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Living in Expectation of the Millennium:  
The Image of Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists in Literature

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English in the University of Canterbury by E. T. Higgins

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present, analyse and explain the image of Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists in literature. Most of the authors studied are Americans, but for comparative purposes reference is also made to British and Australian writers.

Millennialism and apocalypticism are pervasive themes in both American fiction and Adventist belief. An outline of these subjects is given by way of introduction to the thesis topic. Since Adventists are inexplicable without an understanding of the American culture in which they were nurtured, and by which they continue to be sustained, the literary works which mention them have been related to the historical context.

Chapter I details the origin and development of both the Millerite movement and the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the 1840s to the late twentieth century. This provides the setting for and explanation of the religion.

Chapter II deals with the "moral approach" which some writers have used in describing Adventists. Despite preaching imminent catastrophe as well as renewal and rebirth only through apocalypse, they have been seen as a virtuous people having moral integrity from which writers can draw important lessons.

Chapter III describes the humorous, satirical approach to Adventists including recent postmodernist apocalyptic works which use irony as a comical method to depict the church and its followers. Adventists become figures of polarity and radical ambiguity.

Chapter IV is a study of Adventists presented in literature as caricatures, stereotypes and parodies. Writers set out to debunk and
ridicule. It is a convenient strategy for some authors who wish to avoid polemical discussion.

Chapter V describes Black writers and Adventism. Over the past sixty years a number of African-American authors with a background in Seventh-day Adventism have published their experience with this religious faith. All writers reject the religion and prefer to embrace the culture of their black heritage.

The study silhouettes the difference and similarities among the various writers in the treatment of a single subject.
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the way in which Adventists have appeared in literature. Millerites or Adventists were followers of William Miller, an American prophetic interpreter and preacher whose predictions of the end of the world in 1843 and 1844 made an impact upon the religious and cultural life of many Americans. From the resulting debacle of unfulfilled hopes arose the continuing and enduring Seventh-day Adventist church. Over the years there have been many references in literature to Adventists, some praising, some damning the church and its people. Some call Adventists lunatics and fanatics, others more charitable suggest they were merely misguided, while still others have used Adventists as moral exemplars.

An enduring American preoccupation with speculation and debate on Bible prophecy has influenced some American writers. The numerous prophetic expositors of the early nineteenth century were part of a long tradition, commencing with the Puritan settlers of New England, and having as contemporary counterparts the millennial speculations and secret rapture theories of the religious fundamentalists. As revivalists, millennialists, prophesiers, and perfectionists, Adventists are at the centre of this American experience, but also differ from American tradition because they are pessimistic, apocalyptic and apolitical in a republic which has often preached inevitable progress, Manifest Destiny, and human perfectibility.

Writers who wrestle with the great moral question of how far citizens of the republic should go to accommodate themselves to America have been attracted to Adventists as literary subjects, seeing in their separatist and semiascetic attitudes a moral purity uncontaminated by the
pursuit of profit and reward in this world. This provides some consistency of approach to the religion and its people. Nevertheless there have also been other methods used by authors to portray Adventism, ranging from comic apocalypticism through satire and humour to caricature and parody.

In preparing this paper it was necessary to consider all of these approaches. I have used an open text or reconstructive method in this study, which enables one to not only study the text but also the cultural milieu in which Adventists move. One cannot in studying Adventists in literature divorce the people and their religious beliefs from the surrounding culture.

David Reynolds calls the open text method "reconstructive criticism" in that "it attempts to bridge the gap between criticism that treats literature as self-referential and cultural history, in which the uniqueness of the literary text often gets lost."\(^1\) It can be used to describe and critically examine literary works which are simultaneously self-sufficient, and historically shared by environmental factors in society and personal life. Reynolds's approach demands that the historical critic "reconstruct as completely as possible the socioliterary milieu of literary works."\(^2\) To adequately understand Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists they must be viewed in their historical and cultural context. The reconstructive approach provides a means by which this can be achieved, without making "simplistic generalisations" about the relation "between the exterior world and the text." As Reynolds cogently argues:

It assumes that although a text lacks a transcendental signified, its uniqueness lies in the potency of its effort to find replacements for a transcendental signified, to restore suggestiveness by filling desiccated cultural chronotopes with the refreshing waters of human feeling and existing order.\(^3\)
Applying reconstructive methods to those literary works which mention Adventists one discovers three major approaches used by writers to introduce and describe the religion and its adherents. The moral school approach was originally fashioned by fiction writers contemporaneous with the Millerite movement of the 1840s and has been used intermittently ever since to not only describe Adventists but as a moral commentary on American life and manners. Adventists become figures of moral debate and controversy who are used as measuring rods against which to survey and evaluate American society. A second method employed by writers to describe Adventists has been the humorous or satirical approach, which also includes the recent, non-traditional and "post-modern" apocalyptic works using irony as a comical method. Adventists become figures of polarity, of radical ambiguity. The descriptions tend to confirm the popular myths and legends about Adventism. A third approach has been to portray Adventists as caricatures, in stereotypical mode. This method sets out to deliberately debunk and make fun of the religion and its followers, made easier by the fact that Adventists are inclined to act in ways which are easily parodied.

Some writers do not however fit easily into any of the three categories. They are invariably black American authors who have had a background in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Although, the church regards itself as having a universal mission, a message for all creeds and races, these black writers do not see it as a route to join the American mainstream. They remain marginalised because of their colour. This "separateness" requires separate treatment.

An important aspect of Adventism is the apocalyptic which also happens to be a notable feature of some American writing. What writers have done is to "raid" the Adventist position, extract what they can,
then rise above or out of it. When authors use apocalyptic images they have a readily available example of people who actually believe, teach and live in expectation of such things. There is in Adventism a sense of living in crisis, and apocalyptic interpretation whether religious or literary can give some kind of order and design to the past, the present, and the future. Recently "almost all American literature has an apocalyptic tone; the contemporary literary world seems genuinely to reflect a cultural climate that is itself universally apocalyptic," and it is not therefore surprising that Adventists have been an attractive subject. They are a "remnant," a small faithful group (Revelation 12:17), which gives them additional attraction as literary subjects for the image of the remnant is an abiding one in American literature. As Douglas Robinson states: "the imagination of the remnant has special applications to the problem of American self-definition."
NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION


2. Reynolds, p.561.


CHAPTER I

The Origin and Development of Adventism
and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

North America has proved a fertile ground for new religions. There are several reasons for this. First, the United States has seen unparalleled mass immigration. Second (as a follower of European Enlightenment, and sixteenth century religious freedom and dissent), it has encouraged a plurality of religions. In fact, a primary reason for many settlers coming in the first place was the pursuit of religious freedom. The endless stream of immigration and the great Westward Movement resulted in one of history's most important melting pots of religious and cultural ideas. Within the tumults of this intellectual excitement arose Adventism, out of which sprang the Seventh-day Adventist church. The former began in America with William Miller's apocalyptic movement.

Apocalyptic in Ecclesiastical History

The Bible reflects an expectation of things to come. These are such matters as God's Kingdom, the resurrection of the body, eternal life, parousia, signs of the times, and the millennium, but each represents one aspect of a single expectation, whose major concern is often called eschatology, the doctrine of the last or final things. This is the theological aspect. The revelatory, interpretive part of eschatology is usually referred to by the term apocalypticism, an expectation of the imminent end of the present world.
G. C. Berkouwer describes eschatology as dealing with "God's final, definitive acts toward this creation, the last days, the promise of the future, and the expectation and hope occasioned by this promise. It does not deal with unrelated, independent events that are yet to take place; instead, it focuses on the concentration of all these events in the promise of Him who is the Last."¹

It is obvious from the New Testament that the early Christians believed in some form of literal return of Christ; for example, the message of the angels on the Mount of Ascension, who prophesied that Jesus "will come in the same way as you saw him go into Heaven" (Acts 1:11; cf John 14:3). Parousia refers, as do certain other New Testament words, to His coming in glory (Mark 8:38), to His manifestation at the close of the age (Matt. 24:3), to the day when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17:30).

Hence the eschatological hope. Apocalyptic suggests a tendency to speculation about the "times and seasons" of God's final acts, especially as they are portrayed in Daniel and the Revelation, as well as the little apocalypse presented by the gospel writers in the New Testament. These writings have exercised a continual fascination on Christians for almost two thousand years.

Of major importance to the apocalyptic mode is the subject of "millenarianism." Originally conceived as a belief based on Revelation (20:4-6), that after His Second Coming, Christ would establish a messianic kingdom on earth and would reign over it for a thousand years before the Last Judgment, it developed, over the centuries, a complex religious and sociological pattern of its own. Norman Cohn suggests that "Millenarianism" is simply a "convenient label for a particular type of salvationism."² He outlines the way in which Millenarian sects or
movements always picture salvation as:

(a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity;
(b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realised on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven;
(c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly;
(d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself;
(e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of supernatural agencies.

Cohn presents compelling evidence for the continual affirmation and renewal of millenarian beliefs from the beginning of the Christian era to Reformation times. Chiliastic ideas gripped the imagination of all classes. Both clerical and secular representatives indulged in liberal speculations on the books of Daniel and Revelation.

The Reformation brought renewed interest in apocalyptic interpretation. Luther and his followers identified Anti-Christ with the Papacy and believed that "the time of the end" was near. The Thirty Years War on the Continent also initiated a revival of "apocalyptic interpretation," while in Britain, Puritan divines had long shown great interest in prophetic interpretation.

Following the Napoleonic wars, studies about the meaning of Daniel and the Revelation reached their "highest mark in Europe and America." Some of the most widely held views were:

"1) The current Christian dispensation was to end cataclysmically.
2) Punitive judgment would fall chiefly on apostate Christians.
3) The millennium would follow this judgment.
4) The Second Advent would precede the millennium.
5) The 1260 "years" of Daniel and the Revelation were to be interpreted as running from the time of Justinian to the end of the French Revolution," i.e. from about 533 to 1793, or 538 to 1798.

While there was a marked similarity of approach in both Britain and America to apocalyptic thought, with revivalism and reform much emphasised, in America perfectionism was an additional component to the
"preaching of the Apocalypse." Peter Berger in his schema of religious movements in America defines the apocalyptic approach in the following sociological terms. It is a prophetic movement, with "a message to be proclaimed." It is chiliastic (i.e. belief in the millennium) and has as its motif that "the Lord is coming," with an attitude of a warning mission to the world. He gives by way of example Adventist groups, and as a legalistic variant, the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Millennialism, Reform and Revivalism in America

This impact of millennialism on the American self-consciousness has been present from earliest colonial times. The New England Puritans had seen their settlements as God's new Israel, a "wilderness Zion," a "light set upon a hill." A popular view was to see the nation as the "American Israel with all its implications of special election, vocation and guidance." From the pulpits was presented the idea of the destiny of the newly formed Republic to lead the world to millennial glory.

To this must be added a strongly anti-Catholic feeling. This originated with the early Puritan settlers, who had interpreted Daniel and the Revelation in a militantly anti-Catholic fashion. An early progenitor of this attitude is well-illustrated from Spenser's Faerie Queene. No Puritan was in any doubt as to the identity of the "mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:1-5). John Cotton and Roger Williams interpreted the Anti-Christ as the Roman Catholic Church, while Increase and Cotton Mather both concluded that the Roman church was the "mother of harlots." "Anti-Catholic feelings and [great] faith in the future glory of the [American] nation - the millennial dream - became an essential part of American patriotic feeling."
Speculation about the Second Coming of Christ was both a generator and product of the first Great Awakening during the 1740s and 50s and of the Second Great Awakening during the early 19th century. The inquiring Christian could study apocalypticism in thousands of tracts published in Britain and America, as well as more learned commentaries and exegetical treatises produced by such men as Jonathon Edwards, Timothy Dwight, Moses Stuart, George Duffield, and George Bush. The New Testament prayer "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," was of persuasive influence in the minds, hearts, sermons and writings in both colonial and early republican America. This symbolically powerful way of organising experience had the ability to make sense of certain types of troubling events — wars, governmental successions, and natural disasters. It gave hope and reassurance in a seemingly dislocated world which appeared bound in the grip of entropy. Apocalypticism provided a way out.

The brief euphoria of independence was followed in the American religious world by significant disillusionment. "Events had left the nature of God's plan in doubt, and millennialists addressed themselves to issues which bespoke a fear that the signs of the times were not as clear as they ought to be." This resulted in renewed religious activity and study culminating in the Second Great Awakening in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. The influence of Methodism and other perfectionist groups led to a much greater emphasis on both perfectionism or sanctification, as well as the message that "the hour of God's judgment is come" (Rev 14:6).

Literary commentators have also noted the abounding influence of the apocalyptic in colonial and early republican America. Douglas Robinson suggests that "the very idea of America in history is apocalyptic, arising as it did out of the historicising of apocalyptic
hopes in the Protestant Reformation.” American apocalypses are so fundamental to American writing as to be virtually ubiquitous. It provides "a metaphor to express [the] duality of fear and hope "contained in the apocalypse. In both religious and literary terms it "includes not only destruction, but a rebirth into a new and infinitely better world."

Early nineteenth century America has been aptly described as "drunk on the millennium." From the days of the Great Awakening of 1740 there had been an increasing use of prophetic expositions to rouse sinners from complacent slumber and set them on the road to "the kingdom." As Ingemar Lindén has pointed out, "nowhere else in the world did apocalyptic preaching stand a better chance of stirring up an enthusiastic response than in North America."

The Jacksonian Era of American history was alive with reform projects. The radical, reforming conventions of the period are described by Emerson:

If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, mad women, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Comeouters, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, and philosophers all came successively to the top and seized their moment, if not their hour, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest.

What these widely different groups all had in common was a zealous working to hasten the millennium. The reforming zeal of the time was involved in crusades for temperance, dietetic and health reform, educational reforms, women's rights, penal reforms, organisation of labour unions, pacifism, improvement of women's dress, poor-law reforms, and most important of all the abolition of slavery. This wide spectrum of ideas carried marked religious and apocalyptic overtones, portending the commencement of the millennium. Many of the suggested reforms had their origin in the radical puritanism of English Commonwealth days, the
influence of which had always been of considerable significance in American religious and political thought.  

Millennial ideas were never politically neutral, nor were they uniformly conservative; rather the clear links which millennial literature had to both the American Revolution, as well as the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, indicates an extensive and diverse political radicalism. As Ruth Bloch comments: "Particularly among those social groups most engaged with millennial literature— northern small town Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists—millennialism and politics appear to have been thoroughly intertwined."  

The millennialist effervescence of the antebellum reform associations was leading many people to the seemingly inevitable conclusion that, if the commentators on the prophecies were correct, then "nineteenth-century Americans would be uniquely privileged to witness and partake in the advent of the millennial epoch."  

Coupled with the antebellum reform movements was a spirit of religious revivalism which seemed a permanent feature of the period. Revivalism had increased the individualism of the people. Non-conformity was both acceptable and desirable, and the quest for truth was paramount. "Where revivalism had reached its height," there developed the belief that "Christians could live perfect, sanctified lives." Utopian experiments and new religious movements flourished. "One of the most conducive areas for the rise of new religious" faiths was the central and western New York State. This area, swept so often by the fires of revivalism that it was called "the Burned-over District," was to give birth to Mormonism, Adventism and Spiritism. 

Between 1800 and 1860 there was also a revolution in preaching
style. The change occurred at the same time as revivalism and was an important aspect of the latter’s success. Sermons, which since Puritan times had been dominated by "theological rigour and restraint of the imagination," came to be filled with "diverting narrative, extensive illustrations, and even colloquial humour." 32 The transfer of religion from dogma to the imagination had dramatic repercussions for both the common people as well as sophisticated thinkers. The revivalists claimed that their work was done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an assurance strengthened by their expectancy of an impending millennium, but this perfectionist revivalism only "became socially volatile... when imaginatively combined with the doctrine of Christ's imminent conquest of the earth." 33 This interest in, even obsession with biblical prophecy has continued as an important feature of American evangelical religion to the present. 34

Millenarians of the early nineteenth century took seriously the injunction in Daniel that, as the end approaches, knowledge and understanding will increase and the wise will understand while the wicked will not. They also took seriously the need to prepare, through reform, for the glorious days ahead. The Second Great Awakening, which both encouraged and was encouraged by millenarianism, held important implications for the latter. Traditional chiliasts had been premillennialists who believed that the millennium would be preceded by the Second Coming. They understood that there would be "discontinuity and purification," so "the inauguration of the millennium would commence with tumult and disaster, as divine forces destroyed all that was corrupt in earthly life." 35 Many revivalists, however, were post millennialist in the sense that they believed there would be a golden age of one thousand years before Christ's return. Hence the deity's role was
altered from that of sole actor to co-participant with mobilised human society.

This culture of cataclysm is a means of understanding American history and literature. William G. McLoughlin has argued that American history is "best understood as a millenarian movement." He cites the interaction of "individualism, pietism, perfectionism, and millenarian ideology" as part of the "process of reorientation and redefinition of the core of beliefs and values that has enabled us to emerge from each crisis with renewed self-confidence as a people." These values help Americans to "refashion our pattern of life and enculturation to enable rising generations to cope with the unfolding complexities of human redemption." 36

During the early nineteenth century this culture of cataclysm, arising out of religious revivalism, led to what Curtis Dahl has called "The American School of Catastrophe" 37 in writing and painting. The painters and writers of this school ransacked "history and prophecy for the most intensely and giganticly catastrophic events. Their largely religious motivation [turned] them to Biblical subjects." 38 They were the literary and artistic equivalent of the Millerite movement in religion. Calamitous subjects in classical and American history were also popular, but their favourite topic appears to have been the fearful destruction of the world at the Last Judgment. Contemporary with this literary and artistic catastrophic movement was the emergence of religious fiction in America. This was encouraged by the revival movement as well as being partly anti-Catholic in origin. 39

These religious, literary, and artistic enthusiasm for cataclysm and catastrophe are exemplified by Millerism which brought together many of the strands of American apocalyptic and reform thought. It had all
the right ingredients: the anticipated breaking open of the heavens, the
"literal appearance of Christ, the ascent of the saints into heaven, the
burning of the earth, and the descent of the wicked into hell." Not
since "the early days of the Roman Empire" had such a "sizeable group of
people" so whole-heartedly adopted such ideas as the Millerites of
the early 1840s.  

