

My Stand Regarding the Movement Known As The Shepherds Rod

Eugene Prewitt takes responsibility for this document

Take heed therefore how ye hear
Luke 8:18

Introduction

Adventist generally are aware of a shaking that is to take place among God's people. Those that can be shaken will be shaken. Those, who on the contrary, are settled into the truth intellectually and spiritually so that they can not be moved, will remain with the truth.

I have, in my brief lifetime, received many studies, books, and articles that asserted that my salvation would hinge on whether or not I accepted the propositions set forth in them. Many of them were charitable enough to say that God would wink at the times of my ignorance. But precious few of the authors believed that an honest searcher for truth, led by the Holy Spirit, could read the documents and be unconvinced.

If I were only to take into consideration those studies that met the following guidelines, there would still be more than you might guess.

1. The author is a firm believer in the Spirit of Prophecy as manifest in Ellen White
2. The author is very knowledgeable
3. The author has carefully examined the arguments urged against his views
4. The author has prayerfully and humbly pleaded for guidance from heaven
5. The author has a disdain for sin, avoids display, advocates helpful reforms
6. The author has a very significant list of statements from inspiration proving his/her position.
7. The author has a theory that makes many otherwise difficult passages easy to harmonize with each other.
8. The author has more than one passage from inspiration that indicates that one's salvation may hinge on how one receives the message being presented

Yet, if I were to believe only the studies that meet these qualifications, I would at one time believe that our God is three persons and two. I would believe that we should keep the feasts, and that we should not. I would believe that we should stay in the SDA church, join the SDARM church, leave both, start a third. I would believe that modern prophets that rejected each other were both true. I would pronounce God's name in Hebrew with great care. I would believe that the movement to pronounce that Name aright is the 4th angel of Revelation 18. I would also believe that the Shepherds Rod is that 4th angel. I would also believe the literature work of the SDA denomination is that angel. I would also believe that the call to leave the SDA denomination for non-denominational Sabbath-keeping is that angel. I would also believe that the Reform Movement is that angel. And I would believe more things than can be well recounted about Daniel 7 through 11.

With that said, I propose that one acknowledge that having these eight identifying marks is not sufficient evidence that a matter is true. And from that I would suggest that if I conclude from my study that I would rather say "I don't believe that matter" in the judgement, that I am not accusing the document of lacking any of these eight evidences.

This introduction nearly states the direction the paper is going, and for that I am not ashamed. We will have to give account in the judgement for the use of our time and energies. That is reason enough to motivate me to "take heed how [I] hear."

Charity in Judging

I fear men, not because they are a member of one group or another, but because they are men. Men, the best and most honest of them, are erring and contradictory. They make mistakes and retract them or defend them to the bitter end. The evangelist Bunyan, breathing the very atmosphere of heaven, wrote with ability against the 7th day Sabbath. Luther and Carlstadt attacked each other. On nearly every point of difference, Luther was in the wrong. A few of our pioneers opposed Andrew's opinion that Sabbath begins at sundown. And nearly all early Adventists kept it wrong in that respect for several years.

We ought, then, to be charitable in judging. Men may be sincerely wrong, and while we must strenuously oppose the worst of their errors, we may count the erring men as better than ourselves.

But there is a class with whom we can not be as charitable, in the social sense of the word, as with others. That class is made up of prophets, true and false. A person that speaks for God is His servant or His enemy. His ministry is not a harmless mistake; it is of the Devil or of God. Most prophets acknowledge this.

Victor Houteff falls into this last category. Speaking of his own material, Houteff wrote "It can not be anything else but some wonderful, plain, clear-cutting Bible truth which could not be contradicted." SR p. 95. A man that claims to be a prophet (see page 196) makes a statement about inspiration, and thus about the Bible. If he is mistaken in detail, then the Bible may be also. If he can change his views over time, then portions of scripture may be outdated. The Bible has no kind words for false prophets.

Yet false prophets may repent and be converted. Two young ladies in Ellen White's day were self-deceived until instructed by her. They both returned to their position as learners in the school of Christ.

If there is one passage quoted more often by Houteff than others, it is Ezekiel 9. Repeatedly he represents that the slaughter of Ezekiel 9 will happen prior to the loud cry and will be the means of purifying the church. Ellen White presents the truth on this issue, and it is very distinct from the Rod's interpretation.

The slaughter of Ezekiel 9 is parallel with the releasing of the four winds in Revelation 7 and the destruction of the unfaithful by the four "sore judgments" of Ezekiel 14 and the Time of Trouble of Daniel 12:1. The advent movement is purified prior to this as the following passages point out.

