

THE SHEPHERD'S ROD "FORMAL STATEMENT"

(handed to the General Conference representatives  
at the Takoma Park meeting, July 27-August 7, 1959)

"A DAVIDIAN FORMAL STATEMENT OF MOTION addressed to

"The General Conference Representatives of this Committee:

"We are in agreement with the idea that was expressed by you General Conference brethren to the effect that harmony between us can be achieved only by our first coming into agreement on what is the correct principle of interpretation of the Scriptures. For we all recognize that we Davidians judge the validity of purported truth in the light of one principle of interpretation whereas you brethren judge or test it by another. This is the cause of our differences in belief on the prophecies pertaining to the restoration of Israel. To review briefly the principle of interpretation which you have used as a standard by which you have tested the Davidian doctrine of the restoration of the kingdom, we quote from the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 4, pp. 36 and 37, under Section

"VIII. Conclusion: Principles of Interpretation

"When the Jews rejected Christ as the Messiah, God in turn rejected them and commissioned the Christian church as His chosen instrument for the salvation of the world (Matt. 28:19,20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Peter 2: 9,10; etc.). Accordingly, the covenant promises and privileges were all permanently transferred from literal to spiritual Israel (Rom. 9:4; cf Gal. 3:27-29; see on Deut. 18:15). Promises not already fulfilled to literal Israel either would never be fulfilled at all or would be fulfilled to the Christian church as spiritual Israel. Prophecies that fall into the latter classification are to be fulfilled in principle but not necessarily in every detail, owing to the fact that many details of prophecy were concerned with Israel as a literal nation situated in the land of Palestine. The Christian church is a spiritual "nation" scattered all over the world, and such details obviously could not apply to it in a literal sense. Prophecies of the former classification cannot now be fulfilled because they were strictly conditional in nature and limited in scope, by their very nature, to literal Israel.

"The fundamental principle by which we can tell unerringly when any particular promise or prediction of the Old Testament made originally to literal Israel is to meet its fulfillment with respect to spiritual Israel is--when a later inspired writer makes such an application of it.'

"In your application of this principle of interpretation with regard to the basic teachings of The Shepherd's Rod, it has always been your procedure to this very day to test them by Sister White's writings, and almost entirely exclusive of the Bible. Your use of Sister White's writings in applying your principle of interpretation of the kingdom prophecies amounts to an attempt on your part to make her writings on the subject supercede the Bible.

"The following statements express the Davidians' concept of the true principle of interpretation:

"'. . . We should make the Bible its own expositor.'--Testimonies to Ministers, p. 106.

"'. . . The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad, and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.'--The Great Controversy, p. 599.

"'Seventh-day Adventists hold the Protestant position that the Bible and the Bible only is the sole rule of faith and practice for Christians. We believe that all theological beliefs must be measured by the living Word, judged by its truth, and whatsoever is unable to pass this test, or is found to be out of harmony with its message, is to be rejected.'--Questions on Doctrine, p. 28.

"'1. . . . we do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.

"'2. That we do not think of them as of universal application, as is the Bible, but particularly for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"'3. That we do not regard them in the same sense as the Holy Scriptures, which stand alone and unique as the standard by which all other writings must be judged.

"'Seventh-day Adventists uniformly believe that the canon of Scripture closed with the book of Revelation. We hold that all other writings and teachings, from whatever source, are to be judged by, and are subject to, the Bible, which is the spring and norm of the Christian faith. We test the writings of Ellen G. White by the Bible, but in no sense do we test the Bible by her writings. . . .'--Questions on Doctrine, pp. 89,90.

"In other words, the fundamental principle by which Davidians can tell unerringly when any particular promise or prediction of the Old Testament made originally to literal Israel is to meet its fulfillment with respect to modern Israel, is determined by the immediate context of the passage concerned, which itself determines its past, present, or future fulfillment, the conditions, and to whom.