William Miller's Apocalyptic Revival  

"William Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1782. His
father had served" as a captain of the New York State militia in the
Revolutionary War and "later took to farming at Low Hampton, Washington
County, New York." His son spent some five years at a public school
acquiring the rudiments of education and having "early contact with
American revivalism of the Baptist type." Miller read widely but without
direction. "His acquaintance with imaginative fiction seems to have been
restricted to Robinson Crusoe and a novel by Robert Boyle,"41 but his
interest in history was intense. During the war of 1812-14, he served as
a captain in the American army, during which time he underwent a
"conversion experience" and shortly afterwards joined the Calvinistic
Baptists.  

He devoted much labour to a study of the Bible, particularly the
interpretation of apocalyptic symbolism and chronology, with the purpose
of understanding the prophecies. As an aid to this, he devised
hermeneutical rules of the Bible about the last things. He was a
confirmed premillennialist and expected the Kingdom of God or the golden
age on earth to be ushered in at the parousia at the commencement of the
millennium. He accepted the Calvinistic view of irresistible grace and a
limited atonement. Unlike many pioneer Sabbatarian Adventists, Miller was a trinitarian. He believed in an atonement made "by the intercession of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of his blood in the Holy of Holies, and upon the mercy-seat and the people."

The only unorthodox point in his beliefs was his idea of an exact time for the parousia or Second Coming. Here Miller was adamant: Christ was bound to return to earth in a literal fashion "in or before 1843." The last date set for the whole movement, October 22, 1844, however, was not suggested by Miller, although he supported it. Far from being a "distractive component, the time element [was] the propelling force in the revival and served as a catalyst which absorbed the widespread apocalyptic ferment in America and elsewhere."

Miller's startling apocalyptic time calculations can only be understood when viewed in their American setting. As McLoughlin suggests, great revivals generally provide answers to needs and anxieties in American society. The catastrophic cosmology of the Millerites spoke to the apocalyptic consciousness of many Americans. The temporary eclipse of the Papacy and the imprisonment of the Pope in 1798 were widely considered as evidence of the conclusion of the 1260 apocalyptic days of Daniel and the Revelation. Many Protestants saw these events as marking the beginning of "the time of the end" which would usher in the Second Advent.

Added to this were unusual astronomical, meteorological phenomena, and disturbances in the natural world. The words in the "little apocalypse" (Luke 21) and Revelation were studied and applied. Thus the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the "Dark Day" of New England in 1780, and the "falling of the stars" in 1833 were all regarded as signs of an imminent Second Advent.
From 1831, when Miller commenced to publicly preach his beliefs attracted a wide following, but it was not until he received the impetus provided by the publicist Joshua Himes in 1840 that the Adventist movement began to assume a more definite and autonomous course. Scattered as Adventists were over New England and as far south as Virginia, they were an integral part of the millennial ethos of the late 1830s and early 1840s "anticipating with the majority of Anglo-American Protestants that something would happen eschatologically around 1843, and seeing themselves, rightly, as an extension of or at least an epilogue to the Second Great Awakening."[48]

David Rowe suggests Millerites had three major qualities — "Yankeeess" of "a certain Yankee cultural consistency" in religious nonconformity, "pietism, and commitment to action" — but the dynamic driving force was the popular apocalyptic imagery and values of Miller himself. Whitney Cross estimates that "well over fifty thousand people in the United States" became convinced that Miller was right and "that time would run out in 1843–1844, while a million or more of their fellows were skeptically expectant."[49]

The Millerite or Second Advent movement expanded during the thirties in northeastern New York, Vermont, and western Massachusetts. Once it reached Boston in 1839 and received the great publicity initiated by Himes, it started to achieve epidemic proportions in New England and elsewhere. Many powerful preachers and pamphleteers joined the crusade resulting in a flood of Adventist itinerants all over the Northern states during 1840–1844. Miller was in great demand, not only preaching to small town camp meetings, but to large congregations — in Boston, New York, and other cities. His message was very much in the millenarian tradition, but he added a new dimension to apocalyptic. He preached that
all Last Day events "would occur simultaneously. In 1843 Christ would return, separate the wicked from the just, destroy the earth, create the New Heavens and New Earth, and introduce the Millennium. The only event left to occur at the end of the Millennium would be the actual damnation of the wicked." 51

The preaching of imminent apocalyptic destruction was a new sermon style consonant with the revivalism of the times. It was filled with symbolism and colourful imagery, exemplified by the panoramic and spectacular "Chronological Chart of the Visions of Daniel and John," published by Joshua Himes, and used extensively by the Adventist evangelists. These stylistic changes in popular religion were to inspire major writers of the antebellum period who "by absorbing a stunning variety of these devices [rechanneled] them [into their] literary art." 52

An estimated one hundred and twenty Millerite tent-meetings were held during the summers of 1842, 1843 and 1844 with an estimated attendance of a half-million. In March 1843, the appearance of the most brilliant comet of the century was hailed as an omen from God, corroborating the prophet's stern warnings. Although the expected parousia did not occur in March 1844 as expected, the movement continued to spread. So wide was its influence that American authors recognizing its moral and religious authority started using it as "a touchstone for reflection... [on] a variety of [subjects and] themes." 53 Another theme preached and taught by the movement prompted a ready response in the American consciousness, the "Come out of her, my people!" (Revelation 18:4) call, first made by the Millerite preacher, Charles Fitch in Ohio in the summer of 1843. 54

Another well-known watchword of the Millerites which passed into
popular usage was "The Midnight Cry," based on Miller's interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Hence the Millerite cry "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" on the great Atonement Day, October 22, 1844.  

On that day Millerites could be found "awaiting the Lord in a variety of poses." A number of watchers for the advent left Philadelphia to camp in the country to look for Jesus return. Most Adventists, however, seem to have "gathered in churches or homes. Legend has William Miller standing on a large, flat rock on a hill near his home where he could have taken a last view of the unburned mountains and valleys of New England while preparing for the clouds to burst asunder to reveal the returning Christ." The day of the coming of the Lord became the Great Disappointment, to be relived not only in the theological speculations of Millerites crushed by the experience but also by fiction writers.

Confusion to Organisation

The inglorious outcome of the October time caused severe problems, particularly for hard-core Millerites, who refused to acknowledge any error. The effect of the Great Disappointment has been studied by a group of American psychologists. They claim that sincere, committed individuals like the Millerites, who have "invested" everything in a religious idea, tend to be most unwilling to give up faith in the tenets of the leaders. For a long time negative evidence is even likely to increase the group's devotion to the faulty view. But there is a limit beyond which even the most convinced believers have to admit they were mistaken. What often then occurs is a reinterpretation of the crisis so that it is explained. Such a process reassures or re-establishes the
weakened faith of the believer.

This is what happened to some of the Millerites. Hiram Edson was one of the "true believers" in October 1844. A resident of Port Gibson, upper New York State, he had gathered with others to await the Second Coming, and in experiencing the resulting disappointment he searched desperately for a solution. Together with O.R.L. Crosier, he published what he felt was the true significance of the October 22 date. He stated that "I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest (Christ) coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth... He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary: and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth." Until 1844, Christ had been engaged in the daily office of a High Priest, resulting in the forgiveness of sin: since then — it came to be held — he has been performing the higher task of blotting out sin. Thus an investigative judgment is now in progress to discover who among the dead are worthy of resurrection, and who among the living are to be translated. "This theological scheme, based on subsequent revelations, rationalised the failure of the adventual prediction of 1843-4."

Some adventists came to believe that a principal hindrance to the advent had been their failure to maintain the Biblical law, of keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath. The adventists obtained this doctrine through the influence of Seventh-day Baptists, but it was also underwritten by visions, as were a number of other beliefs. Ellen Harmon (later Ellen White after her marriage to James White) claimed to possess the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10) and her many visions came to be regarded as inspired counsels from God. Although her writings are not regarded by Seventh-day Adventists as part of the sacred canon and apply
only to Seventh-day Adventists, nonetheless they confirm faith and pronounce their church to be the remnant church which is the subject of Biblical prophecy.\textsuperscript{42}

William Miller died in December 1849, still convinced that the Second Coming was near but no longer prepared to endorse a specific date for the event. He never became a Sabbatarian, nor did he endorse the views of any of the other splinter groups which fragmented from Millerism upon its demise as a movement after 1844.\textsuperscript{43}

Those adventists believing in an "investigative judgment" gradually coalesced with the sabbatarians to form the Seventh-day Adventist church which was set up as a recognised legal entity in May 1863, with headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan. By this time the theology of the new church had also taken recognisable form. Adventists emphasised free will; they believed that the atonement was not completed on the cross, but continued; they rejected the immortality of the soul, emphasising rather the resurrection. Christ would return a second time to earth, when "every eye would see him," and the world cleansed by fire. Satan would be left for a thousand years on the wilderness of earth, whilst the saints would rule with Christ in heaven. After the millennium, Christ would descend with the saints, punish the wicked, and create a new earth with the New Jerusalem as its centre.\textsuperscript{44}

There was also an emphasis on the world-wide mission of the church. This had not always been accepted. For a few years after the disappointment, Seventh-day Adventists believed that only those who had accepted Millerism could prepare themselves for the end. This "shut-door" theory had been sustained between 1844 and 1852 but fell into disfavour, when it became obvious that the Lord "was delaying his coming." The reason given by Ellen White was linked to a "need for
morally improving God's people: 'I saw that this message would not accomplish its work in a few short months, it is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover them their backslidings, and lead to zealous repentance.'" 

Jonathan Butler suggests the new religious group passed through several phases in their view of government. First, in the Millerite Adventism of the early 1840s, they espoused "an apolitical apocalyptic that shunned any relation to government, doomed as it was to an imminent end." [Second,] "in the post-Millerite Sabbath-keeping Adventism from the mid-1840s to the mid-1870s, they moved from the withdrawn, apolitical position of the Millerites to a political apocalyptic which expressed their doomful denunciation of the republic in the language of contemporary politics." [Thirdly,] "in the Seventh-day Adventism of the 1880s and after, they embraced a political prophetic which brought them into the political process if only marginally and engaged them as prophets to sustain the republic, at least for a time, rather than merely to forecast its ruin as apocalyptists." 

It was "a blend of apocalypticism with radical republicanism," which in the words of Lincoln in the early 1860s found America as "the last, best hope of earth." For Seventh-day Adventists, the nation was "crucial to eschatology and appeared at the heart of their interpretation of the Apocalypse." 

Equally important to Seventh-day Adventists were the identifying marks of the "remnant church," suggested to them by Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." So the church of the last generation was believed to be characterised by restored obedience to the law of God blended with the faith of Jesus and the revived possession of the
prophetic gift, personified in the work of Ellen White.  

Ellen White

Ellen Gould Harmon was born November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine, near Portland. Brought up as a Methodist, she and her family became Millerites after hearing William Miller preach in Portland in 1840 and 1842. Following the Great Disappointment her health appears to have broken down, but by December 1844 she had commenced a public life of her own as a visionary. She was married in August 1846 to James White, later to be a founder of and leader in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

It was when "confusion among the Millerites had reached its height after the October Failure [that] the young and unknown Ellen Gould Harmon claimed to have received visions from heaven to explain the whole mystery with the delayed parousia. During her long life [she died in 1915], she is said to have experienced several hundred visions, lasting from a few minutes to several hours."  

In her early years, the visions were accompanied by such phenomena as somnambulism, with no noticeable breath and other unusual physical manifestations. In later years, however, these characteristics disappeared and instead she claimed to have received "prophetic dreams" in the night season.

According to W.H. Clark the prophetic consciousness can be summed up in five important features: 1) the immediate experience of God; 2) a sense of mission as the mouthpiece of God; 3) a concern for rightness of living; 4) a reliance on invitation; and 5) a highly individualised interpretation and expression of religious truth.
Ingemar Lindén argues persuasively for Ellen White as a Protestant mystic exhibiting the common features of the visionary imbued with a sense of mysticism. What is clear is that the visions gave White very considerable authority and influence in the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ronald Numbers summarises her role in the church thus: "Through the remainder of Ellen's life Adventist leaders coveted her approval and submitted, in public at least, to the authority of her testimonies. Despite her occasional inconsistency and insensitivity, most members clung to the belief that she represented a divine channel of communication. To them, dramatic visions, supernatural healings, and revelations of secret sins were persuasive evidences of a true prophet."

It is necessary to be aware of this attitude of the Adventist Church to Ellen White. Treating her as God's conduit of truth has meant she has had enormous influence on members' lives and behaviour long after her death. Her voluminous writings have emphasised and sustained this attitude. An important aspect of this was her views on fiction and novels, plays and poetry. Her Methodist background was clearly of considerable significance in developing her approach to literature. Methodism in early nineteenth century America was inclined to regard novel reading as a waste of time and energy for the Christian striving for a sanctified life, a view endorsed and supported by Ellen White throughout her long life.

Yet there is evidence that she most certainly read novels as a young person. During the 1830s and 1840s there was, amongst many in America, a yearning to somehow catch a glimpse of heavenly things, "encapsulated in a comment by the Universalist Sarah E. Mayo in a letter of 1838: "Angels in elder times came down to earth; would that mortals in
later days might go up to heaven! And may they not—and do they not sometimes? We have some beings in our world who seem indeed to walk with God—so pure and holy, that we gaze upon them and love them as if they were visitants from the 'Father-land.'" 76 Ellen White clearly saw herself in this role, as her descriptions of heaven, observed while in vision, demonstrate. An interesting feature of these descriptions is the startling resemblance they have to the depiction of heaven in novels of the period. David S. Reynolds has carried out an extensive study of such literature and concludes that "writers of various denominations discovered in doctrinal and illustrative fiction a convenient vehicle for religious discussion during a time of intense controversy and religious change." 77 Ellen White appears to have used similar methods in preparing details of her visions for publication. Take a portion of her first vision (December 1844) which could have come from many religious novels of the time: "Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. The living saints, 144000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spake the time, he poured upon us the Holy Spirit, and our faces began to shine up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses' did when he came down from Mount Sinai." 78

Whatever the relationship may have been between the novels of the period and her descriptions of her early visions, Ellen White took a consistent view that fiction was un-scriptural, that it would constantly overfeed and stimulate the imagination, and "that a soul on such a reading diet was unfilled to contemplate the problems of duty and destiny." 79 Theatre-going was also frowned upon as "a dangerous pleasure" which would "initiate vicious habits and sinful propensities." 80 Poetry, on the other hand, is commended highly as
"sublime and impassioned." 81

It is not surprising that this approach to literature, has had a considerable dampening effect on the creativity of Seventh-day Adventists. Those writers who have been Seventh-day Adventists have not remained so for long. The stultifying effect of what has been called the "dry as the hills of Gilboa theology" of Adventism has seen many creative writers, artists, and intellectuals leave the church, which has not, however, stopped them from writing of their experience. Witness Martin Gardner, Malcolm X, Piri Thomas, and Richard Wright. 82

An additional problem, faced this time by Adventist educators, has been how to effectively teach literature when Ellen White has so categorically condemned such a practice? The solution has been to gradually introduce such studies, so that while literature was completely absent from the syllabus of Adventist schools and colleges at the turn of the century, it is now universally taught, albeit with some degree of caution. 83 To some extent the hands of college administrators have been forced by the need for affiliation and recognition in the wider community.

Until Ellen White's death in 1915 the church continued to be dominated by apocalyptic-eschatological motives for mission. Nevertheless, she endeavoured to engender interest in other aspects of spirituality, particularly the importance of the atonement or justification, the Methodist tradition of the sanctified life being the imitatio Christi, and finally health reform. 84 While many of her contemporaries were emphasising the central importance of the Law to the Adventist faith, she asserted the primary importance of the gospel. 85 The measure or otherwise of her success can be gauged, at least to some extent, by the image of Adventists in literature, whether they are
perceived as puritanical legalists, or sincere and generous Christians looking fervently for the "blessed hope," the second coming of Christ. This picture of devoted expectation of the apocalypse is illustrated often in Adventist publications.97

Health Reform

Health reform and modern ideas about a "wholesome" diet have their roots in the American utopian reform ideas prior to the Civil War. There was an ardent crusade for "biologic" living on earth in harmony with nature's law. This Gospel of Health with its inherently optimistic concepts initially found little support amongst Millerite adventists who were much more concerned with the coming apocalypse. Nevertheless, as time went on Seventh-day Adventist became caught up in the American antebellum health reform movement.

Ellen White and other Adventists were influenced by these widely publicised efforts to spread the idea of healthful living,98 so much so that White had a number of visions about the subject, commencing with the Otsego vision of June 6, 1863, of which she subsequently wrote:

I saw that it was a sacred duty to attend to our health, and arouse others to their duty... We have a duty to speak, to come out against intemperance of every kind—intemperance in working, in eating, in drinking, in drugging—and then point them to God's great medicine: water...99

During the years immediately following Ellen White's health reform vision, healthful living became almost a moral crusade for Adventists. To disregard the laws of health was considered tantamount to breaking the sixth commandment. The Seventh-day Adventist movement exemplifies the natural affinity between revivalism and temperance, between sanctified living and healthy diet. The hand of the Lord was seen in the temperance
and health societies springing up all over the country.

One of the most influential health reformers, both within and outside the Adventist church was John Harvey Kellogg, a medical doctor. It was his abundant zeal which made the Battle Creek Sanitarium a world-famous institution. This Adventist hospital had, by the 1890s, become the most popular medical centre in America, a summer resort of the rich.

While Kellogg became increasingly disillusioned with the church, leaving it in 1908, his health legacy lived on. The Adventist church was perceived by Americans as in the vanguard of the health reform movement, even if, at the same time the individual church members were seen to be somewhat fanatical in diet. Former and non-Adventist writers have commented on the Adventist approach to health in a variety of ways, usually conceding the significant improvement in health which can result from such practices, while occasionally satirising the fanatical commitment of some Adventists to healthy living.

The Crisis at Minneapolis 1888

By 1888, when the Seventh-day Adventist church met in general conference, the denomination had reached a crisis over the doctrine of justification by faith. The conference had intended to study apocalyptic interpretation, particularly in the book of Daniel, but instead an evangelical atmosphere was created by the presentation of justification by faith, as discussed in the book of Galatians. The conflict was between the hard-line legalists filled with ideas of prophetic speculation over the coming apocalypse and younger, better educated men who wished to present the fundamental Protestant belief in the gospel of free grace outside anything the believer might achieve.
The great light for Adventists in 1888 was that no amount of mere human obedience could satisfy the divine law. Christ only could satisfy the law on humanity's behalf. It was a new note in Adventism but not one accepted with enthusiasm by many. Ellen White gave her moral blessing to it, but a large number of Adventists continued in the well-trodden paths of prophetic exposition and the sanctified life. This indeed was the way Adventists were perceived - as narrow-minded, somewhat bigoted legalists and enthusiastic apocalypticists - as can be seen by the way they are described in contemporary literature. Part of the problem seems to have been that the older participants at the conference could remember the excesses of the Millerite period, and were afraid that fanaticism might return, hence their retreat into a cold and formal legalism.