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness. {5T 81.1}

When trees without fruit are cut down as cumberers of the ground, when multitudes of false brethren are distinguished from the true, then the hidden ones will be revealed to view, and with hosannas range under the banner of Christ. Those who have been timid and self-distrustful will declare themselves openly for Christ and His truth. The most weak and hesitating in the church will be as David--willing to do and dare. The deeper the night for God's people, the more brilliant the stars. Satan will sorely harass the faithful; but, in the name of Jesus, they will come off more than conquerors. Then will the church of Christ appear "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." {5T 81.2}

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the

easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them. {GC 608.2}

Then where does Ellen White place Ezekiel 9? She places the slaughter 50 pages later in the same book, the *Great Controversy*, well after the commencement of the time of trouble (p. 613) and the deliverance of God's people (p. 635), in the midst of the "Desolation of the Earth." (p. 656).

"The Lord hath a controversy with the nations;" "He will give them that are wicked to the sword." The mark of deliverance has been set upon those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done." Now the angel of death goes forth, represented in Ezekiel's vision by the men with the slaughtering weapons, to whom the command is given: "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." Says the prophet: "They began at the ancient men which were before the house." Ezekiel 9:1-6. The work of destruction begins among those who have professed to be the spiritual guardians of the people. The false watchmen are the first to fall. There are none to pity or to spare. Men, women, maidens, and little children perish together. {GC 656.2}

"The Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Isaiah 26:21. "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor." Zechariah 14:12, 13. In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the wicked inhabitants of the earth--priests, rulers, and people, rich and poor, high and low. "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried." Jeremiah 25:33. {GC 656.3}

For other references where Ellen White applies Ezekiel 9 to the time of trouble, see GC88 p. 656, CET p. 185, 4SP p. 473, Mar. p. 296, 5T p. 207-210.

But after failing to teach the truth on these issues, Houteff dares to say of Ellen White:

"[She] has failed to point out the exact company by assembling the references together and clear the mystery." *Shepherds Rod*, vol. 1, p.

It is Houteff who has failed. By pure speculation on page 36 he places the slaughter of Ezekiel 9 as preceding Revelation 18 in point of time. This would place the giving of the 4th angel's message after the experience of Ezekiel 9. But the experience of Ezekiel 9 will come after it is too late to give the message! Sad deception this is.

Houteff does not hesitate to say that the truth about the 144,000 was not understood prior to his writings. Yet a great deal of material by Ellen White, and by other pioneers, has been written on this subject. (See article, *Ellen White on the 144,000*.) See SR p. 14-15 for the statements about how the key messages explained soundly by our pioneers (ie. Haskell, Smith, White) have "never been understood at any time, nor proclaimed by this denomination or any other people, and only theories have been advanced."

Only those who have never thoroughly studied the biblical writings of the pioneers should be unashamed of this last statement. Houteff contrasts his *studies* with the pioneers' *theories*. But the contrast could not be more reversed. While the early Adventists, such as Bates and Miller and Haskell and White and Andrews

and Loughborough present connected thought and strong arguments, Houteff repeatedly urges the thought that his doctrines can not be proven wrong as evidence that they are right. Ellen White wrote the following

We are to pray for divine enlightenment, but at the same time we should be careful how we receive everything termed new light. We must beware lest, under cover of searching for new truth, Satan shall divert our minds from Christ and the special truths for this time. I have been shown that it is the device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation. This is made the absorbing theme, the "present truth," when all their investigations and suppositions only serve to make matters more obscure than before, and to confuse the minds of some who ought to be seeking for oneness through sanctification of the truth. {14MR 178.3}

Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with the light which God has given me. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed, and you will never be able to explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you. You may gather together scriptures and put your construction upon them, but the application is not correct. The expositions by which you sustain your position are not sound. You may lead some to accept your explanations, but you do them no good, nor are they, through accepting your views, enabled to do others good. {14MR 179.1}

You need to come into harmony with your brethren. You may take certain views of Scripture and, searching the Bible in the light of your ideas, may gather together a large number of texts and claim that they mean this and that, and call for anyone to prove to you that your views are incorrect. But what influence could anyone have upon your mind, when he takes the same scriptures and interprets and applies them differently? Both of you claim to found your views on the Bible. {14MR 180.2}

Houteff was not careful enough in making his assertions. His arguments are often based on the false premise that prophets have been inspired verbally. An example of this is on page 21 of SR vol. 1. Houteff argues from the words "come down" in Revelation 18, and speaks of how it does not say "descended." But Ellen White quotes this same passage in *Early Writings* p. 277 and refers to the angel "descended."

Houteff had certainly read *Early Writings* p. 277, for he quotes it on the same page and draws on the word "addition." He presents his work as the "addition" to the message of the third angel. However, the context indicates how the 4th angel is an addition to the first. It is a delineation of "additional corruption" that have entered the fallen churches.