"The results of the two methods of interpreting the Scriptures involved are these:

"Whereas Davidians believe the covenant promises to Israel through Abraham will be completely and literally fulfilled in true Israel in the last days as the prophecies plainly state, you brethren by the application of your principle of interpretation are made to take this position:

"'. . . Promises not already fulfilled to literal Israel either would never be fulfilled at all or would be fulfilled to the Christian church as spiritual Israel. Prophecies that fall into the latter classification are to be fulfilled in principle but not necessarily in every detail, owing to the fact that many details of prophecy were concerned with Israel as a literal nation situated in the land of Palestine. The Christian church is a spiritual "nation" scattered all over the world, and such details obviously could not apply to it in a literal sense. . . .'"--Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 4, pp. 36, 37.

"In view of these opposite results we see that the next step we must take toward achieving unity is to become agreed on what is the true principle of interpretation. That, Brother Chairman, is what we move be discussed and settled now."

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE REPLY

to the

Shepherd's Rod Formal Statement

"REPLY TO A DAVIDIAN 'STATEMENT OF MOTION' OF AUGUST 6, 1959

"Your 'Statement of Motion' presented to us yesterday morning has been carefully considered. This is, in brief, our reply.

"I. You state that 'Davidians judge the validity of purported truth in the light of one principle of interpretation whereas you brethren [Seventh-day Adventists] judge or test it by another.'--Page 1.

"However true this assertion may be, we feel that your present claim that you test the validity of purported truth by the Bible, and the Bible only, is not consistent with the Davidian policy and practice during the past 30 years. For example, Mr. V. T. Houteff, the chief exponent of the Shepherd's Rod doctrine, says in the 'Introduction' to his first book, The Shepherd's Rod, volume 1 (published in 1930): 'This publication contains only one main subject with a double lesson; namely, the 144,000, and a call for reformation. . . . The wonderful light between its pages shines upon a large number of scriptures which we have had no understanding of heretofore. The interpretation of these scriptures is supported entirely by the writings of Sr. E. G. White, that is termed the Spirit of Prophecy.'--Page 11. (Italics added.)

"An examination of that book of Mr. Houteff reveals that it has cited the writings of Mrs. E. G. White 154 times in support of his interpretation of the Scriptures in favor of his doctrine. In The Shepherd's Rod, volume 1 (issued in tract form in 1945), he has cited the writings of Mrs. White 56 times in support of his interpretation of the Scriptures. In The Shepherd's Rod, volume 2 (1932), Mrs. White's works are cited 72 times in support of his interpretation of the Scriptures. In The Answerer No. 2 (published in 1944) he cites Mrs. White's writings 42 times for the same purpose. His other writings follow a similar pattern of Bible interpretation.

"Furthermore, it is a well known fact that in their efforts to propagate the Shepherd's Rod doctrine among Seventh-day Adventists during the past 30 years, the Davidians have spared no pains in trying to bolster their teachings by the use of Mrs. White's writings. And in meeting arguments of the followers of 'the Branch' and other such offshoots, the Davidians have freely used the writings of both Mr. Houteff and Mrs. White.

"Moreover, in the letter which Mr. Houteff signed on January 18, 1934, in Los Angeles, California, requesting that the Pacific Union Conference Committee appoint a committee to hear him set forth 'the evidence for his belief in the fundamentals of his message,' this stipulation was made: 'In these studies Brother Houteff is to use only the writings of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The time used is not to exceed one week. After each study the committee selected may retire for counsel, and may then submit its evidence for mistakes in Brother Houteff's teaching, such evidence to be drawn from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy only.'--Reply to the Shepherd's Rod, p. 6 (published by the Pacific Press Publishing Association in 1936); The Story of 'The Shepherd's

Rod,' pp. 9, and 10 (issued by the Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in October of 1955). A photographic reproduction of that letter is presented in both of these publications.

"We repeat again, that the stand that you have taken in your statement of yesterday morning, is not consistent with the policy and practice hitherto followed by Mr. Houteff and his followers.