Post 1888

Apocalyptic premillennialism continued to be a hallmark of Seventh-day Adventist preaching throughout this period, coupled with an aggressive world-mission outreach. Part of the success of Adventists in adding substantial converts to their church at this time was the very nature of the era in which they carried on their evangelistic activities. The world wars and the Great Depression were fertile soil for the eschatological expectations and apocalyptic message of the Adventist church. It was helped in America and Britain by a continuing interest in premillennialism.

There are now over six million members worldwide, with an annual growth rate of new accessions to membership of approximately 250000. While figures for white Anglo-Americans (including the Commonwealth) has remained almost stationary, the increase in eastern Europe, and third
world countries has been nothing short of phenomenal. Coupled with this has been a rise of indigenous and ethnic leadership which originally started with African-Americans, but has now spread throughout the world.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has become the largest Protestant denomination in parts of Central and South America, and in certain African and Asian countries. In South Pacific states such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, it provides many administrators and politicians because of the strength and quality of its educational work. This large membership has yet to be explored or portrayed in literature. Given the large third world Adventist population, artists will inevitably arise from its ranks who will wish to treat their religious heritage in literary ways. For the moment, such activity has been restricted to the Anglo-American culture from which Adventism originated and grew. It is not therefore surprising that it was this same culture which first delineated Adventists in literary terms. African-Americans have already produced some compelling portraits of this religious group, and without doubt the same thing will occur in the third world. It will be interesting to see whether these future writers, like certain American black authors, reject their religious heritage, and prefer the reassurance provided by their native culture. Writers in the Anglo-American tradition, on the other hand, have found it comparatively easy to remain with that tradition by the very fact that it is part of their heritage, and they do not therefore have to wrestle with what has often recently been described as cultural imperialism.

Contemporaneous with a rise of liberal scholarship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a steadily decreasing enthusiasm, faith and commitment amongst sophisticated, educated, white, middle-class Adventists for their faith, and its attendant, strict rules of everyday
living. Such a tendency is not a uniquely Adventist phenomenon, it is shared by much of the white, Anglo-American middle-class, but is particularly noticeable in Adventism because of its generally conservative image: witness the intense, indeed morbid curiosity and excitement engendered by the Lucille Miller murder case, in California in 1964, and the Lindy Chamberlain trial which seemed to provide the Australian news media with continuous copy through most of the 1980s.

It is not without significance that when writers came to deal with these matters they not only emphasised the moral dimensions of the story, but also placed it within an apocalyptic framework. In discussing the Lucille Miller case in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Joan Didion quotes from W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," which announces:

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, ...
... Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! ..." 

which is exactly where John Bryson in his study of the Chamberlain affair commences:

"this was the twenty-second day in October. Everyone was here to watch the second coming of Christ and to be drawn up into the heavenly throng."

It is a far cry from this eschatological intoxication to the reality of white, middle-class Adventist life where morality has become, in the words of Didion, "a code that has as its point only survival, not the attainment of the ideal good," and about which she comments, "You see I want to be quite obstinate about insisting that we have no way of knowing — beyond that fundamental loyalty to the social code — what is 'right' and what is 'wrong,' what is 'good' and what is 'evil.'

Apocalyptic movements, when they remain single-minded, find it difficult to adopt any practical measures that benefit humans in their daily concerns (for example the Jehovah's Witnesses), since the coming
saviour will wipe away all need for knowledge and for facilities of this kind. In providing themselves with a biblical exegesis to explain why the advent did not come at the expected time, the Seventh-day Adventists also (no doubt unwittingly) provided themselves with new orientations that facilitated the process by which the movement not only persisted, but expanded and became institutionalised.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I


7. Lindén, p.21.

8. Lindén, p.22.


Froom, pp.651-655.


16. Lindén, p.25.


Lindén, p.27.


38. Dahl, p.381.


41. Lindén, p.36.

42. William Miller manuscript (1822) par.9,10 quoted in Lindén, p.39.
   This was unlike the teaching of some of his followers after the collapse of the movement, who believed that in October 1844, Christ went from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place.

43. Lindén, p.39.

44. McLoughlin, pp.133-142.

45. Sandeen, p.5 et passim.

   The great "Dark Day" was caused by widespread bush fires, while the 1833 "falling of the stars" was a periodic display of the Leonid Meteor cycle — see Froom, pp.289-297.

47. Gaustad, p.155.

48. Gaustad, p.175.


50. Cross, p.287.

51. Rowe, p.13.

52. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, p.16.

55. Schwarz, p.50.
56. Doan, p.52.
   Damsteegt, pp.16-66.
59. Festinger, pp.3-12,22,23.
63. Schwarz, pp.56-58.
64. Spalding, pp.233-244.
65. Numbers and Butler, p.201.
67. Gaustad, p.185.
68. Gaustad, p.185.
   See also Damsteegt, pp.155-164, 202-216.
69. Froom, Volume IV, p.1045.


70. Lindén, p.157.


72. Lindén, pp.153-162.

73. Froom, Volume IV, pp.964-1019.

Spalding, pp.61-63.

Arthur L. White, pp.73-89.


75. Reynolds, *Faith in Action*, Chapters I and II.

76. Reynolds, p.67 Quoted.

77. Reynolds, p.72.


See also pp.1895-1896 "Novels - pernicious influence."

81. White, pp.2075-6.


85. Damsteegt, p.270.


87. see in Spalding, p.74 the Harry Anderson painting of Ellen Harmon in vision, observing the Advent people marching to heaven. Also p.243.


90. See "An Authentic Interview between Elder G.W. Amadon, Elder A.C. Bordeaux and Dr. John Harvey Kellogg in Battle Creek Michigan on October 7, 1907 - Mimeographed copy republished (1982).


92. Lindén, pp.244-248.

93. Paxton, p.65.


Schwarz, pp.192-3.


100. Didion, p.9.

101. Bryson, p.3.

102. Didion, pp.133,135.
CHAPTER II

The Virtuous Millennialists: Adventists as Figures of Moral Debate

For centuries millennialism has been a means of articulating popular social criticism in America. The fact that hopes for the future were repeatedly symbolised in biblical millennial language has been of considerable significance. A leading scholar Perry Miller has pointed to religious sources for revolutionary and reform attitudes and beliefs. After 1800 reform movements driven by Christian millennialism provided an outlet for those who wished to eradicate intemperance, war, slavery and a host of other evils. Pious enthusiasm nurtured this spirit of reform, combined with what Whitney Cross and David Smith suggest as the inspiration of the millennium, "the key to an understanding of [the] religious and social history" of the period. Because "religious movements and trends have formed an integral and dynamic part of the evolution of American society," it is not surprising that American writers have reacted to them.

In considering the attitude of certain authors to Adventists, one needs to keep in mind the rather conventional and traditional American theology held by the latter. Since the early nineteenth century revealed religion has been the subject of sharp attack, yet Adventists have been perceived as a people who have kept the faith, remained true to the principles of the Reformation and not compromised. They have continued as committed premillennialists, the prophetic faith of the original Puritan settlers of New England. Thus while the majority of Americans embraced a religious or secular post millennialism and gave allegiance to
continuing progress, including "manifest destiny" and a coming golden age on earth led by America. Adventists staunchly continued to preach the imminent catastrophe when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," (2 Peter 3:10). Such a doctrine was not pessimistic however, for in the apocalypse lay the hope of renewal and rebirth in the life to come.

The irony is that Adventists have been seen as outside the mainstream of American religious life. Whether this is an historically correct perception is irrelevant. The popular misconception sees the religion as a challenge to the dominant American ideology. The image becomes the reality. Some writers have responded to this misconstruction by viewing Adventists as an heroic and misunderstood minority, a group whose separatist attitude to the world shows a moral purpose from which important lessons can be drawn. Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists may be figures of moral debate, but they are also virtuous millennialists in the best American tradition. The ambiguity is accepted. It is part of the uncertainty with which many Americans approach their cultural tradition. Adventists are seen by some writers as a group in religious and moral protest, in secession from the principal community, in this case America. They are a people who are not prepared to accommodate their ethics to the respectable majority, and the strength of this challenge provides literary inspiration to such creative artists as Hawthorne, Emerson and Poe. The fact that the apocalyptic ideology of Adventism, "from old to new, from corruption to new innocence, from death to rebirth, [happens to be] fundamental to American literature" is also significant because it means a sharing of vision and attitude.

David Reynolds has said "that one of the main weapons wielded by the major American writers against oppressive literary influence was a
native idiom learned from their own popular culture. The truly indigenous American literary texts were produced mainly by those who had opened "sensitive ears to a large variety of popular cultural voices." In a similar way Adventists used a native religious idiom against oppressive religious culture. The major writers recognised and appreciated the kindred spirit. It was a means by which imaginative forms and religious beliefs reinforced each other. It also shows literary expression testifying to the "beginnings of a dissociation of faith from belief, and culture from religion." Prominent writers and Adventists both reacted against this trend while remaining committed to the constitutionally strict secularity of the United States.

F.O. Matthiessen has suggested that "an artist's use of language is the most sensitive index to cultural history, since a man can articulate only what he is, and what he has been made by the society of which he is a willing or an unwilling part." When men such as Emerson, Poe, Whittier, and later Waldo Frank and Ralph Allen considered their community and society, they wished to evaluate, to make moral judgments. One method was to treat Adventists as moral yard sticks to comment on American life. This method was originally fashioned by writers contemporaneous with the Millerite movement and has been intermittently used as a method of moral commentary on American life and manners ever since. Adventists become figures of moral debate and controversy. They are used as measuring rods against which to survey and evaluate American society.

There is also a tendency in certain writers to admire Adventists as exemplifying the "come outer" tradition, long a part of American culture and belief. This central American motif was claimed by the Millerites, leading to a separation from the orthodox churches, a separation which
became permanent with the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1863. This message demanding a setting apart, a coming out of Babylon (the United States), a return to simple country values, has remained very much part of Adventism. 11 The Biblical authority for such a stance is contained in Revelation 18:4 which speaks of another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Adventists have also been used in literature as examples of individual regeneration and to demonstrate the dedication displayed by believers in the premillennial return of Christ. 12 Ralph Allen in his novel The High White Forest (1964) 13 presents a sympathetic and compelling account of the contrast between the ways of the secular world and the inner sanctum of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, represented by the heart of the believer.

In this chapter, seven writers will be studied to show the various ways in which Adventists have been portrayed in literature for moral purposes: Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, John Greenleaf Whittier, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jane Parker, Waldo Frank, and Ralph Allen. There is considerable variation in the way the authors deal with Adventists, but each displays respect for the ethics and principled dedication of the religious faith. They also recognize the conscientious commitment displayed by Adventists for the cause of traditional American millennial fundamentalism.

Although often critical, the image presented by these writers is usually positive. Adventists are figures of debate and controversy who are used to expose and to be contrasted with the materialism, sham, hypocrisy and social corruption of society. They are exemplars used by the authors to emphasise the great moral abyss between the pretensions of
a society often dedicated to greed and profit and the Biblical injunction so beloved by the early New England settlers: "and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). This is not to suggest that Adventists are described as models of virtue, far from it, but the authors at least concede the genuine nature of the group's religious faith and often admire the courage of the believer to challenge the community. They are kindred spirits in the work of man's redemption and reformation.

Adventists have preached of man's sorry degeneration from an Edenic beginning; they have also believed that their apocalyptic message can rejuvenate and prepare humanity for the Last Judgment. A number of important American writers, including Melville in Moby Dick, have seen "apocalypse as regeneration." 14 just as Adventists have, 15 and have found American culture permeated with the rhetoric of moral and social perfection. While Adventists have been in the habit of pronouncing moral judgments upon all sorts of social and political situations from the vantage point "of a perfect ideal," 16 so too have certain writers who, without the advantage of a perfect ideal, have turned to Adventists as a touchstone to demonstrate the moral shortcomings of American society when contrasted with these watchers for the Second Coming, thereby opposing ethical standards to the pragmatic tendencies of the American people.

Ralph Waldo Emerson tended to underestimate his contribution to American culture and letters, calling it "... simply historical. I write anecdotes of the intellect; a sort of Farmer's Almanac of mental moods." 17 He refused to define morals, preferring instead to observe and comment upon contemporary American life, although in so doing he came very close to understanding the inner moral core of American culture. 18
He was aware that a sense of impending destruction had dominated American consciousness and literature for centuries, and that the continuing presence of such visions in American literature could provide a significant insight into the process of shaping the American mind. He paid close attention to the shifting issues of the American apocalypse and in so doing observed with considerable interest the rise and expansion of the Millerite movement. This is not surprising since Emerson has been described as America's "greatest Romantic apocalyptist," and the rise of a religious movement preaching an imminent, final, and total end provided him with the opportunity to meditate upon man's fallen condition. He saw and appreciated that Miller and his Adventist followers were reacting against the facile optimism of nineteenth century America, and while he rejected their complete reliance on "the authority of the Scriptures" he sympathised with their attack on "the moral and social corruption and spiritual blindness of his own generation". He regarded Millerism as the first characteristic of "The Age." Like William Miller himself, he was not afraid to align himself with an unpopular cause; to interpret, and draw moral lessons.

A story about his meeting with a Millerite on the Last Day, demonstrates his sanguine and cheerful attitude towards the movement. When asked by Miller's follower "Sir, do you not know that tonight the world is coming to an end?" Emerson responded, "I am glad of it; man will get along better without it." He appears to have professed a certain healthy skepticism about the coming Judgment Day while identifying with Millerism's "come-outer enthusiasm akin [as it was] to his own Transcendental faith." He clearly followed the Adventist harbingers with continuing interest, for example after reading an article in Signs Of The Times in early 1843, he noted in his journal that he had
discovered "an excellent Millerite who gives out that he expects the second advent of the Lord in 1843 but if there is any error in his computation, - he shall look for him until he comes." \(^{24}\) A little time later, he recorded that "New England cannot be painted without a portrait of Millerism with the new advent of hymns" \(^{25}\) and copied into his journal the words of a popular Adventist song.

Emerson also seems to have referred to the Advent movement in *Essays: Second Series* (1844). For instance, his allusion in "The Poet" to standard religious imagery - "some stars, lilies, leopards, a crescent, a lion, an eagle, of other figure which came into credit God knows how, on an old rag of bunting, blowing in the wind" - seems to be a description of the colourful charts of prophecy portraying the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the apocalyptic vision of John, which Millerite evangelists used in their sermons. \(^{26}\) In "Nominalist and Realist" Emerson deplored the fact that a prophet could proclaim "I thought I was right, but I was not," and seek "the same immeasurable credulity" from his followers, rather as Miller had in March 1844. \(^{27}\) Notwithstanding this he was still able to identify with the prophet for both men stood for "the radically immanent divine, the truth of intuitive perception,... proud to remain unorthodox [and stand] beyond the boundaries of acceptable faith and belief." \(^{28}\)

Edgar Allan Poe is another author who has used and commented upon Adventists and their faith in his writings. Curtis Dahl suggests that Poe radically reworked the Millerite theme "of catastrophe into psychological terror," \(^{29}\) so that the horror of catastrophe is often within the mind of the protagonist. By trying "to give some kind of order and design to the past, present, and the future" both Poe and
Miller exhibited what is now called "the modern sense of crisis." David Reynolds has suggested that much of Poe's writings were to a large degree "rhetorical responses to popular sensationalism," so it is not surprising to see him utilizing the imaginative thrust of the early Adventists' apocalyptic message. Poe was certainly aware of the Millerite prophecy in March 1843, for he mentioned to it in print that month. However, Daniel Hoffmann argues that he was probably influenced some years earlier by Miller's millennial expectations, for in 1839 in "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" he describes a world waiting for Doomsday, followed by the fiery holocaust itself. Charmion and Eiros are in a kind of future life existence in the realm of Aidenn, and Charmion asks Eiros how the world ended. The latter recalls that as the End drew near "Mankind grew paler," until "All human operations were suspended." At the climax there occurred "A combustion irresistible, all-devouring, omni-prevalent, immediate; - the entire fulfilment, in all their minute and terrible details, of the fiery and horror-inspiring denunciations of the prophecies of the Holy Book." The "wonders and wild fancies .... strangely rife among mankind and the "announcement by astronomers of a new comet," all bear out the Adventist influence.

Gary Scharnhorst suggests that Millerism "seems to have sparked Poe's apocalyptic fantasies," and he pursued this mode in Eureka (1848) and Mellonta Tauta" (1849). In Eureka he spoke of "the inevitable catastrophe" or "Great End" which he stated "is at hand" and confirmed "his metaphysical speculations with astronomical evidence about a comet, much as the Millerites in 1843 had regarded a comet as proof of the imminence of the End." In addition, he speaks of "one Miller or Mill" as "the cleverest logician of the nineteenth century," and in the apocalyptic context it is most likely to have been William Miller, rather
than John Stuart Mill. 40 A further Adventist influence is to be seen in the importance which Poe attaches to the great nebula in the constellation Orion. 41 Just prior to Eureka being written, there was considerable publicity in New England to the visions of the Adventist prophetess Ellen White, particularly one in which she saw the Orion nebula as the gateway to heaven, resulting in a great deal of public speculation. In "Mellonta Tauta," a phrase which Poe elsewhere translated as "These things are in the future," a pundit aboard a balloon in the year 2848 - a literal millennium in the future - repeats the reference to "one Miller, or Mill." It is a story full of irony and gossip, which "ends as the [narrator] Pundita's balloon collapses and she descends, a comic Christ, into the sea." 42

The apocalyptic writings of Poe which have been covered in this study confirm a tendency in him to use eschatological fantasies to emphasise the moral judgments he makes about the American society of his time. The interesting feature is that Adventists triggered off this phenomenon.