And on the same page (p. 21) he reinterprets "mid-heaven" in Revelation 14 to mean "not as powerful." Interestingly, Ellen White also referred to the meaning of the angels being "in heaven."

The warning of the third angel, which forms a part of the same threefold message, is to be no less widespread. It is represented in the prophecy as being proclaimed with a loud voice, by an angel flying in the midst of heaven; and it will command the attention of the world. {GC 449.2}

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. {GC 594:2}

On the next page (p. 22) SR teaches that "The sealing can not begin until the angel (of Rev. 7) arrives." "we must await his arrival." Did Ellen White place the sealing in the future from her time? No, she wrote that it was already in progress in her time (see below). Houteff (p. 32) says it began in 1929.

There is a spirit of desperation, of war and bloodshed, and that spirit will increase until the very close of time. Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads,--it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved,--just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming. Ms 173, 1902, pp. 3-6

On page 27 Houteff writes that “It is positive that the sealing of the 144,000 is Ezekiel 9, -- the separation (sifting in the church -- the godly from the ungodly.)”

This is dealt with thoroughly in the first page of this document. The experience of Ezekiel 9 describes the experience of the faithless during the time of trouble. Then what does cause the shaking and sifting? The statements quoted earlier show that it ends with the work of the Sunday Law. And it begins now by the giving of the message to the Laodiceans. This is the cause of the shaking today.

I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people. {EW 270.2}

The Seal of God, explained thoroughly in scripture as the experienced Sabbath, and given as a sign from the time of Moses, is very important to Adventism. Houteff, on page 28, indicates that this is not the seal of Revelation 7. See *Publishing Ministry* p. 16 where James White quoted Ellen White as confirming Joseph Bates study on the Sabbath being the seal of Revelation 7. Houteff adopts a maxim that would make any present truth into “the seal” and would thus muddy the waters regarding the great Sabbath issue. He writes “Whatever the present truth is, that is the seal.” p. 28.

A clear example of reasoning that would never proceed from a true prophet is found on page 30 of SR, vol. 1. Houteff reasons as follows:

“Those who are sealed (marked) and escape the ruin are the ones that will constitute the number which prophecy declares to be the 144,000. Our denomination numbers about 300,000. This means the denomination will be divided in half and suggests the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five were foolish. In other words, half and half.”

That nice ratio of 144,00 to 300,000, which was about equal to the ratio of 5 to 10, formed the basis for interpretation of the parable! But how would he interpret it today? By his reasoning there should be one wise virgin and 89 foolish. Or the parable was only valid for the years 1933-1937 and was not possible to be understood either before or after. This is a sad commentary on how to interpret the Bible. Houteff made it worse by indicating that there was hope that the ratio might be made better.

His determination to find something new and odd led him to negate important truths. He wrote on p. 32 that if we do not know *the timing* of Revelation 7 and 18 that we have no message. This is so contrary to revelation. We have a message, for example, about Christ's coming. We do not know when it will happen, but we have it. Revelation 10 and Habbakuk 2 were fulfilled by the advent movement when they had no idea there were fulfilling them. This did not negate the value of these passages. They came to be a great source of comfort to the Advent people.

Numerous other little errors, some more or less significant, fill the book. They are listed below, but are not commented on in great detail. One reason: Our counsel is to not allow ourselves to be caught up on all these little details, which is just why Satan brings them all up. The key points presented above should be reason enough to reject the claims of a pretended Messenger of God.

--Eugene Prewitt April 9, 2002

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Page references below are to *Shepherds Rod*, Volume One

p. 236-237. Accused brethren because no letter in five months. How much time does it take a group of men to study so many ideas and conjectures and suggestions? It would take much more than five months, and it is not reasonable to expect that they would lay aside their duties to devote full time to this project.

p. 216 Makes “deadly wound” into the reformation. This is false. p. 221 makes various entities of Protestantism into the heads of the beast! This can only be derived by speculation, and false speculation at that. Reading a few pioneer works on Daniel and Revelation would clear up these misconceptions.

p. 185 Hollow argument that heaven is in “north” as answer to Indian’s infidel arguments. Orion is not in north. And the example is thoroughly silly. The Indian would not have been any more impressed by one pointing to the arctic. This page also says that Lucifer was “honest in his deception.” John 8 says he was a liar from the beginning.

p. 195 After arguments to show the church is ignoring the SOP, brings up TM 475 as another example that we should be teaching our people to expect another prophet. Ellen White was speaking of her own ministry and was quoting scripture when she said “he.” She was specifically asked repeatedly if there would be a successor to her work. She never indicated that there would. To say that the church was amiss for not teaching that there would be one is misleading.

