useful as a reference work, astonishingly accurate in its references to particular men and events, but virtually without historical merit when Froom lifts his eyes above the level of the catalog of the British Museum. But for anyone interested in pursuing the study of millenarianism, Froom's volumes, which cover a period stretching from the Fathers down to the middle of the nineteenth century, provide invaluable bibliographic and reference service (pp. 288-289).