Poe's ability to identify with popular culture enables him to express feelings of kinship with Adventists, and in William Miller Poe saw someone who expressed the same interest as Poe in the process of apocalyptic transformation - "in the transitional medium that makes possible the movement from one level of material existence to another, from the human to the angelic." 43 Transition is at the centre of most of Poe's poems and many of his stories, and transition happens also to be the focal point of Adventist spiritual hopes, the change from earthly to heavenly life.
The Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier was another to express views on the early Adventists. His strong individualism and independence of spirit, as well as his zeal for reform made him a committed supporter of William Lloyd Garrison and his journal *The Liberator*. The anti-slavery, progressive reformers were in the amillennial or postmillennial tradition who believed the Second Advent was either a spiritual, ahistorical event or would occur at the end of the millennium. Whittier shared these views but was sympathetic to the Millerite movement. Like Garrison, however, he was concerned that so many abolitionists were being diverted from the Great Cause into the social quietism of the Adventists. Garrison had noted with regret that two of Miller's chief supporters, Himes and Charles Fitch, had defected from abolitionist ranks. Whittier shared Garrison's scorn of what the latter called "idle chiliastic speculation," but conceded that "Millerism was not a doctrinal aberration" and was indeed very much part of a major Christian tradition dating back to New Testament times.

He could accordingly express his own abolitionist dreams and post millennial expectations, as in his poem "The New Year" (1839), as well as gently chide the Millerites for their desertion from the ranks of reformers, as in "The World's End" (1844). This essay resulted from a visit which the poet had made to Miller's first camp-meeting at East Kingston, Massachusetts. He describes the build-up of tension created by the camp-meeting songs among crowds already in a highly excited state. His report is particularly valuable because it is written by a non-partisan almost at the time of the event. He was touched by Miller's preaching, as well as being fascinated by the lithographic, pictorial chart of apocalyptic symbolism, which said Whittier represented "Oriental types, figures, and mystic symbols, translated into staring Yankee
realities, and exhibited like the beasts of a travelling menagerie." He was particularly impressed by the camp meeting songs, which came from a pocket size compilation by Joshua Himes. This contained many of the usual cherished Christian hymns of the period, as well as a number of Adventist songs emphasizing the apocalyptic thrust of the message. Whittier, who believed that poetry was written for the multitudes, seems to have taken these Millerite lyrics to his heart. Typical of these, and one used time and again throughout the camp-meetings and public gatherings was "The Last Trumpet" which tells of the parousia, Gabriel's Horn, the enraptured expectation of the waiting bands of the faithful, as well as the terrors of hell to give that "extra bit of edge to the joys of the saints." 45

In his essay Whittier said that he could not agree with his Millerite friends because "the effect of this belief in the speedy destruction of the world and the personal coming of the Messiah, acting upon a class of uncultivated, and, in some cases, gross minds, is not always in keeping with the enlightened Christian's ideals of the better day." By preaching apocalyptic speculation the Adventists were interfering with the ushering in of the great American millennium. 46

While a reasonable enough objection, the reformers would sometimes, in their effort to discredit what they saw as fanaticism repeat the most wild and sensational stories of Millerite enthusiasm. 47 On one occasion Whittier encouraged his readers to perform their "simple and clearly defined duties of the present life" rather than speculating "into the mysteries of the future" like one Maine couple who had "very unprofitably engaged in brooding over the mysteries of the Apocalypse, and in speculations upon the personal coming of Christ and temporal reign of the saints on earth." The pitiful pair, "obsessed with earth's imminent
dissolution," according to Whittier, "came to an agreement that the husband should first kill his wife and four children, and then put an end to his own existence. This was literally executed – the miserable man striking off the heads of his wife and children with an axe, and then cutting his throat." 48 This relationship between Millerism and madness has stirred passionate debate since the early 1840s, although Francis D. Nichols' scholarly *The Midnight Cry* (1944) seems to have laid the myth to rest. 49

Whittier did not again mention Adventists until Millerism had faded and slavery been abolished. About 1866 in writing to Annie Fields he stated that he "had been deeply impressed lately" with Millerite doctrine, 50 and in the same year he dealt sympathetically with Adventism in two poems. "Snowbound" depicted "A not uneared, half-welcome guest" of his family one winter night during his boyhood whose "sweet voice had notes more high/And shrill for social battle-cry." He was referring to Harriet Livermore, who "embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent" and left the struggle for social reform. Because she "felt it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming .... she crossed the Atlantic and spent the greater part of a long life in travelling over Europe and Asia." He closes his eulogy:

And still, unrestful, bowed and gray,  
She watches under Eastern skies,  
With hope each day renewed and fresh,  
The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,  
Whereof she dreams and prophesies!  
Where're her troubled path may be,  
The Lord's sweet pity with her go! 51

In his poem "Our Master" Whittier expresses his postmillennial view of Adventism in which "We bring no ghastly holocaust," because Christ reveals Himself to each of those who express his gospel on earth, and Millerism can only postpone rather than hasten the millennium. 52
While Whittier was always a post millennialist he did see value in the Adventist movement and used it in his writings to study the moral and social imperfections of the period. He was clearly prepared to concede the ethical standards of the Millerites while being somewhat critical of their excesses.

Emphasis on religious matters is very marked in the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and no more so than in the stories written during the early eighteen forties at the height of the Millerite excitement. John Frederick has called them "intellectual in their origin rather than emotional .... fabrications rather than creations," and suggest that "the intellectual purpose and meaning of each story is perfectly obvious," and overtly stated, but part of the reason for their ready accessibility in terms of meaning and implication are their obvious relationship to the Advent movement of the period. What Hawthorne achieved was "a radical reworking of [the] catastrophe [theme into] tragic irony," and in so doing he presented a truthful and compelling portrait of early Adventists. He recognised that the apocalyptic morality of the Millerites, their preaching of change from old to new, from corruption to new innocence, from earthly death to heavenly life, was fundamental to American culture. He saw in the Adventists "stubborn revisionists, always perversely concerned to unearthen old skeletons and submit them to close scrutiny, always testing beliefs that the society as a whole would usually prefer not to have tested." The apocalypticism of the Millerites was much in his thoughts, as in his comments in a letter to Horatio Bridge on March 25, 1843: "The system of slack payments in this country is most abominable, and ought, of itself, to bring upon us the destruction foretold by Father Miller. It is impossible for any
individual to be just and honest, and true to his engagements, when it is a settled principle of the community to be always behindhand."

The fascination which Hawthorne had with Miller's prophecies is creatively expressed in a number of stories written in 1843 and 1844. Referring to these Gary Scharnhorst comments that Hawthorne theorised that "a writer of romances should eschew verisimilitude" to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience and aim instead to depict "the truth of the human heart." He accordingly "composed tales set in the neutral territory 'where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet,'" and in order to deal with modern material in his fiction he selected "what was neutral though not yet distanced by history." William Miller provided him with a character who already moved in this visionary and shadowy area where the Actual and Imaginary meet.

In "The Hall of Fantasy" (February 1843) he uses Miller as a touchstone or standard by which to judge or comment on the visitors to the Hall, as well as the contemporary world. We observe the many reformers of the day "whether in physics, politics, morals, or religion," who are referred to as "the herd or real or self-styled reformers" (740), an incongruous throng personifying wisdom and nonsense, who mill about the place. There is however, says Hawthorne, one theory which "swallows up and annihilates all others" (741).

The language is apocalyptic and rightly so for we are about to be introduced to William Miller himself. The description of Father Miller is sympathetic and compelling: "an elderly man, of plain, honest, trustworthy aspect. With an earnestness that betokened the sincerest faith in his own doctrine, he announced that the destruction of the world was close at hand" (741-2). There follows a discussion of the condition of the world, the various perplexities of mankind, the moral pollution,
the withered dreams, the impending catastrophe. The author murmurs to his friend that he cannot bear to see the old Earth perish. But the latter suggests that Man's view is ridiculously narrow and superficial, and that it "would be absurd to argue the continuance of the world from the fact, that it seems to have existed hitherto in vain" (742).

Hawthorne thoroughly investigates the effect the possible consummation is having on the multitude who expostulate against it, but their motives, he concludes, are mostly absurd, so that "unless Infinite Wisdom had been aware of much better reasons, the solid Earth must have melted away at once" (743). There is a sense here of the writer as prophet, identifying with Miller as he stands against the crowds, informing them of the truth of the human condition, experiencing all the loneliness which the seer or sage must feel in such a situation.

The narrator of Hawthorne's tale concludes that he will confide his life to Providence, so that if the world were to come to an end at any moment, he will find a foothold somewhere else. He suggests that "for those who waste all their days in the Hall of Fantasy, good Father Miller's prophecy is already accomplished," and the world has come to an untimely end. Nevertheless an occasional visit will help to at least spiritualise "the grossness of this actual life" (745).

"The Hall of Fantasy" has been called "a thin conceit: the fable of a castle in the air, a house of the imagination." 60 It is true that it is like a morality sermon with a clear allegorical intention, using as a moral example the person of Father Miller, but there is an imaginative use of the millennial dream, with a biting commentary on contemporary America and its inhabitants. The schemes and dreams of the latter are, observes the narrator, to be scattered "like so many withered leaves upon the blast" (742) by the relentless theory of Father Miller. It is the
prophet's celebrated dignity and his mistrust of the efficacy of social reform which entitles him to a prominent place in the Hall. It was not that the Millerites were not interested in social reform, quite the contrary, but their sense of living on the edge of the millennium meant their second advent preaching took priority. Beside God's direct intervention in human history every contemporary concern paled into insignificance and it was this single-minded devotion to a holy cause which so impressed Hawthorne and made him give William Miller such a prominent and distinguished place in his story.

Hawthorne continued his treatment of Miller in his next tale, which examines the implications of Miller's prophecy. In "The New Adam and Eve" (February 1843), he imagines that "good Father Miller's interpretation of the prophecies ... have proved true. The Day of Doom has burst upon the globe, and swept away the whole race of men" (746). Part of the attraction of William Miller to Hawthorne is clearly Miller's bold and imaginative search for truth and reality. As Hawthorne says: "it is only through the medium of the imagination that we can loosen those iron fetters, which we call truth and reality" (746), and to that extent he and Miller are kindred spirits, like-mindedly conceiving the apocalypse and like Jeremiah "lamenting the vanities of civilization." 41 While Miller despaired of man's capacity to create the new heavens on earth, he did believe in super-human forces, in God and Christ, to inaugurate the renewed Eden.

It is correct as James Mellow says that, ""The New Adam and Eve" suffers .... from an insistent working-out of the terms of his (Hawthorne's) social criticism," 42 that it is exaggeratedly "moral" in the sense that Hawthorne is never quite certain whether he has established his case and keeps underlining his moral in rather heavy-
handed fashion. Nevertheless it was topical, and the public took it to their hearts, for it was a moral and righteous message presented during a time of religious fervour suggesting the Great End of all things, and Hawthorne in his own very literary way was preaching in "momentary expectation of the great event.""43

From a study of an old order or cosmos, to a new heaven and a new earth in "The New Adam and Eve" tale, Hawthorne continues in rather similar vein in "The Christmas Banquet," (January, 1844), "published only weeks before the expiration of the year when, according to Miller's original calculations, the overripe earth was destined to be plucked from the heaven."44 Part of the attraction of Hawthorne to Miller seems to have been the very rationality of the latter's argument in which he marshalled compelling historical evidence for the fulfilment of prophecy according to his hermeneutic. There was too a quality of Yankeeness about Millerism which must have appealed to the New Englander's deep knowledge of Calvinistic pietism. This is not to suggest that Hawthorne was a follower of William Miller, but his sympathy for the prophet is obvious, even when the latter's expectations seemed liable to disappointment.

In some ways "The Christmas Banquet" is another version of "The Hall of Fantasy," with similar social critiques, and the same catalogue of human types and vanities. Time is an important element, and the past, and future are linked in an unreal present which possesses many of the characteristics of a fairy tale.

The eschatological preoccupation continues in "Earth's Holocaust," (May, 1844) which according to F.O. Matthiessen was written "when the activity of the Millerites had caused him to ponder how reforming zeal might bring to destruction all the age-old abuses and encumbrances of the
world." Hawthorne describes a vain attempt by the people of the world to destroy their "accumulation of worn-out trumpery .... by a general bonfire" (887), like the destruction of the earth described in Revelation.

The story was written at a time when "devoted and excited bands of zealots .... absorbed the last frantic appeals," of the Millerites. There was a sense of divine appointment, of crisis of faith, as Miller set a further date - April 18, 1844. The millennialism and pietism which was helping to make adventism a mass movement also ensured that it grew uncontrolled and uncontrollable. It was this element of uncontrolled, mass power which Hawthorne utilised in his vision of boundless, excited crowds, stirred to a frenzy of burning and destruction in "Earth's Holocaust."

There is another, more political aspect. Hawthorne recognised that nineteenth-century America, with its worship of individualism, self-reliance and progress, was a perfect environment for the deification of man. He saw that the reform message while it starts by "shaking down only the old and rotten shapes of things" (903), will end up laying its hand "upon the main pillars, which supported the whole edifice of our moral and spiritual state" (903), so that the renovating hand becomes that of the destroyer.

What Hawthorne's reformers fail to realise is that the one thing which can lead to true reformation and redemption remains untouched. The container of "real time in all its qualitative multiplicy and homogeneous duration," the heart, is the only truly "boundless sphere, wherein existed the original wrong, of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types" (906). Purify this inner sphere and evil will become a shadowy phantom and vanish of its own accord. The
devil, portrayed as a dark stranger in the tale, seems to have the last, cynical word, when he points out that unless the heart, "that foul cavern," is purified, nothing will have been gained. "Oh take my word for it, it will be the old world yet!" he exults (906).

It is this very question of the heart's condition which was such an important component of William Miller's message, for he preached not of outward reform but inner renewal, using the words of Micah 6:8 "What is good has been explained to you, man; this is what God requires of you: only this, act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly, with your God." 68 While a letter he received from a supporter at this time suggests that the greatest hour was that "all of God's children might be all of one heart, one mind, and one understanding." 69 Miller had looked on the benevolent reformers of his day as forerunners of his own movement, while one of his followers, Joseph Bates "saw Millerism as the "fountain head" from which effective moral reform flowed." 70

Clearly Miller's emphasis on the condition of the heart would have appealed to Hawthorne. Whatever the emotional excesses of some of his adherents, Miller himself laid stress on an intellectual, reasoned approach, with regeneration of the whole man, which would enable the believer to purify his heart and soul in readiness for the coming apocalypse. 71 It was all very much in the American pietist tradition.

So it is that Hawthorne in "Earth's Holocaust" reveals his understanding that the act of regeneration must involve the whole man, not merely the intellect, but the heart, so that there is complete inner purification.

There is a wealth of apocalyptic colour in many of Hawthorne's other stories written during the eighteen-forties, and even if Father Miller is not present in person, his message certainly is. The
combination of mature artist, endowed with a singular moral purpose and attached to a millennial tradition of great contemporary and past importance is sufficient to produce some of Hawthorne's most effective and compelling narratives. The doomsday Trumpet, the great Judgment, and the flames of Hell are never far away in most of these tales. The same themes and images occur again and again, whether the fiery, red and sulphurous flames of Tophet in "The Celestial Railroad," in "Feathertop," and "Ethan Brand," or the celestial trumpet which summons the great multitude of Revelation in "The Procession of Life." The author uses and reuses such symbols to underline and emphasise his moral purpose.

In "The Great Stone Face," (January, 1850) there seems an implicit tribute to William Miller. Hawthorne assumes the mantle of a poet and describes how the legends of wisdom are tested by the tenor of a life so that "creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so to complete it" (1181). Just as Miller pondered over the mysteries in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation, so Ernest ponders over the mysteries of the Great Stone Face. Each is driven to an interpretation, and for Ernest, the forms of angels seem to appear and then fade into the mists. Miller believed that angels had influenced his work and he often preached of the three angels' message of Revelation 14:6-20, referring to it as the judgment hour message of his time." In "The Great Stone Face" the angels symbolise the Stone Face itself (1174, 1177) as well as influencing the man who becomes the interpreter of the riddle of the Stone Face, Ernest: "angels, as had often been said, seemed to have wrought with him at his labor in the fields; angels seem to have sat with him by the fireside; and dwelling with angels as friend with friends, he had imbibed the sublimity of their ideas" (1182).

The people have been seeking a man of prophecy to unfold divine
truths; they find it in the simple farmer Ernest. In a similar way the humble farmer William Miller became one who was also able to share in the divine similitude. Both men ascend the pulpit, (1183) to communicate with the people. The description of Ernest as he speaks, could well be that of the adventist prophet himself:

His words had power, because they accorded with his thoughts; and his thoughts had reality and depth, because they harmonised with the life which he had always lived. It was not mere breath that this preacher uttered; they were the words of life, because a life of good deeds and holy love was melted into them .... the poet, as he listened, felt that the being and character of Ernest were a nobler strain of poetry than he had ever written .... he gazed reverentially at the venerable man, and said within himself that never was there an aspect so worthy of a prophet and sage as that mild, sweet, thoughtful countenance, with the glory of white hair diffused about it. (1184)

If the poet may be accepted as Hawthorne, and Ernest as Miller, who died shortly before the story was written, then it is indeed a moving tribute to a man whom Hawthorne had long respected. There is another aspect however, for if "Creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so to complete it," (1181) then art is more than mimesis: it is a divine making, a "bringing forth of reality by mystical means." 73 The artist not only assumes the mantle of creator but is able to interpret the prophecy of the Creator Himself. To this extent, Miller and Hawthorne are kindred spirits and artists interpreting the divine. James Mellow describes Miller as making "a doomed passage through Hawthorne's fiction, like a meteor that consumes itself in the process," 74 but within the meteor was a precious nucleus which provided the writer with a more than mimetic vision. In William Miller, Hawthorne observed a fellow seeker after Truth. His literary recognition of the prophet was his personal tribute.