p. 203 Here Houteff “proves” with faulty math. He used a poor sample as the basis of his calculations. True growth (from births) in the church is same as the population growth of the nation, about 12% in four years. In actuality the church has grown faster than the world’s population, which is evidence that it has converted more people each year than it has lost to apostasy. He forgets that the children he was counting (ages 2 to 7 for example) are born nine years prior to their baptism and membership. This places his calculations off by nine years. A little checking with someone better at math would have solved the problem, and reveals with how little care the work was done.

p. 210 Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Papacy, France/Reason, America/Image—heads of blasphemy. Not true of Luther, Wycliffe, White, etc.

p. 213 Argument from absence of info—weak argument regarding “crownless” heads. They are “kings” in Dan. 7:24. Hollow argument.

p. 151 Reasoning from Is. 59... There was no intercessor... therefore God clothes himself with zeal and recompensed the people while clothed with the “garments of vengeance.” SR says “Had there been a man, God would let the man do the work, but as there was no one, He does it himself. This reveals one of God’s working principles. He will use one man or a nation to help correct or punish another.” “This...takes place before probation closes.”

At the commencement of the holy Sabbath, January 5, 1849, we engaged in prayer with Brother Belden's family at Rocky Hill, Connecticut, and the Holy Ghost fell upon us. I was taken off in vision to the most holy place, where I saw Jesus still interceding for Israel. On the bottom of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance. {CET 100.1}

Then Jesus will step out from between the Father and men, and God will keep silence no longer, but pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. I saw that the anger of the nations, the wrath of God, and the time to judge the dead, were separate and distinct, one following the other; also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out. {CET 100.2}

See also p. 185, 229; 8T 42; EW 36. Many more

And what about the idea of “one man” correcting being a “working principle” of God? The man being sought for was an “intercessor.” See Ez. 23:30-31, Ps. 106:23, Job 42:7-11. False application by SR.

p. 153-154 Is. 61:2—Makes the “year” literal and the “day” prophetic. The acceptable year was the fulfillment of Daniel 9 at Christ’s baptism.

When Jesus in the synagogue read from the prophecy, He stopped short of the final specification concerning the Messiah's work. Having read the words, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," He omitted the phrase, "and the day of vengeance of our God." Isa. 61:2. This was just as much truth as was the first of the prophecy, and by His silence Jesus did not deny the truth. But this last expression was that upon which His hearers delighted to dwell, and which they were desirous of fulfilling. They denounced judgments against the heathen, not discerning that their own guilt was even greater than that of others. They themselves were in deepest need of the mercy they were so ready to deny to the heathen. That day in the synagogue, when Jesus stood among them, was their opportunity to accept the call of Heaven. He who "delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18) would fain have saved them from the ruin which their sins were inviting. {DA 240.4}

p. 162-163 Explains “gardens” “bricks” “swine’s flesh” “in the graves” all by assertion. What does he say graves are? “Man made devices of which there are no resurrection.” This is anything but proof, anything but sound.

Robbing Christ of His Glory (after reading pp. 85-91)

Moses was a type of Christ. . . . God saw fit to discipline Moses in the school of affliction and poverty before he could be prepared to lead the hosts of Israel to the earthly Canaan. The Israel of God, journeying to the heavenly Canaan, have a Captain who needed no human teaching to prepare Him for His mission as a divine leader; yet He was made perfect through sufferings; and "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:10, 18). Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection; yet He died to obtain for us an entrance into the Promised Land. {CC 111.5}

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, . . . but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:5, 6). {CC 111.6}

Compare to: p. 91 “Ancient Moses is a symbol of modern Moses (present leadership).” The page speaks of Moses fleeing Pharaoh because “he was too cowardly and feared Pharaoh.” Contrast this to:

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Hebrews 11:27

Assertions regarding God’s Purposes

If I say that my middle name is Bethel, you could find evidence against it by looking at my birth-certificate or by asking my mother, or looking at my passport. But if I said that my middle name William was chosen by God and placed in the mind of my mother because I will do a work of reformation like William of Orange, and that the proof is that I teach the same as he did regarding our duty to risk death in the cause of God, it would be impossible to prove that I am wrong.

Assertions regarding meaning and the purposes of God can not be proved or disproved, and this is why Satan uses them to great advantage in interpreting the Bible. But we are not to follow cunningly devised fables.

You need to come into harmony with your brethren. You may take certain views of Scripture and, searching the Bible in the light of your ideas, may gather together a large number of texts and claim that they mean this and that, and call for anyone to prove to you that your views are incorrect. But what influence could anyone have upon your mind, when he takes the same scriptures and interprets and applies them differently? Both of you claim to found your views on the Bible. {14MR 180.2}

Houteff argues that all scripture must be understood at the end of time. This does just what God has asked us not to do...it encourages speculation and focus on side issues.