

# In Pursuit of Adventist History

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*BIBLICISM, APOKALYPTIK, UTOPI: Adventismans historiska utformning i USA samt dess svenska utveckling till o. 1939*

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This essay falls into two unequal parts. The first part (pp. 1-167) deals with the origins and development of Adventism in the United States to 1888. The second part (pp. 168-446) deals with the beginnings of Adventism among Scandinavian immigrants in America and the spread of Adventism to the Scandinavian countries by the help of these immigrants until the movement gathered its own momentum, which is traced with emphasis on Sweden to 1939. The author's own summary of his thesis, translated into English by B. B. Beach, is appended for English readers (pp. 447-465). Pages 446-494 contain bibliography and *varia* incident to the author's research.

Linden observes that, to date, historical research in Adventism has been divided and disconnected. He proposes to view its various aspects (political, sociological, theological-dogmatic, and psychological) as objectively as the sources indicate. To achieve this end he uses the historical method employed in writing church history.

When William Miller (1782-1849) arrived on the scene, the young American republic was already displaying those characteristics that would distinguish its history, to wit: aggressive expansion; restless democracy, with rights for the common man; a rough-and-tumble social makeup; and an assortment of religious beliefs showing both conservative and strong emotional character. The utopian ideal of Christ's Second Coming was present, and entire settlements had been founded in this spirit. Revival preaching by lay pastors sought to prepare settlers for the impending parousia.

The greatest of these lay preachers was William Miller, who first concluded that the parousia would occur during the year between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. He later revised his chronology, on the basis of the Book of Daniel, and set the date for Christ's coming at April 18/19, 1844. Christ not having appeared at this time, two of Miller's disciples reset the date as October 22, 1844, a conclusion Miller did not accept. The group who adopted this new date (April-October 1844) was known as the "Seven Months Movement."

After the "Great Disappointment" (when Christ did not come as expected on this latest date), from the mass of disappointed Adventists, one small group (whom Linden includes among the "left wing" and "radicals") refused to give up their faith in the 2300 days prophecy of Daniel 8:14. Further study led this part of the "radicals" to reach the conclusion that on October 22, 1844, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary took on the character of a judgment of the saints — called the "investigative judgment" — and that the parousia would take place whenever this judgment was completed. From this as a basic article of faith, the small group went on to discover other articles of belief that today distinguish the Seventh-day Adventist church.

On one point of late Millerite doctrine, the group of Sabbatarian radicals emerging

in 1845 encountered difficulty. Two Millerites, Joseph Turner and Apollos Hale, developed the idea after the Great Disappointment that only those who had a part in the Seven Months Movement had hope of salvation. Christ's moving into the "most holy" part of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22 had "shut the door" (Matthew 25:10) to salvation for sinners. Turner and Hale had developed this idea in order to salvage the confused left wing of Miller followers after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844.

Linden finds that Sabbatarians like Joseph Bates, James White, Ellen G. White, and others accepted the "shut door" doctrine and continued to hold to it until 1851. He summarizes his argument thus: "There is strong evidence pointing to the conclusion that the Whites abandoned the extreme Shut Door notions at about the same time, and then went on to become ardent missionary apostles, who wholeheartedly supported Miller's Open Door views in such a way that they did not place any limitations on God's saving people outside the fold of 'the little flock scattered abroad.' This may be said to be an unusual development in a religious movement. The other thing that is remarkable in this connection is the hesitation of some Adventist historians and leaders to accept this historical development as it actually took place" (p. 451).

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Notwithstanding the author's careful investigation and cogent reasoning, I feel that the foregoing needs further elucidation. The earliest Seventh-day Adventist group, coming out of the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, developed a whole body of theological articles of faith during a period of nearly seven years: the Sabbath, conditional immortality, adult baptism, the services of the Lord's Supper, and the Second Coming of Christ. And in 1849 the group began to publish *Present Truth* to tell the world what Seventh-day Adventists stood for.

For whom was all this theological debate and activity intended? For sinners? No; they were excluded by the Shut Door idea. For saints? Likewise no; by the same line of reasoning they were within the Shut Door.

The strange thing about the Shut Door doctrine is that, according to Linden, it prevailed among the Seventh-day Adventist Miller group for nearly seven years. Miller's entire proclamation of the parousia lasted only eight years, but the theological stalemate of the Shut Door required seven years to be abandoned. And for three years of this time the Sabbatarian Adventists were publishing *Present Truth*, telling the world what they stood for.

The second milestone in the history of Seventh-day Adventism was the creation of a formal organization in 1863. Without it, the worldwide interests of the message of Adventism could not have been furthered. The author analyzes the problems incident to organization: the strong opposition, the skillful leadership of James White, and the special share of Ellen G. White in assuring members that this was God's way of leading his people into the universal task of proclaiming the imminent return of Christ the Lord.

There followed more than three decades of rapid expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist church in all aspects of its work. Its great work of missions began, its publishing interests went beyond the United States, its concepts of healthful living became known, its program of education for its youth was established. And toward the end of the period, the theological basis of the movement was strengthened and broad-

ened greatly by a fresh approach to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, as debated and accepted at the General Conference session in Minneapolis in 1888.