Another writer who used Adventists as a means of teaching moral
principles was Jane Marsh Parker who in the novel The Midnight Cry, (1886) 75 emphasised the movement as within the mainstream of millennial fundamentalism, and "documented the benevolent influence it exercised through individual regeneration." 76 Parker is a frank apologist for the Adventists, and her work seems to be an endeavour to set the record straight on the Millerite movement. The daughter of a Millerite preacher, she wrote popular religious morality tales. Both aspects are very apparent in her novel, which is partly autobiographical. In the latter part of the nineteenth century she wrote a number of articles defending Millerism and attempting to remove "many erroneous impressions of a movement which, disastrous as it was, did much to clarify the theological atmosphere." 77

Parker was very aware of the potential which Millerism had "as a subject for realistic fiction," 78 although The Midnight Cry is a rather weak work. The plot is contrived, the characters woodenly presented and the dialogue stilted and unconvincing. Nevertheless, as a study of the early Adventist movement it has value as accurate history from an eyewitness reporter. Indeed Gary Scharnhorst suggests it is probably "the most complete and reliable history of Millerism written before Francis Nichol's definitive apology The Midnight Cry (1944)." 79

Chapter X of the book is a factual summary of the history and beliefs of the Millerites, including the exegetical methods used by Miller to arrive at his date for the Second Coming. The believers "went forth that summer" (1843) "to proclaim the Midnight Cry. The Christian world was sensibly disturbed by their proclaiming in season and out of season that the end of all things was at hand. Thousands who scoffed at the teachings of Father Miller in public, trembled in secret ...." 80 Parker argues that the Adventists were "far in the lead" (98) in the
interpretation of prophecy, that the fundamental theory could not be faulted (97), and that the intense opposition to the movement was because of the fear of the awesome outcome if Miller was correct:

Mathematical calculation and prophecy led to the sure goal there was no evading, A.D. 1843. And so with the rest of the prophecies of the Second Coming—prophecies whose realistic representation by horned beasts, angels blowing trumpets, and flowing vials, the casting of the devil into a bottomless pit, ... all culminating in A.D. 1843, made the old Millerite chart a powerful attraction to the scoffer, who could find no error in its mathematics, however he might marvel at its zoological eccentricities (100).

The moral fervour of the believer is graphically portrayed in this description:

The heroism of the martyrs of old repeated itself in their adherence to their faith, their scorn of derision and persecution. Their unploughed and unsown fields proclaimed their disbelief in another harvest. The Millerite preacher was ubiquitous. There was no escaping his chart and his tracts, and many, dissatisfied with the dry dust of the orthodox theology, found a grim fascination in the near fulfilment of Father Miller's gospel (100-101).

Parker attributes Millerism's popularity to its extreme orthodoxy, (96-101) rather than to the attractive indeed lurid colour of its apocalypticism. She goes to considerable lengths to demonstrate how normal and orthodox Millerites were. While conceding that the "annihilation of matter, the discontinuance of material substance" (223) might seem "scientifically unthinkable and theologically monstrous" (223) to her readers, it certainly was not to the committed Adventists of forty years earlier. She conceded that the Millerite movement had held back institutional reforms, (53, 134, 210, 224) but emphasised the benefits received through individual regeneration (223-227).

One would expect the culminating event of the story to be the day of Great Disappointment, but it is more of a whimper, as the heroine waits anxiously in a private home for the inevitable anticlimax. Parker does in fact provide an apocalyptic highlight earlier in the novel in the vivid description of "The Dream of Father Miller" where the earth reels
to destruction, the stars are hurled from heaven, and "the children of men" cry in vain to "the Judge, descending, attended by retinue of angels and archangels" (141).

It is a sympathetic portrait of Millerites which Parker sketches in this novel, although she does not ignore some of the disquieting features of the movement, particularly the "effect of such chiliastic doctrine on young minds. (101,157,179,188)" Because she endeavours to be realistic and truthful in her treatment of an historical subject the book is by no means an unqualified endorsement of all aspects of Adventism. Indeed one reviewer concluded, she portrayed "a graphic picture of the extensive disorder caused" by Miller and his followers.

While Parker endeavoured to portray Millerites in a realistic way she was very aware of the moral judgments which had been made about the movement. As a result her writings have a tendency to show the early Adventists as moral exemplars compared with the rest of society.

For Parker the reason for writing the novel was a search for truth, to answer the question what were the early Adventists really like? What was the motive force impelling or driving them ever onwards to the kingdom? She responds to the first question with a wealth of historically accurate detail and to the second in the words of the heroine: "I want a religion that shall dispel illusions, not absorb them; that shall break down dogmatism, not build upon it; that shall give me real knowledge, not evolutions of my ignorance and mistakes" (145). The sad reality, as the author reminds us at the end of the tale is that we can only continue to live and die in hope — "He fell asleep at the last, whispering, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly'" — ... (290)

In contrast to Parker's sympathetic account of Adventists Waldo
Frank, while sympathetically portraying the tortured fundamentalism of an Adventist household in *The Bridegroom Cometh* (1938) is nevertheless extremely critical and censorious of the resulting narrowness and fanaticism. It is a serious attempt to describe and question the life of a completely dedicated Adventist family which is fervently and anxiously awaiting the Second Coming. Unlike earlier moral commentators on Adventists, Frank turns his critical eye not at society so much as at the religion itself, and in doing so he rejects the promised world-inheritance of premillennialism in favour of the spirit and tradition of America to create a new world, in other words a postmillennial solution.

Frank's starting point appears to be the somewhat debatable suggestion that the expanding American frontier required that the colonial and republican pioneers adopt a system of moral repression, by which they could channel all their human energies into taming the wilderness. This self-mastery would have the effect of a harsh asceticism which could lead to fanatical commitment to a religious ideal, to the exclusion of that vicarious experience which is art and culture. Clive Donald in *The Bridegroom Cometh* is a man of this kind, whose life is spent in constant expectation of the apocalypse, who reinterprets the most common of everyday events to fit his scenario of the coming Armageddon and continually seeks out opportunities to share his Adventist faith. This in some ways is similar to Frank's own ethics. As Paul Carter observes: "He learned from the Hebrew prophets that 'conviction without deed is bad ethics.' The religion of the future, therefore, will be a product of methodology instead of theology; its objective will be to find ways of action, public as well as private, which will release awareness of God ...." 89

In *The Bridegroom Cometh* the universe is felt and experienced
through the sensibility and will of the heroine, Mary Donald, the 
dughter of Clive Donald. We see Mary gradually come to reject the 
other-world inheritance preached by Adventists in favour of the spirit 
and tradition of America to create a new world.

The book "opens with a dramatic scene of Mary's baptism in a river 
in New England on the day World War I breaks out in Europe." As the 
story develops one is impressed at the knowledge displayed by Frank in 
every doctrine, every aspect of Adventist life, custom, and manners. 
These things are carefully used to build up a completely realistic 
portrait of an Adventist home in crisis. It is "a moving vignette of the 
hard piety of [a] bleak home." The father lives "only for the Second 
Coming; the frustrated, bitter stepmother" hates the man who has failed 
"to give her a son" and also hates his two daughters Mary and Martha 
in piety of Christ's promise to give to those who hated this world a 
lovelier world." 

Frank uses the apocalyptic beliefs of the Adventist family as a 
methodological framework for his novel. The work has two major sections, 
the first entitled "The Last Days," the second called "The Second 
Coming." Within these two symphonic movements (and the musical allusion 
is deliberate, for there is also a complex musical structure to the 
novel) there are constantly reiterated eschatological themes leading the 
characters to reflect upon the moral condition of themselves as well as 
the world. For example in the baptism scene there is reference to the 
old "paint-peeled hog-back" Adventist church in Main Street with its 
"wood arch yellowing with words that many weathers had faded from black 
to dun: CHRIST IS COMING." (14) The landscape is abruptly changed to the 
baptism at the lake where men and women are singing
"Lord, we are vile, conceived in sin,
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race and taints us all ...." (14)

Almost immediately we are introduced to the Reverend Sim whose "graphic accounts of the Prophecies now due, Daniel and Ezekiel held assemblies in awe from Maine to Texas." (15) Frank uses this method again and again as the story deepens, the apocalyptic statement, the moral discussion, followed by the practical eschatology. (18, 19, 51, 153, 286, 370, 518)

As one reads The Bridegroom Cometh a clear picture develops of the Adventist way of life: its tortured endeavours to follow the words of St. Paul to "be in the world, but not of the world," its absolute conviction in the coming parousia, its strict code of living, its judgmentalism, but also its nostalgia for the past, its moral virtues, its gospel music, and enthusiastic sharing of faith at every opportunity. Clive Donald is forever aware of the Signs of the Times which continually reinforce his belief in the coming Armageddon:

Clive Donald slapped his Marling Monitor: 't won't be long, now, Ma; 't won't be long. Listen to the news, Last Dike Cleared in Panama Canal. Kaiser Sends Greeting by Radio to President Wilson. Orville Wright Flies at Dayton. All on one page. What does the Book of Daniel say? 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' Look?" .... Clive Donald beat time with his palm on the folded paper, 'for all these things must come to pass at the last days.' Signs multiply. Ma, this may be the last Christmas' (18-19).

This sense of urgency drives the Adventist family in all aspects of their living. Time is short, and they must be prepared at any time to meet their coming Saviour in the clouds of heaven, reflected in their approach to all issues. The question forever lurking in their minds is - if the Lord should come today will I be ready? (19, 37, 153, 286) It is highlighted by the wall motto in Gothic boldface:
Rules for Today.
Do nothing that you would not like to be doing,
when Jesus comes.
Go no place where you would not like to be found,
when Jesus comes.
Say nothing that you would not like to be saying,
when Jesus comes (20).

There is also between the windows, the embroidered sampler:

    Christ is the Head
    of this house
    The Unseen Guest
    at every meal
    The Silent Listener
    to every conversation (20).

This is classic adventism, seen in Adventist homes across the
nation, and beyond to the Anglo-American religious colonies in Australia
and New Zealand.

A further consequence of this holy living or pietist approach to
life is the condemnation of smoking, drinking and dancing, such a
reaction being an American puritan tradition going back as far as the
Pilgrim Fathers: "Mary was in their room alone, and of all the freshmen
class alone was working. To dance was sinful, although she couldn't
believe it as bad as playing cards, smoking, drinking ..... and Mary saw
girls guilty of these!" (125) It is a rigid orthodoxy which leads Mary
tortured fears of her fitness to meet the Bridegroom when He comes:
"What am I afraid of? Christ is coming, and I will be condemned. I know
that. Because the fear of the Lord has not been in me ...." (153)

There is another aspect. The deeply felt need in Adventists to
spread their message, combined with a suspicion amounting to almost
phobia towards Roman Catholics. Frank skillfully draws out both threads
when Mary Donald visits Mrs. Duval. Mary likes Mrs. Duval and tries to
make her understand that time is running out for the earth and that
Christ is coming soon, but Mrs. Duval is satisfied with her own Roman
Catholic faith, and gently and sensitively explains this to the girl.
When Mary returns home she is berated by her stepmother:

'Mrs. Duval!' she shouted. 'French Canuck! I'll vow by the Lord, a Catholic.'
Clive Donald looked at his daughter, distantly, gently, in pain. He got up from the table, .... and came back with the Book.
'Listen,' he said:
".... and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces ...."
'Do you know what it is? The Catholics as Daniel foresees 'em' (51).

In the latter part of the novel Frank mentions in somewhat ironical terms the election of Warren Harding as president. The significance for Adventists of the time was that Harding's mother was a Seventh-day Adventist, and the president had himself been a one-time Adventist as child and youth; hence he "knew the truth," and "would come back in to the fold one day." Frank compares and contrasts the mediocrity of Harding and his message of normalcy and restoration with the programme outlined in The Education of Henry Adams (380-382).

Mary Donald finally realises that she is forever estranged from her parent's crabbed religious fundamentalism and turns for salvation to Communism. But this too is not for her, as she comes to realise that it has the same paradox as Adventism. "They work day and night for the love of man, and they do not love" (604). It reminds her "of the analogous contradiction in the fundamentalist doctrines of her childhood, which were also dedicated to the salvation of mankind while denying love." *9 The book ends with Mary finding a solution to her fears in love, "loving with no fear of judgment: loving herself" (621).

Waldo Frank's The Bridegroom Cometh is full of ideas and attitudes - "prophetic, aesthetic, fundamentalist, Communistic," [which crash] blindly into one another." *9* But it is finally love which provides salvation for Mary, rather than the apocalyptic triumphalism of her parents.
The Canadian author, Ralph Allen has in his novel *The High White Forest* (1964) dealt with Adventists in a more balanced way. Like Frank, he writes in a realistic mode, but has the ability to get within the skin of religious fundamentalism in a way which Frank is not able or willing to do. The novel studies the contrast between the secular world and the Seventh-day Adventist faith. It is the conflict generated by the clashing of these two systems which is at the heart of the personal and moral growth of one of the chief protagonists in the story. David Kyle's odyssey commences with a discussion of the time prophecies in the book of Daniel and reaches an apocalyptic climax in the cold white forest of the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, one hundred years after the abortive end of the world. It is also an ethical allegory between good, typified by the young American Kyle, and the German-American Franz Koerner who makes the wrong moral choice in joining National-Socialism and fighting for Hitler. But Allen does not see things simply as good versus evil, or white and black. His implicit intention is to paint a picture of good and evil revealed in their true form so as to facilitate ethical choice for the reader.

The book presents a picture of Adventism in which the sectarian enthusiasm has passed away with the generation that first constituted it. A new generation has grown up and enshrined the charisma and authority of belief "in a traditional [and] legalistic order."^2

David Kyle, a Seventh-day Adventist from Battle Creek, Michigan, who is gradually losing his faith, joins the army. This is a difficult moral choice for him, because Adventists traditionally objected to the bearing of arms and almost invariably when called into the armed forces would seek to serve in a role consonant with their religious beliefs, usually in the medical corps. Kyle decides to serve his country in a
combatant role, but he finds it extremely difficult to explain his position and principles to his father. Initially his father thinks it is all a question of belief and is about to hand his son a stack of pamphlets, "Here you'll find all the important reasons all the important rationalists have given for not believing in the Bible. You'll also find the reasons why their reasons don't stand up, they all ultimately refute themselves ...." But the father comes to understand that it is not a question of belief or otherwise in the Bible, but the moral principles of his son. "We declared ourselves at the time of the Civil War, David.' Samuel was determined to make his point. 'The Adventist declaration was accepted by the Government and it was accepted again in 1917 and it's still accepted.'" But David quietly replies, "All I've thought is that if I'm going to be in the war at all, I'm going to be all the way in. The excuse I could use doesn't fit my case any longer, that's all."

Adventism's standards are significant. Adventists in Battle Creek have strict dress standards, for Mrs. White had counselled them to dress soberly, "in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety" (48), because "physical attraction was not supposed to count with decent people," and as a result Dave Kyle feels self-conscious about holding hands with his girlfriend (48). This question of dress is important to the believer, as Allen makes clear, when he returns to the subject in a conversation between Kyle and his girlfriend Mary.

"'Mrs. White also said,' Mary informed him, 'We are a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men'" (56). The phrase "Mrs. White .... said," is extremely common amongst Seventh-day Adventists, particularly as the beginning of an authoritative pronouncement on some matter of social standards. Dave Kyle remains very aware of numerous prohibitions even after he joins the army. He continues to be a non-smoker, a fact
which makes him well-known in his company (25-6, 34). He does begin swearing, however, finding it "exhilarating" the first time he uses coarse language (170).

Adventist theology "affects Dave significantly." His father, Samuel Kyle, is an intensely religious man whose faith is built on the authority of the Bible and Mrs. White. "He seized on every possible pretext and, if no pretext came forward, invented one, to introduce some essential article of scripture or one of the interpretations or canons of Sister White." He quotes Mrs. White's statement that "there are true Christians in every church. But when the decree shall go forth declaring the counterfeit Sabbath, the line shall be clearly drawn between the false and the true." He believes that because of the Adventist lifestyle "anybody with eyes could see that Adventist children were almost automatically, healthier, happier, better-mannered, better-schooled, better-nourished, and in better company than other children" (41-43).

The "substance" of Samuel Kyle's belief is that "Christ did live, Christ did die, Christ would return, at his Advent the righteous would be borne to eternal bliss and the unrighteous would be devoured in flames." Dave regards his father as so "securely rooted in and insulated by his religion" that he cannot be affected by tragedy (48,52). When Dave goes to the University of Michigan to study pharmacy, problems with his religion arise. He writes to his father, "I know the Bible says we're right, but this friend of mine and this girl friend of his keep asking how I'm sure the Bible's right." Samuel's reply merely exhorts his son to accept the reliability of the Bible and Mrs. White, and David finds he can "only grope" (47).

His son's decision to go into combat causes "aching sorrow" for Samuel Kyle. For the first time Dave perceives that "his father neither
saw nor leaned upon his gospel of salvation as a gospel mainly of self-preservation; it was a gospel of pity and concern, and Samuel's concern now was not for forms and observances and rules and his own unflawed performance of his duty, but for the immortal soul of his only son" (52). Samuel takes very seriously his son's apostasy, concluding that he will not see him in heaven, but still writing to Dave that "all our love is with you" (49).

When the Adventist minister refuses to treat him as a betrayer, Dave feels betrayed himself. Mary Egan, his girl friend, tells him, "All you've believed in, all you've been taught, it's all gone, but you're still most highly brave" (49). This is a sympathetic, realistic portrayal by Allen of the moral difficulties involved.

But Dave cannot entirely forget his Adventism, for the vision of the "deep and bottomless terror of the lake of fire" (67) remains to surface in his consciousness in times of crisis. He doubts his own doubts, is not quite sure where he stands, and wants "only a cunning little hedge bet on the forsaken, seedy ridiculous, insane, but still terrifying faith of his fathers; a stand-by foxhole in case by some wild fantasy the lake of fire turned out to be the well of truth" (299).

As the book closes Dave turns to a "secular version of the fatalism his religion had once provided." He meets Koerner making his way through the snow-filled forest, and discovers his true identity. Facing the crisis he raises his rifle, wondering whom he is really aiming at—his father, Mary, or himself.

Was this where damnation became final, when the lake of fire flooded over and became irrevocable and beyond escape? He had wondered enough already, he told himself in this irrevocable, irreplaceable split second, there was no time left for further wondering. He must do what he was compelled to do and hope that at last this high white forest would release him and allow him to make his peace on earth with Samuel Kyle and claim his life on earth with Mary Egan. He corrected his aim" (375).
This is an expression of the duality of fear and hope of the apocalypse, a term which includes not only destruction, but also a rebirth into a new and infinitely better world. "Kyle's secular fatalism has clarified his vision. He has exercised his option and can live only in hope rather than despair.

Allen has in this novel not only investigated man's inhumanity to man, (the degeneration from an optimistic American belief that mankind can somehow save itself), but uses Adventist apocalypticism to provide a solution which can rejuvenate and prepare humanity for the shape of things to come. David Kyle's personal odyssey illustrates a bringing together of ethical standards with the pragmatic tendencies of the American way of life.