"II. You say also in the statement which you presented yesterday morning: 'Your use of Sister White's writings in applying your principle of interpretation of the kingdom prophecies amounts to an attempt on your part to make her writings supercede the Bible.'--Page 3. We emphatically deny this assertion. On the contrary, we have made it very clear that the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventists are based on the Scriptures, and that Mrs. White's writings have been a valuable aid to us in studying and understanding the Bible. Moreover, we have pointed out that the Davidians have repeatedly claimed to believe in the writings of Mrs. White 100%. Indeed, Mr. Houteff himself, writing as chief spokesman of the Davidians, has declared: 'Our being, as you know, unswerving adherents of the Bible and of Sister White's writings, full-fledged S. D. A.'s, we are sure that both the Bible and Sister White's writings support the Rod one hundred per cent.'--The Symbolic Code, vol. 7, nos. 7-12 (July-December, 1941), p. 5. (Italics added.)

"Your written statement of yesterday morning appears to be a repudiation of that claim made by the founder of the Shepherd's Rod party.

"III. We wish to remind you that you put the Davidian principles of interpreting the Scriptures to the test in the spring of 1959. In your official organ, The Symbolic Code, vol. 14, no. 6 (special edition), a letter dated February 17, 1959, was addressed to Elder R. R. Figuhr and the other members of the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in which you set forth your interpretation of the prophetic period of 1260 days in Revelation 11. In that letter you said: 'In the November, 1955, Symbolic Code we published our stand that we were then living in this time period. Today we believe we are approaching the end of it. In fact, we believe it will end sometime this Spring.'--Page 6.

"On page 8 of that publication you declared that you were 'leaving this entire matter with the Lord to demonstrate whether He is leading in the work at Mount Carmel.' And you added: 'If the message and work of The Shepherd's Rod is God's truth as we believe it to be, the 1260 days of Revelation 11 as The Symbolic Codes have explained, will end sometime this Spring.'--Pages 8 and 9. That letter was signed by Mrs. V. T. Houteff and eight other persons in behalf of the Executive Council of the General Association of the Davidians.

"Shortly afterward a second special edition of The Symbolic Code (vol. 14, no. 8) was issued, in which you said: 'In the first Special Edition of The Symbolic Code (vol. 14, no. 6), the General Association of Davidian Seventh-day Adventists issued its stand on the 1260-day time prophecy of Revelation 11. Notice was also given that the fulfillment of the events of verses 7 to 13 which follow the 1260 days, as explained in the Code, would be the means by which the

Lord will demonstrate that He is leading this association in its teachings and work. The purpose of this article is to define just what the Lord's demonstration will consist of.'--Page 3. (Italics added.) In subsequent paragraphs of that same publication you predicted that 'at the conclusion sometime this Spring of the 1260 days' prophesying by the Two Witnesses, war is to be brought against Them. The Two Witnesses are understood to be God's church and the Old and New Testament Scriptures.'--Page 4.

"Also it was foretold by you in that same issue of the Code that 'immediately following these 1260 days of Revelation 11 the leopard-like beast of Revelation 13 will commence his last 42 months' existence. At the end of the 42 months the beast will no more continue.'--Ibid., p. 7

"Again, you predicted: 'Thus at the end of the 1260 days of Revelation 11 when the 42 months of Revelation 13 begin, western Europe is to organize herself under a system sponsored by the Great Adversary, that is to astound the world. For this Satanic system will come suddenly, unexpectedly.

"With the end of the 1260 days of Revelation 11 coming this Spring and the 42 months of Revelation 13 then beginning, students of prophecy should expect this event to develop in Western Europe and be adopted by the United States this Spring. . . This is the great test that lies just ahead.'--Ibid., p. 9. (Italics added.)

"Inasmuch as the validity of the Davidian principle of interpreting the Bible prophecies already has been put to a decisive test by you in the spring of 1959, we let the results of that test speak for themselves. Moreover, as for your predictions that God will establish a Davidian kingdom of 144,000 in Palestine in the near future, we again let God and time demonstrate whether your principle of Bible interpretation is sound or not."