In this development the name of Ellen G. White became increasingly important. The author devotes an entire chapter to her charismatic gifts and claims (pp. 191-196). Using the methods of contemporary church historians, he reaches the conclusion: "The source of material shows beyond any doubt that in Ellen G. White Protestantism has one of its visionaries."

However, in this chapter as well as throughout the dissertation, where reference is made to the work of this acknowledged spiritual guide (on whose contributions the Adventist church has bestowed the name "Spirit of prophecy"), many readers will be troubled by the author's attempt to categorize her status as a charismatic leader according to the concepts of the current historical method. Some will question whether or not charismatic gifts should be subjected to such analysis. Are not the gifts of the Spirit as mysterious today as when Jesus conversed with Nicodemus about them in John 3 or when Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12 that the Holy Spirit gives them in the church as he wills?

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Seventh-day Adventism reached Scandinavia via the emigrants from those lands. Often their religious experiences in the United States took them first into the Baptist faith and then into Adventism. Once there, they became ardent proselyters by letters and by literature among their friends and relatives in "the old country." Among such was John G. Matteson, who came to Adventism as a Baptist preacher in Wisconsin. In 1878 he was in Oslo preaching the Adventist doctrines so successfully that by 1879 the first legally registered church in Norway and in Scandinavia came into being.

Meanwhile, Adventist literature from the United States was doing its work. In 1880 Matteson organized Sweden's first Seventh-day Adventist church of 47 members at Grythytted. A young preacher, Jonas P. Rosquist, who had worked with Matteson in Oslo, had conducted a series of meetings in the community with success. Matteson himself felt in 1880 that Sweden offered better possibilities for Adventism than either Norway or Denmark. His evangelistic fervor took him to Stockholm, and in 1884 he organized a church of 14 members in Sweden's capital. Within a few months the congregation numbered 75 members. Meanwhile, in 1882 Sweden, with only 88 members, had been given provisional status as a conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Four years later, at the important conference of Orebro, the official Swedish conference was organized after the American pattern. Headquarters were moved from Grythytted to Stockholm and inevitably Matteson was the conference president. The irrepresible Dane was everything — administrator, evangelist, educator of new preachers, author, founder of schools and publishing houses, and translator — and he did everything well. Presently he returned to Denmark and there laid the foundations for a strong work in his native land. But his contribution to Seventh-day Adventism in Sweden was notable and lasting; by the turn of the century the membership of the Swedish conference stood at 756.

The decades of 1900-1920 witnessed limited progress in Swedish Adventism; but with the return of an era of peace in 1919, the General Conference began at once to reestablish relations with war-isolated Scandinavia. Gustaf E. Nord, a successful leader in Swedish-American Adventism, was made president of the Swedish conference in

1921 — and of the Scandinavian Union Conference one year later, with Stockholm as headquarters.

Nord was capable as organizer and financier in addition to being gifted as evangelist. Young Swedish-American evangelists were invited to return to Sweden and soon proved successful in preaching to Swedish audiences. Property was purchased in Stockholm for headquarters and made ready for use in 1923. Best of all, the Stockholm congregation of Seventh-day Adventists (which had existed since 1884, but without a representative center) dedicated the new *Advent Church* early in 1925. Two years later the Hultafors Sanatorium was purchased as a health center in Sweden; and before he ended his office as president in 1932, Nord had acquired the spacious property of Ekebyholm near Rimbo, between Stockholm and Uppsala, as a new center for the Swedish Mission School (which had existed since 1898 at Jarnboas, Sweden, under limited conditions).

Since its founding, the Ekebyholm school has grown into the Swedish Junior College and Seminary, a significant center for Swedish Adventist thought and culture. Its faculty, of which the author of this important study is a ranking member, is respected and competent.

A few small errors in the book should be noted. On page 98, line 4, should be read 1844 for "1884;" page 117, line 17, must read Portland for "Poland;" page 194, line 5 should be Bodén for "Bodin;" page 359, line 9 ff., gives the impression that the president of the Scandinavian Union Conference in 1925 was C. J. Raft, but he lived in Switzerland at that time and Nord was president.

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## The Search for the Historical Luther

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### MARTIN LUTHER'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

By William M. Landeen

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Probably more has been written about Martin Luther than about any man in history, with the possible exception of Jesus Christ. Despite the great mass of material already written, scholars continue their interest in Luther — more than a thousand studies appearing each year, according to the *Luther-Jahrbuch*.

Unfortunately, many of these studies have been polemical. Such friends and disciples as Cordatus, Melancton, Mathesius, and Spangenberg eulogized the reformer as the prophet of God, the noble and heroic champion of truth, the spiritual liberator of the world, even the very angel of Revelation 14:6 ff.

On the other hand, Luther's opponents, largely Catholics, denigrated him. Such contemporaries as Johannes Cochläus and Johann Pistorius characterized the re-