All of the writers studied have viewed Adventism in moral terms. There has been a wide variety of approach, but the emphasis has been on certain major features of the religion - its part in the mainstream of millennial fundamentalism, its come-outer tradition, its cherished apocalypticism, its judgment hour message and its rejection of materialism. Such matters underline the moral debate and controversy which has attended the movement. The depiction of Adventists has been shaped by some American writers into a moral critique of United States society generally. This has been the inevitable result of Adventists being used as yardsticks to measure the moral shortcomings of the wider American society. It is unlikely that Adventists will continue to be portrayed in these terms, however, for the change from sect to church, the increasing liberalism of its educated laity, the gradual drawing away from the come-outer tradition, have all meant that church members no longer seriously yearn for the blessed hope of apocalyptic fulfilment.
Rather, in the words of John May, they "meantime turn their full attention to the ambiguous face of history."
NOTES FOR CHAPTER II


16. Gaustad, p.27.
17. Matthiessen, p.3.
18. Matthiessen, p.11.


34. Poe, 4:6, 8.

35. Poe, 4:5.

36. This is confirmed by Harold Beaver as editor of The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 335-356, although some of Beaver's descriptions and dates concerning the Millerites are inaccurate.

37. Scharnhorst, p. 22.

40. Poe, 16:308.
41. Poe, 16:354.
   Poe, 4:200.
42. Scharnhorst, p.22.
43. Robinson, p.111.
44. Quoted in Scharnhorst, p.25.
   But see "Millerism and Madness: A Study of 'Religious Insanity' in Nineteenth-Century America," by Ronald L. Numbers and Janet S. Numbers in Numbers and Butler, pp.92-117, in which the authors seek to answer the question "why so many contemporaries, including some Millerites, believed that Millerism caused insanity?"
   Scharnhorst, p.27.
52. Whittier, Poetical Works, pp.443-444.


55. Robinson, p.65.


57. Scharnhorst, p.22.

58. Scharnhorst, p.22.


61. Scharnhorst, p.23.


64. Scharnhorst, p.23.


66. Cross, p.305.


70. Numbers and Butler, p.193.

71. Lindén, p.62.

72. Froom, 4:52.

73. Fossum, p.94.

74. Mellow, p.235.

75. Parker.

76. Scharnhorst, p.33.

77. "Did the Millerites Have Ascension Robes?" *Outlook*, October 13 (1894), p.582.


78. Scharnhorst, p.31.

79. Scharnhorst, p.32.

80. *The Midnight Cry*, p.96. Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.

81. Scharnhorst, p.33.

82. Scharnhorst, p.33.


Scharnhorst, p.33.

84. Frank.


86. Carter, p.119.
87. Carter.

88. The Bridegroom Cometh, p.20. Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.

89. Carter, p.123.


90. Carter.

91. Allen.


93. Allen, p.53. Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.


95. Land, p.59.

96. Robinson, p.xii.

97. May, p.21.
CHAPTER III

The Humorous, Satirical Approach to Adventists, including
the Comic Mode of Apocalypticism

A second method employed by writers to describe Adventists has been the humorous or satirical mode. This also includes the recent, non-traditional and postmodernist apocalyptic works using irony for comic effect. Adventists become figures of polarity, of radical ambiguity. The descriptions tend to confirm the popular myths and legends, although the literary authors show a wide knowledge and understanding of Adventists.

While Adventists portrayed in the satirical or humorous mode at first sight appear as minor, if not peripheral figures in fiction, they immediately assume much greater prominence when combined with the apocalyptic. Adventists are ready-made characters waiting to be used by the comic apocalypticists. As society has changed so too have Adventists and their image in apocalyptic literature, which has itself changed both in form, content, and meaning. Apocalypse has been seen as regenerative, and Adventists have been useful symbols against the great backdrop of the End of Age. They are a small group, a remnant, who are destined to "enter the kingdom of heaven." Revelation 12:17 speaks of the dragon being wroth with the woman, "and went to make war with the remnant of her seed," the latter being faithful Seventh-day Adventists.

Recent literary apocalypticists, reacting against the popular American dream of material and millennial bliss in the here and now, have recognised kindred spirits in Adventists, which has not however stopped them from often portraying Adventists in ironical, allegorical, and
metaphorical terms. To both the Adventist and the literary apocalypticist there is a conception of crisis, so that whether it is the 1840s or contemporary America there is an acceptance that it is an age of crisis and this provides a central element to those who endeavour to make sense out of such a world.

Making sense of the world has not always been easy for either Adventists or literary apocalypticists to achieve, considering that liberal, Protestant America seems to believe in a religious process wittily caricatured by Richard Niebuhr in these words "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." In order for the postmodernist apocalypticist to achieve the effect of impending apocalypse he must be able to convey to his readers the sense of the immediacy of destruction which results from associating the danger with the reader's experience. One way of doing this has been to use the Adventist experience, but literary modernists, "infatuated with the abstract ideas of time and the absurd" have gone further. Celebrating William Miller's time prophecies they have manipulated time and thereby subverted "the traditional notion of a paradigmatic or time-ordered fiction that arranges concords between beginning, middle, and end." They "manipulate time just as traditional writers manipulate character and setting in plots with linear continuity."

Eight writers will be considered in demonstrating the humorous or satirical approach to Adventists - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the minor novelists Edward Eggleston and Mary E. Wilkins, Sinclair Lewis, Wright Morris, and the literary modernists Djuna Barnes, William Gaddis and Robert Coover. While displaying some radical differences in technique and method, each presents a somewhat similar description of Adventists.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reacted to the Adventist movement with moral indignation and irony. His short novel Kavanagh (1849) is a fictional satire of the Millerites, although not on specific doctrinal grounds. The attack by Longfellow is directed at both the behaviour of Adventists, and what he perceived as the disastrous effect their message had on others. Longfellow's publisher advertised the book as "a beautiful picture of life in our own times." In fact the story includes a description of a Millerite camp-meeting which is neither beautiful nor artistically accurate although certainly picturesque. It appears to have been formed by "rumour and prejudicial newspaper reports rather than personal observation." Typical of this is the account of a Millerite evangelist's arrival in a New England village which contains the first reference in American literature to the ascension robes supposedly worn by Adventists on the Great Day: "It was one of that fanatical sect who believed the end of the world was imminent, and had prepared their ascension robes to be lifted up in clouds of glory, while the worn-out, weary world was to burn with fire beneath them." The message of doom carried by the preacher spreads rapidly through the village, infecting an orphan with a sense of benumbing sin. As evening draws on the Millerites sing one of their "awful and ludicrous" hymns of bleak and preordained judgment. The orphan, convinced that she is beyond redemption and destined for hell, stumbles despairingly to a river where she throws herself to a watery death.

Longfellow judges the Adventists and finds them wanting. In an excellent use of juxtaposition he contrasts the mournful yet powerful message of the Millerites "Prepare! prepare! prepare to meet the living God!" with the words of Isaiah 63:1 which speaks of a saving God rather than a judgmental tyrant, which is the God of the Millerites as perceived
by Longfellow. Isaiah asks the question: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" This is answered by the Lord himself "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." This Saviour is the antithesis of the gloomy-looking man who rides into town with his judgment hour message of destruction which Longfellow not only rejects with satire and irony, but condemns as encouraging fanaticism leading to death. There is no humour about Longfellow's treatment of Adventism, although much of his description of the religious behaviour reminds one of the exaggerated portrait of modern Millerites painted in Robert Coover's *The Origin of the Brunists* (1966), but without the flirting with absurdity to be found in the latter.

Longfellow was inclined to sport with Adventism, to regard it as a menace to religion and society, a "curious excrescence of the national culture."¹³ Not so the minor writer Edward Eggleston whose novel *The End of the World* (1872) is deliberately designed to be an historically accurate picture of Millerism in southern Indiana. It is also an application of the image of the end of the world which Douglas Robinson says "in American literature is an image of desire that seeks not to point beyond itself to some indefinite paradise but to embody the very mediatory locus that makes speculation about temporal and spatial transitions possible."¹⁴ A literary work treating of the end of the world was not new to nineteenth century America; the tradition goes back to Puritan times when Michael Wigglesworth published his long poem, *The Day of Doom* (1662), but Eggleston is less concerned with the pyrotechnical effects lavishly displayed by most writers of the apocalyptic. His novel endeavours to be both serious history and satire with an ostensibly objective view of the Adventist movement, for
Eggleston believed the novelist should "set down things as he finds them." 15

The melodramatic plot deserves little comment, for it is the usual sentimental love tale then so popular: the love of August Wehle and Julia Anderson triumphs over the schemings of an evil mustachioed villain and Julia's termagant mother. Nevertheless William Randel suggests the novel "has value not because of its plot but because of the scenes and events that form the background of the plot. The climax of the love story coincides with the day which the Millerites had announced as the end of the world." 16

Eggleston is a gentle satirist who usually portrays the Millerites as pious and sane citizens. Elder Hankins, the preacher who propagates Miller's "new fangled" faith in the area of Sugar Grove, converts many whose expectation of the Day of Doom relieves "the fearful monotony of their lives" (59). In four dramatic chapters, Eggleston details the events of the Last Day. "Work was suspended everywhere" (256), and popular imagination seized upon shooting stars and crimson clouds as signs of the End. Withdrawing to "a large bald hill" to await their ascension, the Adventists "wept and shouted with the excitement" (257). Like the later Brunist sect that suffers poor weather on the night they expect the End, they are finally dispersed by a torrential rainstorm. A bolt of lightning "produced a startling effect upon the overstrained nerves of the crowd ... And then the hurricane struck them, and they half-ran and were half-carried down the rear slope of the hill" (275-76). The beginning of a new day finds them declaring "that the world had ended, and that this was the new earth," while others "still waited for the end," and still others, throwing off their pietism embraced "the blankest atheism and boldest immorality" (278).
While this picture of Millerism is not completely accurate it is not deliberately malicious. Eggleston chides Miller and his followers for being zealots and fanatics but concedes that "every religious delusion has grown from some fundamental error in the previous religious teaching of the people" (58). Indeed he even praises the theological offspring of the Millerites, "the Adventists of today," as "a very respectable denomination, doing a work which deserves more recognition from others than it receives" (57).

While throughout the novel there is a continuous thread of satirical comment on the more outrageous manifestations of the Millerite excitement Eggleston does suggest the movement enjoyed mass appeal, as in his concluding comment: "The assured belief of the believers had a great effect on others ... An eminent divine, at that time a pastor in Boston has told me that the leaven of Adventism permeated all religious bodies, and that he himself could not avoid the fearful sense of waiting for some catastrophe" (251). This evaluation of the movement was accepted by W.D. Howells, who like Eggleston had been living in the Ohio River valley during the grand millennial year. In reviewing Eggleston's novel Howells stated that during "the great Millerite excitement ... vast numbers of good people throughout the country believed that the end of the world was at hand, and probably most men were touched with a vague fear that it might be so."

Mary E. Wilkins, "a New England local colorist," repeats all the popular legends of the Millerites in her short story "A New England Prophet" (1894). The comical aspects of the Great Disappointment are highlighted with a repetition of the ascension robes myth, and the assembling together of the true believers on a mountainside to await the End. While she purports to record the local history of Millerism it is
really an embellishment of popular rumour rather than accurate history. Although Wilkins claimed that the story was based on an actual incident in her hometown of Randolph, Massachusetts, it seems to have been modelled largely on Eggleston's novel.

Wilkins seeks to emphasise the importance of new beginnings rather than destruction in her story. There are elements of America as the Redeemer Nation contrasted with the dead end of Adventism's blessed hope. It is this contrast which provides Wilkins with the satirical tool she seems to require in telling the story. Wilkins's prophet "expounded strange and subtle mathematical calculations and erratic interpretations of history as applied to revelation with a fervour which brought conviction to his audience." Like the Eggleston account, a Millerite suffers the jeers and ridicule of his neighbours. His more skeptical brother assumes ownership of the family farm before the Day of Doom thus saving the Millerite from temporal ruin. In both stories the climax occurs with the marriage of a young Millerite woman and her unconverted lover while a group of believers await the End on a hill nearby. The description of the Disappointment is a travesty of history, with the prevailing mood sardonicism. Ascension garments are much in evidence, together with vulgarity and boorishness as Wilkins underlines her satirical purpose and produces an almost carnival atmosphere (610). Finally the "pallid shivering people" return slowly to their homes, their disappointment complete (611).

What Wilkins was clearly doing was to create the right backdrop for a good story. Millerism suited her purpose and provided a ready made climax. In utilising the Adventist movement she fell easily into the satirical mode in describing it.

Wilkins's approach is part of the process of furthering
mythologies, and constructing archetypes in both literature and religion. Newly made myth is really old, reassuring tradition. Examples can also be found in the writings of Sinclair Lewis, where Seventh-day Adventists make their brief appearance as exaggerated archetypes fulfilling American expectations of radical religious fervour. They are pale reflections of Elmer Gantry. Lewis's first mention of Adventists refers not to the people but to a church building, with clear hints of the personification of this structure to the characteristics of those who use it. In Main Street (1920), Carolyn Kennicott goes to a window in search of the charm of the surrounding village. What she sees is "the side of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - a plain clapboard wall of a sour liver colour; the ash-pile back of the church,"21 symbolic of all that is sterile, austere and unimaginative in small-minded and smalltown Midwest. An argument over theology in Elmer Gantry (1927), Lewis's novel about a sanctimonious, hypocritical evangelist, results in one person's telling another: "professed Christians like you give them this emasculated religion! Why, it's fellows like you who break down the dyke of true belief, and open a channel for higher criticism and sabellianism and nymphomania and agnosticism and heresy and Catholicism and Seventh-day Adventism and all those horrible German inventions!"22 Somewhat later in the same book Dr. Zechlin, a religious liberal cynically observes: "... good Baptists, who worry lest their sons and cousins and sweethearts fail to get into the Baptist heaven - or what is even worse, who wonder if they may not have guessed wrong - if God may not be a Catholic, maybe, or a Mormon or a Seventh-day Adventist instead of a Baptist, and then they'll go to hell themselves!"23

In It Can't Happen Here (1936), Lewis pictures Fort Beulah, Vermont, as a small town "where to sport a beard was to confess one's
self a farmer, a Civil War veteran, or a Seventh-day Adventist." One of the story's main characters, the longwinded fascist Berzelius Windrip, writes an autobiography in which he portrays Adventists as zealots whom he would like to unite with Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians into a "whole glorious brotherhood." Windrip's - or Lewis's - association of Adventists with mainline Protestant groups is unusual, but perceptive. Finally in Arrowsmith (1945), Lewis portrays a character as "a socialist, a Swedish Seventh-day Adventist, a ferocious arguer, and fond of drinking aquavit," who gets turned out of a beer-garden because of his vigorous preaching. Lewis leaves the impression that Adventists are an unusual lot, who seem to combine a dour religious faith with an unhesitating non-conformity. The satire remains essentially in the comic mode.

The distinguished novelist and essayist Wright Morris has occasionally used a similar approach in his descriptions of Seventh-day Adventists, although his usual method of depicting the religion and its adherents is polemical caricature. Morris is well acquainted with Adventism which was the faith of his mother and her relatives. He inherited almost $500 from his Seventh-day Adventist grandfather which helped to set him on his writing career. In Will's Boy: A Memoir (1981) he tells of meeting his mother's sister Winona and her family. These Adventists gave him "an image of human goodness" which he felt he "had been lacking." He also noted that their belief "need not be good for me to be good in itself" (161). His Aunt Winona whose "first love had been the Lord," was at once "serene, vulnerable, and unshakeable. The appalling facts of this world all existed to be forgiven. In her presence I was subject to fevers of faith, to fits of stark belief. Like the grandfather, she saw me as a preacher in search of a flock" (159).
It is a sensitive and sympathetic portrait of the gentle, aging aunt who gives "proven sinners three or four times their share of her concern and love" (156).

In contrast to Lewis and Morris literary modernists seized with the power to manipulate time have celebrated Adventism as an excellent vehicle for comic apocalypticism in which the modernists have invented "absurd worlds-without-end which resemble no real world so much as that netherworld" to which Adventists expect to be translated. Upsetting the traditional time-ordered fiction with its beginning, middle, and end, the modernists instead, constantly manipulate time. For example Djuna Barnes in her avant-garde novel Nightwood (1936) illustrates "spatial form" with her character Nora who can range the centuries from the early Christian era, through nineteenth century America to an eschatological climax heralded by the End of the World. There is both cataclysmic prediction and visionary transformation, linked with a secular vision of survival which preaches an idealistic emphasis on mind and imagination. Nora is a woman unrestrained by time, "the only woman of the last century who could go up a hill with the Seventh-day Adventists and confound the seventh day - with a muscle in her heart so passionate that she made the seventh day immediate. Her fellow worshippers believed in that day and the end of world out of a bewildered entanglement with the six days preceding it; Nora believed for the beauty of that day alone."29 She was at that time an Adventist, and Barnes suggests some of the attributes displayed by such believers: "One missed in her a sense of humour," and sums up the philosophy of such seekers of the Second Coming in the words: "outside and unidentified" with the world, "endlessly embroiled in a preoccupation without a problem" (53). Adventism is "one of those deviations by which man thinks to reconstruct himself" (53). The
apocalyptic aspects of Millerism and the Adventist faith are summed up in the biblical cry "Watchman, what of the Night." (78), but for Nora the uncertainty created by the looming End of Days leads her to cry out: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me!" (83) It is a "Great Enigma" (83) which she cannot resolve. There is a certain cutting irony in the way Barnes portrays Adventism. Her skepticism of their beliefs is clear as she combines a satirical commentary with the comedy of the absurd. It is an early example of two of the chief features of literary modernism, the manipulation of time and the realisation of the ludicrous. Unlike later literary apocalypticists of the absurd she retains a degree of seriousness in her methodology and descriptions, although the connection between her modernism and Adventism is coincidence.

In The Recognitions (1955), William Gaddis uses the Millerite legend for a lengthy discussion of the lasting effects of religious ideas through time and their effect on individuals. An enthusiastic Adventist reads Miller's "Dream of the Last Day" with the dedication of a new convert. 30 Time and the apocalyptic process is stressed in the mention of "the Dark Day of May of 1790 whose night moon turned to blood, and the great falling of stars in November 1833, as signs of the Second Advent" (55). Mention is also made of periodic natural disturbances, earthquakes and tempests as well as the soon coming Advent, as Aunt May the time warped Millerite contemplates the end of the world, prophesied so many years before by William Miller: "evidence continued to 'flow in from every quarter.' 'The earth is reeling to and fro like a drunkard.' At this dread moment look! The clouds have burst asunder; the heavens appear; the great white throne is in sight! Amazement fills the Universe with awe! He comes! He comes! Behold the Saviour comes!" (36) Apart from the piling on of exclamation marks Gaddis has caught exactly the
language of Adventism's literature describing the Second Coming. It is a deliberate choice of bathos, the mixing of the ludicrous with the serious.

Gaddis uses the same technique to describe the life and beliefs of Aunt May, a nineteenth century-style Adventist who has somehow wandered into the twentieth and remains ambiguously bewildered and at the same time completely untouched by the madness she encounters. Aunt May is a stereotype of what we feel every stiff upper lipped maiden Adventist aunt ought to be. She convinces the hero of Gaddis' story that "there was no more hope for the damned than there was fear for the Elect." (35) and spends times of marathon duration with her nephew describing the suffering, disaster, and pitiless horror caused by sin (35). Poor Aunt May retreats more and more into a world of her own imaginings as she sees the earth grow daily worse. The Bible is her consolation, put aside "only for excursions among the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Primitive Protestant Martyrs, from the Introduction of Christianity to the Latest Periods of Pagan, Popish, and Infidel Persecutions ('embellished with engravings'), and such recent prophets as stood her in stead of newspapers" (35).

The exaggerated language is deliberately used by Gaddis for comical and satirical effect, and yet it accurately captures the spirit of questing, eschatological Adventism, with its nostalgic longing for a return of the days of martyrdom, as well as its rather nervous hope that the apocalypse will perhaps be postponed just a little longer.

Like many Adventists, Aunt May studies the Bible and other prophecies: "she read interpretations of the eleventh-century Malachi prophecy (on the Popes, of which only seven remained to come, and with the seventh the destruction of Rome) with the avidity of someone reading
the morning's news" (35). She takes a spirited anti-evolution stance, using a weird and fanciful understanding of the prophecies to reassure her fundamentalist faith in a literal creation of the earth by God: "She waited, thumbing the Revelation of Saint John the Divine, which she read as a literal transcription of the march of science, a parade led off by Darwin which had trod on simian feet throughout her life" (36). When she receives word of the Scopes trial in Tennessee she retires to her room "as though what she was waiting for was a secret from everyone but herself and her Creator" (36).

She treats all people, including Janet the kitchen girl, as potential converts to Adventism, but her endeavours to explain the complicated arcana of her faith to the simple young woman merely fills the latter with "the residence of terror in the collapsing tenement of her mind" (36). The strongly anti-Catholic bias displayed by many Adventists is shown by Aunt May in a comical episode involving satire and irony: "- And this? she appeared one morning in the study door poised rigid, dangling forth a pamphlet between forefinger and opposable thumb, - tell me how this got among my things? As though there might have been movement in the air, the pamphlet fluttered open, quaking its suspended title: Breve Guida della Basilica di San Clemente" (37). It is of course a travel guide, but Aunt May takes verbal flight in horrified indignation that something Latin, something Catholic and idolatrous has invaded her sanctuary.

Like his recent Carpenter's Gothic (1986) 31, William Gaddis uses religion in The Recognitions for satirical and comic effect. A less than subtle irony is present throughout the Aunt May episode. It is an outstanding performance in humorous apocalypticism which not only presents a truthful portrait of the Adventist faith and people but keeps
us entertained as well.

A major study of the religiosity of Adventism and its consequences is Robert Coover’s *The Origin of the Brunists* (1966). This is an important novel in the comic apocalyptic mode. The author focuses on a world of violence, failure, boredom, and death, but salvation is also provided, leaving the reader with a sense of optimism. The story is set in a technologically modern world into which the Millerites seem to have been transported in time. The Brunists are a new millennial religious sect who set dates for the end of the world.

According to Coover, history "is man’s attempt to make sense out of [the] world, to place his experiences in a context he can understand." The real power of "historical events lie not in their facts but in descriptions." Since "these descriptions are the products of imagination, they are fictional in nature." With time such descriptions begin to take on a mythic quality, which underpin history. In *The Origin of the Brunists* Coover exposes the myths of Adventist religious groups like the Millerites and uses ironic commentary to show how fictions, which have no more meaning than people care to assign to them, can be formulated into truths. He also seems to be suggesting that people today have lost their desire for the thrill of discovery. They have become comfortable and accepting of their way of life. Their conventional viewpoint is confirmed and reinforced by the media and popular culture heroes. Against this attitude Coover paints a portrait of modern Millerites or adventists who set out on a search of new, yet old theological and eschatological truths. The reader is invited to relinquish his or her traditional approaches to reality and participate in this wait for the Second Coming. It is as Richard Anderson confirms: "an exercise of art that frequently juxtaposes what is fantastic in
life with the everyday."

The story involves Giovanni Bruno, the miraculous sole survivor of a coal mine disaster, who suffers brain damage from carbon monoxide poisoning. His occasional grunts and gestures provide esoteric meaning to a holy-roller pentecostal widow, a bumbling numerologist, and a spiritualist who is in touch with powers from another dimension. Gradually a group of believers form who interpret Bruno's grunts as indicating that the End of the World will occur on April 19, the last day under the sign of Aries. Like Seventh-day Adventists the Brunists search the Book of Revelation for signs and symbols. Revelation provides the searchers with ample material for chiliastic prophecies since it abounds in numbers, and numerical symbols are essential for understanding Coover's method. Yet one soon becomes aware that the author is using these numbers, clues, paths and symbols to discredit and parody his characters. Robert Coover uses apocalyptic imagery in order to challenge its foundation. His novel proves, according to Zbigniew Lewicki, that "skilful manipulation of signs and symbols can in fact produce the illusion of substance behind them, even if there is no 'real' message to convey." Adventists' faith in their prophetic interpretations may teach nothing or "take us anywhere."

In preparation for the End the Brunists not only commence to spread the word but also fashion their own rather filmy white ascension robes, clearly modelling themselves on their Adventist predecessors. The editor of the local newspaper, an engaging cynic called Justin Miller, manages to infiltrate the sect by pretending a faith in the Brunist message and publishes his own "midnight cry," a pictorial special headlined Brunists Prophesy End Of World!, and organises a Millennium's Eve television documentary. Miller is certainly the most complicated character in the
novel. His name is readily associated with William Miller, while the
Justin aspect suggests St. Justin, the second century Christian martyr
whose missionary zeal is credited with a widespread increase in Christian
activity in Asia Minor. In a similar way it is Miller who secures
worldwide recognition of the Brunists. The Origin of the Brunists opens
with a quote from Revelation 1:11 - "Write what you see in a book and
send it to the Seven Churches" - and the analogy is clear: it was the
duty of John to describe what he saw, and it is the duty of Miller to
write about what he sees. There is also an obvious parallel to Ellen
White who saw many things in vision and was similarly commanded to write,
doing so voluminously as does Miller. Ironically Miller, nicknamed
"Tiger" Miller, is soon declared an agent of the Powers of Darkness.

Coover not only deals with the enthusiasm engendered by the Brunist
adventist message but the legalism which is an important component of the
movement, as it is of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. He quotes as his
heading for chapter six the words of Moses: "This book of the law shall
not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and
night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written
therein ..." The narrow judgmentalism of certain members of the Brunists
such as the Baxter family are used by Coover to underline the irony that
these rigid legalists have been somehow caught up in a group, who, far
from relying on crabbed and self righteous commandment keeping, have
taken a leap of faith beyond the unimaginative and strict ritual of daily
religious control to an apocalyptic vision of the End of Days. Coover
seems to be suggesting that it is fun while it lasts, although by the end
of the novel reality has started to seep through: the eschatological
excitement of the believers and their religion is gradually becoming more
staid and respectable. Still, the matter of obedience to God is central
to the Brunists since one of those who dies in the mine disaster leaves a note which not only reinforces and encourages the little group of Brunists but also paraphrases the biblical statement that "the wages of sin are death." Ely Collins, the fundamentalist preacher, manages to scrawl out a tortured message before his suffocation by underground poisonous gases:

Dear Clara and all:
I disobayed and I know I must Die. Listen
always to the Holy Spirit in your Harts Abide in Grace.
We will stand Together befor Our Lord the 8th of (105).

Recollection of these words means that many Brunists "study it in our hearts and abide in Christ Jesus" (105) so that their consciences will be clear and they can stand faultless in the judgment. Poor Ely Collins with his self flagellating spirituality is doomed to die an early death. This reminds the reader conversant with Adventist history of James White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church who perished at comparatively the same age as Ely Collins. Both men leave a widow who seizes the opportunity provided by the absence of a husband authority figure to establish their own ascendancy in the fledgling, religious movement. Ellen White determined "to take the work where he left it and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion." 36 Sister Clara Collins is a kind of time-warped Ellen White who provides continuity and inspiration to her followers as they face an equivalent of the Millerites' Great Disappointment:

She stood so tall in her tunic, so strong and self-possessed. He had heard her speak on other occasions at tent meetings and in company with Brother Ely, but always then in that great man's shadow, and he had never before observed such eloquence in her, such candid poise, such great personal magnetism and contained power; she was as though possessed by the Holy Spirit Itself — and, indeed, was this not precisely the case? (5).

Meanwhile, "the Brunists attract international attention." 37 Suicides, miracles, and verifications from the stars indicate that there
is indeed to be an end of the world. On the Last Day, the robed Brunists lead a bizarre crowd along an old coal-slag road to the side of a mountain where they sing hymns and await the second coming on their Mount of Redemption. It is a classic Millerism re-enactment. The situation becomes driven by commercialism as vendors hawk popcorn and soft drinks in a carnival atmosphere which immediately reminds the reader of the close connections between the American Dream of a millennium of peace on earth with the commercial reality of ensuring a quick profit in any situation. A violent storm erupts however, resulting in Brunists leaping in frenzied reaction into "the air as though trying to fly" (407). Purposeless violence erupts in the noisy confusion as a man is crushed when a bingo tent collapses, a child is trampled, a woman dies in an epileptic fit, another suffers a miscarriage, and Miller is attacked and virtually crucified. At the same time, as with the Adventists of 1844 there are similar groups and happenings occurring outside the United States:

Announcer's voice broke through the network program again with a sudden bulletin, accompanied by a newsclip of the Brunists standing on a hill ... but this hill was rocky and unfamiliar. Didn't recognize any of the cultists either. Good reason: they turned out to be a group in Beirut where, the announcer explained, night had already fallen and the end of the world was expected momentarily. Quick bulletins then of similar groups gathering in Germany, in Great Britain, in Rhodesia, Greece, Australia, Peru, Canada ... (476).

Recovering from their own Great Disappointment they act like the early Adventists, reinterpreting and setting new dates, but gradually become institutionalised and look with disfavour on the more sensational aspects of their religion, indeed denying they ever took place. They start to wear regular clothes under their Brunist tunics and comment judgmentally on the behaviour of some of their fellow believers: "They read afterwards about some meetings where things got even worse than they
had at the Mount of Redemption" (507), but Clara Collins says that such people "were sensationalists and not really Christians" (508). Brunist hymns reach the Top 40 charts, their leaders write popular inspirational books, Sister Clara Collins becomes the "Evangelical Leader and Organiser," and Giovanni Bruno, the crazy prophet, is sent to a mental hospital.

There are close parallels here to the early Adventists whose history has clearly been researched by Coover for his novel. Both movements corroborate prophecy with intricate and elaborate numerology confirmed by astronomical and other natural phenomena, and each prospers under the direction of numerous subordinates and followers. Like the Brunists the Adventist hymns were extremely popular in the early days of their faith. Early Adventist leaders such as Miller, Himes, Joseph Bates and James White all wrote inspirational books for popular consumption. The reception of Bruno into a mental hospital has its corresponding aspect in the 1840s when it was alleged that a number of Millerites became deranged by religious excitement and had to be locked up in institutions for the insane.

It is, however, the figure of Sister Clara Collins who can be most easily identified. She is a latter day Sister Ellen White, the most important founder of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Coover is well acquainted with the Ellen White legend as his description and development of Clara Collins makes clear. The deep impression which White made on her contemporaries is an ability shared by Collins:

'Brother Hiram!' Clara cried, and hurried toward him to take his hand in both of hers. 'How wonderful! You've come!'  
'Yes, after all you told me, Sister Clara, I could hardly stay away.'

She introduced him to the group, friends of the faith from New Bridgeport. Hiram had never seen Clara so inspired. She spoke glowingly of all their plans, of all the wonderful people who had answered the call, of this great moment that was gloriously upon them (4).
She is clearly a woman who is developing charisma, and animated charm as the religion grows. She demonstrates an Ellen White role as "the Lord's messenger," to inspire, and lead with an ebullience and vitality which was formerly completely absent from her life and character:

And Sister Clara Collins rose tall and she said, 'We go, we go to that Mount of Redemption,' and how her voice rang! 'We go not to die, but to act!' And oh! how they exulted and oh! how their hearts leapt with a common hope! and oh! how the hallelujahs were sounded! 'The Kingdom is ours! It awaits us! It awaits us on the Mount of Redemption! We have but to act! We have but to go! But to go and to receive it!' Oh! it was tremendous! it was electric! it was glorious!" (12).

This shows the dynamic contrast between Sister Collins and the other Brunists. The spontaneous and earthy language of Collins catches exactly the Ellen White oral prose which Adventists flocked to hear at their annual camp meetings:

Clara Collins came on, a sudden dynamic contrast: 'Yesir, we are very excited! ....' Announcer: 'When exactly, Mrs. Collins, do you anticipate the, eh, end of the world?' Clara: 'Well, we don't rightly know, but if you're worryin' about it like you better be, ....' (477).

And a little later:

Clara Collins gazed upward, lifted her fist and cried out, and they all mimed her. What power that woman had! (487)

Like Ellen White, Collins's message is finally to convert the whole world: "'God willing,' she shouted out, 'we will go out and win the souls of the whole wide world!'" (517)

Coover has carried out an impressive amount of research on Millerite history, but he deliberately distorts and exaggerates the record by referring to hysterical suicides, crazed individuals, and ascension garments because, as he has observed, "It is easier for me to express the ironies of our condition by the manipulation of Platonic
forms than by imitation of the Aristotelian." He has written neither an historical novel or even a parody of an historical novel about Millerism; instead he attacks the very notion of historical veracity. As Gary Scharnhorst says, Coover "voided the teleological bowels of history by creating a novel world in which 'facts' are irrelevant, if not incredible. His selection of oft-distorted 'facts' about Millerism as analogies to those irrelevant if not incredible 'facts' recorded in his metahistory of Brunism is ironically propitious." 43

Coover produces in the Brunists a panoramic picture of the multiplicity of dreams and unconscious needs which comprise a culture. He demonstrates how newly formed religious organisations afford each member special powers to explain and conquer the inexplicable. Like the Adventists the Brunists treat the entire uncomprehending world as a potential enemy who may attempt to interfere with their communion with the divine. The portrait of Adventism which emerges is a combination of rigid fanaticism, obsessional behaviour and continuing eccentricities, but there is also a vigorous, aggressive evangelism, a fervour in apocalypticism which is a fertile soil for growth and expansion. Coover contrasts this vibrant energy of an enthusiastically spreading faith with the ordinary American community with its reputation for being stable, sane, and unadventurous. 44 The Origin of the Brunists is not so much apocalyptic as meta-apocalyptic, that is, it deals primarily not with the apocalypse itself but with its cult-chiliasm, 45 which is of both the Brunist and Adventist kind. By setting the story outside of time he successfully combines the more solemn tale of the Millerites with the comic relief of the Brunists. The ending is suitably less than serious as the Divine Judge and Angels faced with selling the idea of the End to an incredulous public "hire a leading American public relations agency
... for thirty pieces of silver to provide the solution" (533). William Miller would have understood.

The humorous, satirical approach to the portrayal of Adventists in literature has developed certain characteristics which make it immediately recognisable. There is almost invariably a strong satirical vein being worked by the author which is often combined with irony and sardonicism. Longfellow, Eggleston, Wilkins and Lewis seldom go beyond this, although Longfellow and Wilkins's descriptions of the Millerite excitement use both ridicule and facetiousness. Djuna Barnes retains a cool detachment as she looks at Adventism, enabling her to appear objective even when she is successfully using satire and irony combined with an amusing drollness. Gaddis and Coover on the other hand use burlesque, ridicule, comic effects and ambiguity as they introduce Adventists to their readers.

The results of using these various techniques is to portray Adventists as dour religious legalists who have moral certainty of belief, or as eccentric individualists who pursue an apocalyptic Doomsday which never quite arrives.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III


4. Quoted in Robinson, p.65.


7. Scharnhorst, p.34.


23. Lewis, p.122.


25. Lewis, p.142.


Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.

28. Scharnhorst, p.34.


31. Carpenter's Gothic (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986). Although there is no specific mention of Adventists in this work, Gaddis once again satirises fundamentalism, particularly of the Mormon and Southern Baptist type.


34. Lewicki, p.63.


37. Scharnhorst, p.35.


40. Schwarz, p.417.

41. Schwarz, pp.410-412.

42. First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing, ed. by Frank Gado (Schenectady: Union College Press, 1973), pp.143-44.

43. Scharnhorst, p.35.


45. Lewicki, p.60.

See also Zahava McKeon, Novels and Arguments (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp.130-76, for a detailed "qualitative" approach to The Origin of the Brunists.
CHAPTER IV

Caricature, Stereotypes and Parodies of Adventists

There has been a third approach to the depiction of Adventists in literature. In contrast to the humorous attitude adopted by Gaddis, Coover, and others, this portrayal of Adventists in literature is pictorial and exaggerates the characteristic traits of Adventists for comic effect. The religion and its members become standardised images targeted for intentional mockery often resulting in a highly entertaining picture of Adventism which is nevertheless a travesty of reality. This legitimate approach to the religion sets out to debunk, to ridicule, to caricature or parody. It may be any or all of these, but the portrait is stereotypical. The fictional caricature becomes a convenient strategy for some authors who wish to circumvent polemical discussion, and Adventists are a comparatively easy target because they act in ways which are easily parodied. Millerite and Seventh-day Adventist history is full of examples of sincere but misguided actions of individuals and groups, from the abortive wait for the End in 1844, through the quixotic attacks on evolution by George McCready Price, to a recent Seventh-day Adventist expedition to Mount Ararat to locate Noah’s ark.¹

From the beginning of the Millerite movement Adventists have been ridiculed and parodied in American fiction,² portrayed as both noble and ignoble, as paragons or lunatics, or with contempt or sympathy. The explosive dynamic of the Adventist faith leads some imaginative writers to exploit this aggressive religious fervour into their works by articulating the commonly held beliefs and attitude towards Adventists of the populace, and this usually results in caricature and stereotype, in
myth and legend, parody and ridicule.

A somewhat different pattern emerges when one looks at British and Australian literary images of Adventists. There is still caricature and parody, but accomplished in a much less serious manner than American writers. British and Australian authors seem to just want to enjoy themselves as they paint colourful, larger than life portraits of Adventists. For example, while George Bernard Shaw's *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935) is an eschatological play with apparently serious themes and messages, the playwright "retired from the problems of the actual world," and "retained confidence in the poise of his own mind," and "the philosophical playfulness of *The Simpleton* is the fruit of this condition." Consequently we do not really take the Adventists in the play seriously. The absurdity of their behaviour and beliefs reflects not so much on the religion as on humanity generally.

This attitude is even more pronounced in the Australian play *The Legend of King O'Malley* (1974) by Michael Boddy and Robert Ellis, which revives old forms (revivalist meetings, vaudeville turns), and puts them to new uses. The broadly comic style gives an Australian view of the Adventist church and its people. It is a slapstick way of celebrating the church which would be unimaginable from American writers who seem to take their religion more seriously. Even Robert Coover in *The Origin of the Brunists* retains a serious intention amid all the comic apocalypticism.

From the 1840s the Adventist movement provoked derisive comment. James Fenimore Cooper and Oliver Wendell Holmes were two of the first to adopt ridicule and caricature towards the religion. They assumed a "Brahmin superiority" in describing the Millerites as "a virulent strain of mass lunacy." Since neither man had any personal contact with the
movement they seem to have relied mainly on rumour and innuendo in coming to their judgment.

At the beginning of the 1840s Cooper had become embittered by the press libels made about him because of his opposition to the Anti-Renters of New York, and seems to have "regarded Millerism" as a further example of "the rabid mob mentality which was threatening the republic." 5 While at least one group of Millerites held a series of meetings in Cooperstown during 1844, there is no evidence that Cooper attended them, and indeed his correspondence is openly scathing of the movement. 6 In his novel Wyandotte (1843) set in pre-Revolutionary New York he includes a denunciation of Millerism. His genteel and heroic protagonist, who "saw and felt the consequences of education, habits, manners, opinions and sentiments," is contrasted with "the ordinary demagogue, a wretch equally incapable of setting an example of any of the higher qualities in his own person or practice, and of appreciating it when exhibited in others." To ensure there is no misunderstanding to whom he is referring, Cooper cites "Miller's interpretations of his prophecies" as one example of the demagoguery he found so distasteful. 7 While his own postmillennial beliefs are expressed in his utopian novel The Crater (1847) he continued his bitter attack on Millerism in his correspondence of the period. 8

Holmes in an early instalment of The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table (1857-58) spoke scathingly of the Millerites. Describing the comet of 1843, he somewhat cynically observed that he would have felt more anxiety "if I had thought the world was ripe. But it is very green yet, if I am not mistaken; and besides, there is a great deal of coal to use up, which I cannot bring myself to think was made for nothing. If certain things, which seem to me essential to a millennium, had come to pass, I should have been frightened." He then continues in satirical
verse form in "Latter-Day Warnings," which outlines the conditions he thinks would herald the End. Only "When legislators keep the law,/When banks dispense with bolts and locks," will the Last Trump sound and "Miller's saints blow up the globe;/But when you see that blessed day,/Then order your ascension robe." Holmes clearly considered the Adventists to be a peculiar people who showed symptoms of madness. His attitude to the movement is one of "patrician condescension."

Certain minor American novelists of the mid-nineteenth century adopted a rather similar tone of condescension and caricature in describing the Millerites. Charles Cannon capitalised on what he saw as the movement's evangelical excesses and fanaticism. In Father Felix (1845) he depicts a Millerite revival which brings about the derangement of Julia Baldwin, whose former simple, virtuous life is replaced by mad and dangerous ravings which lead to her death. George Lippard used similar methods in his little known satire on American religion The Memoirs of a Preacher (1849). The main character in this novel is a popular preacher and fraudulent religionist named Edmund Jervis. Jervis is a Millerite and spiritualist who lives in a Gothic mansion in Philadelphia. He is described as "the man of men, who has given all the women in town love powders, and who frightens our most respectable merchants into fits, with his sermons." Under his coat of sanctified respectability lies "a hollow-hearted Sensualist ... tainted to the core by perjury, seduction, and slow, cool, calculating Murder" (55). It is humourless parody of the sensationalist variety. Jervis is painted in such larger-than-life colours that he becomes an unbelievable caricature, a Satanic figure who, when charged with having "the lust of the Sensualist, the cold unbelief of the Atheist" (99), replies sardonically that he is merely a product of a society that idolises its preachers and
thrives on sectarian warfare. It is an unpleasant and unconvincing portrait of a Millerite. A somewhat similar approach to Adventists was used by John DeForest in *Witching Times* (1856) and *Irene the Missionary* (1879) both of which suggest the Millerite movement was an historical aberration, a time of madness, suicide and fanaticism.\(^{12}\)

By way of comparison and contrast to these American authors one may note George Bernard Shaw's play *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935) which also deals with Adventists, madness and suicide, but Shaw has a serious moral purpose which uses Seventh-day Adventists as a comic counterweight to the important philosophical indictment he makes in his play against Western civilization. The Adventists appear at the beginning of Act II as the crew of the Pitcairn Island fleet. A character describes them as "Seventh-day Adventists," who "are quite sure the Judgment Day is fixed for five o'clock this afternoon. They propose to do nothing until then but sing hymns. The Irish Free State Admiral threatens to sink them if they don't stop. How am I to keep them quiet."

\(^{13}\) It is an image of Adventists as "a somewhat odd lot looking for the Second Coming of Christ in strange places and times."\(^{14}\)

A writer who genuinely endeavours to capture the image of Seventh-day Adventists is Upton Sinclair in his novel *Another Pamela* (1950). Not only is Sinclair's knowledge of his subject matter impressive but he also shows an excellent understanding of the Adventist mind and its attitude to life. However there are elements of caricature and parody in his approach which give a certain woodenness and lack of animation to his characters. This is characteristic of Sinclair's writing. His message takes precedence over his characters who are little more than symbols of moral virtues and failings, resulting in a presentation which is flat and unrealistic. The novel becomes something of an Adventist burlesque, but
an entertaining burlesque in which the reader gains an intimate awareness of Adventist practice and theology.

*Another Pamela* is patterned after Samuel Richardson's eighteenth-century novel. Sinclair tells the story of a poor Adventist girl who in the 1930s goes to work as a maid at the Southern California home of the wealthy Mrs Harries. The novel is in the form of letters which Pamela writes to her mother and to her sister, who is a medical student at the nearby La Sierra Adventist College. As in the original *Pamela*, the plot revolves around Pamela's attempts to preserve her virtue despite the efforts of Mrs Harries' nephew, Charles, to seduce her. With Mrs Harries' encouragement Pamela becomes instrumental in saving Charles from a life of drunken debauchery. She preserves her virtue, marries Charles and presumably lives happily ever after.

Pamela is a sweet, innocent, good-hearted girl whose religion pervades her whole life. She believes the world is in God's very personal control, apart from those people who are under Satan's domination. She regards it as God's providential leading when she first meets Mrs Harries, whose car breaks down near Pamela's home in the country. She describes it "as wonderful a case of providential action you ever read in the Sabbath Lessons." With God's guidance there can never be such things as accidents. She says, "If I ask him to guide me and then open the Book with my eyes shut, it will be what he wishes me to read" (55).

This view results from Pamela's literalistic reading of the Bible in which she implicitly believes every word; otherwise her "soul will be lost in everlasting hell fire" (43). All questions are solved by consulting the Bible. For example on one occasion she asks her sister to look up the term "paper money" - a subject of discussion among Mrs
Harries' socialist friends — in a Bible concordance so she will know what to think on the topic (32). Her interpretation of the Bible comes, however, from Ellen White. She explains to her sister that she "studied every word of the First Angel's Message and checked every word of its prophecies by the interpretations in The Great Controversy" (11).

According to Pamela's Adventist mother, most of the people of the world "are damned souls who will be gathered up like chaff from the threshing floor and cast into everlasting fire." Pamela knows and understands this but "that does not make [her] want to hear it so many times." Because the pernicious machinations of Satan will be all about her she has to promise her mother before going to work for Mrs Harries "that never, never, will [she] permit any trace of false doctrine to find lodgment in [her] mind." Hence, although Pamela believes that everyone is equal in the sight of God, "those of us who have the true faith are better" (10). This does not mean that Pamela is hypocritical. She accepts the moral exhortations of her mother while understanding the ambiguity of such a position.

Pamela displays missionary zeal for her faith, sharing and discussing it with anyone who will listen, including a young man in prison, a fellow maid, a young folk poet — and Charles. It is this idealistic passion in sharing her beliefs which help to get Pamela involved with Charles. He takes her hand while driving, and she responds, but thinks: "This is temptation, this car is temptation, and this lovely ride; the devil is after me. But if I can save this young man from getting drunk again, will that not be a victory over Satan?" (85). As her involvement with Charles deepens, she says, "I have the fear that if I do not keep him happy he might order a drink right at this place ... In short, it is the awfulest confusion I have been in yet."
Then later, "I fear that I am in love with him, and I want so to save him, but I know that I cannot, and I think, Oh, but I must try!" (114).

When Charles at last asks Pamela to marry him, she makes him kneel with her in prayer: "'O God, dear God, good God, help two lost children to find the light! Help us to keep our vows of love! And no more drinking of liquor!'" She describes how:

I made him say it; I made him repeat every sentence after me, like a child. It could not have failed to touch him, because he saw how much it meant to me. "No more cocktail parties! No more night clubs! No more ladies of any sort!"... He swore that he meant it, he swore it on his knees before God. And then, when he got to his feet, I made him promise it on his honor as a gentleman—meaning to bind him both ways, for safety (302).

Pamela's mention of cocktail parties and nightclubs indicates some of the social standards she feels are so important. She surrounds herself with prohibitions. She does not wear makeup or jewelry (305), does not eat meat (25), will not smoke or drink (114), thinks that dyeing one's hair is a sin (7), and believes that reading fiction is wrong, though she is able to justify Richardson's Pamela since it "is like history; at the same time it does not fail to strengthen virtue, being full of moral sentiments most uplifting" (226). During much of the book she refuses to go to the theatre or movies, but after her marriage rationalises her attendance at the theatre by explaining to her sister that:

I searched my conscience, and remembered what I had been taught on the subject of the stage and screen; the main point seems to be the corrupting of the young. But I am no longer young in that sense; I have learned the difference between good and evil, and it can do me no harm to know how much of the latter there is in the world... I have to balance the evil of breaking our church's rule against the evil of managing my husband too strictly and so losing my hold on him (311-312).

There is also in Pamela's attitude a large measure of the Puritan ethic of taking life seriously, of not wasting time, of making oneself useful. She determines to shun luxury which is one of "Satan's devices"
(246), and prays that pride and worldliness will not turn her head (303). The end of the novel finds her declaring that she intends to be useful, for that is obviously God’s purpose in raising her condition in life (313).

Two major features stand out in Sinclair’s novel. First the complete unreality of Pamela as a living human being. Like Richardson’s Pamela she is too good to be true. Her virginal perfection finally becomes irritating (whether this was Sinclair’s intention is not clear) although to be fair she does retain a certain alluring sexuality to the end. The second matter is Sinclair’s treatment of Seventh-day Adventism. The religion emerges as narrow-minded, insular, and parochial. Yet the telling of such a tale is no dour exercise. Quite the reverse. By describing Adventists and their beliefs through the sweet and innocent eyes of Pamela he manages to achieve a veracious portrait of the religion while consistently retaining an air of gentle burlesque. His description of Adventism is not treated as merely incidental to the novel; it is a major theme which is important for both plot and character development.

It is not surprising that Sinclair as a well informed American writer regarded Adventism as part of the American Protestant tradition. On the other hand British novelists Lawrence Durrell and Rose Macaulay connect them with fringe sects. In Balthazar (1958), the second part of his experimental Alexandria Quartet, Durrell groups Adventists with sects of hermetic philosophy (particularly magic and alchemy) - namely Steinerites, Christian Scientists, and Ouspenskyists. Macaulay in Towers of Trebizond (1959) castigates Adventists as:

one of those sects that Americans have, and that are difficult for English people to grasp, though probably they got over from Britain in the Mayflower originally, and when sects arrive in America they multiply, like rabbits in Australia, so that America has about a hundred to each one in Britain, and this is said to be on account of the encouraging climate.

The image of Seventh-day Adventists which Macaulay paints shows a
slightly mad group of people looking for the Second Coming on Mount Ararat. One of the major characters, Father Chantry-Pigg, an Anglican priest, who views Adventists with scorn and loathing does not want to talk to them (49), and the narrator quotes his comment of splenetic contempt "that the Seventh-day Adventists were the busiest missionaries in Turkey and the Levant, and met, he feared, with only too much success" (22). This rather supercilious disdain which the Anglican High Church priest displays towards Adventism is in fact part of his much wider prejudice against all things American, and the Seventh-day Adventists merely epitomise all that is wrong in this former British colony (59-61,63-64). It is an entertaining if prejudiced view of Adventists.

By contrast the American novelist and essayist Martin Gardner is both entertaining and extremely well-informed in his treatment of Seventh-day Adventists because he was for a short time in his youth a member of the church. Gardner approaches his former faith with amused tolerance and an incisive and at times cutting wit. Gardner gives the impression that Seventh-day Adventists are excellent candidates for his ridicule because they take themselves and their religion so seriously.

He categorises Adventists with Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses and other fundamentalists "or any of a dozen other sects that bemuse the poor and poorly educated." 19 They are "believers outside the mainstreams," 20 "whose members and clergy," 21 are poorly educated. The hero (or anti-hero) of Gardner's novel The Flight of Peter Fromm (1973) knows that Adventists "advocated a variety of strange doctrines — ultimate annihilation of the wicked, for instance, and soul sleeping until the day of judgment — doctrines he regarded as in conflict with the plain teaching of Jesus." 22 In considering the value of an Adventist historical and theological work Gardner comments that "it is a valuable
reference, though marred by occasional errors, by heavy-handed Adventist rhetoric, and by art of the crudest possible sort. Seventh-day Adventists seem unable to outgrow the practice of saturating their books with pictures that resemble soft-drink advertisements."

Gardner reserves his most damning comments, however, for the founder of the church, Ellen White. "Conservative Seventh Day Adventists do not question [her] divine inspiration." He presents considerable criticism of Ellen White's "inspiration" as a prophetess, suggesting that "she consciously, shamelessly, and extensively plagiarized the writings of others." He reveals that more then one hundred Adventist ministers have recently resigned over the unwillingness of "the sect's leaders to face up to the implications of Mrs White's plagiarisms," and suggests the issue is a "major turning point in the history of the 'remnant church.'"

He clearly delights in racy description of the church leader:

In her younger days she repeatedly went into trance states during which, her followers maintained, she completely stopped breathing. On the basis of her lurid visions, which she said came directly from God, she filled dozens of books with exotic details about biblical events - details missing from the Bible - as well as about doctrines peculiar to the Adventist movement. She also appeared before local church congregations to give what today would be called "psychic readings" about problems facing church members.

His zestful outline of Mrs White in vision making a "quick tour of the solar system" and somehow getting the number of planets and moons all wrong is an accomplished comic performance, while his vignette of the prophetess's early Orion vision is full of irony and ambiguity. He even manages in The Magic Numbers of Dr Matrix (1985) to "discover" that the mysterious number of the beast in Revelation 13:18 "six hundred three score and six" is none other than Ellen White. This is travesty and burlesque of a particularly entertaining kind, for Gardner never becomes serious in his attitude; the comedian's mask is always worn.

While Gardner shows little or no respect for Ellen White he is much
more ambiguous in his view of the grand old man of American creationism, the Seventh-day Adventist George McCready Price. There is more than a touch of admiration for Price's lone, consistent, and thundering challenge to evolution. Gardner calls Price's *The New Geology* "a remarkably ingenious defense of the medieval view that the earth was created six thousand years ago, in six literal days, and that fossils are simply the buried forms of plant and animal life which flourished before the great Deluge." Peter Fromm thinks Price's arguments are "overwhelmingly convincing" and gives a copy of Price's book to his university geology lecturer. When the latter hands it back with the comment that "The man's as nutty as a fruitcake," Peter is "more certain than ever that Price had given the theory of evolution its coup de grace." But Fromm remains uneasy about many of Price's arguments because "Price was a Seventh-day Adventist" and it becomes obvious that the religion is at least part of the reason why Price never receives general acceptance:

"When he came to see me he had a big book with him called *The New Geology*. It was by some knucklehead named Price."

"I know the book," I said. "Price is a Seventh-day Adventist who lives in Walla Walla, Washington. He must be as old as Methuselah. You know, he was the scientific authority William Jennings Bryan kept referring to during the Scopes trial in Tennessee."  

Peter Fromm finally decides Price's writings are full of "priceless stupidities," and he throws away *The New Geology*. Nevertheless the fascination with Price remains in Gardner's psyche, since he refers to him with respectful esteem in his collections of essays *The Whys of A Philosophical Scrivener* (1963) and *The New Age* (1988).

Another Seventh-day Adventist makes a distinguished if unusual appearance in Martin Gardner's fiction. This is the enduring numerologist Dr Irving Joshua Matrix. As the "greatest numerologist of all time" it somehow seems appropriate that Dr Matrix was born to
"Seventh-day Adventist" missionaries in Japan, since this combines a long American tradition of interpreting numbers and prophecies with a Japanese bent for numerical paradoxes. Gardner's uses his rational and mathematical abilities to create a convincing character who rather cynically propounds all the standard Adventist interpretations of Bible prophecy and then tells the reader that there is really a very sensible explanation to everything, and that reason is the only way to obtain solutions to life's problems. As with so much of Gardner's writing this is primarily entertainment, although one could argue that there is also an underlying moral, or more particularly educational purpose, since Gardner clearly wants to instruct and lead his readers.

Wright Morris is another American writer who has used entertaining parody to describe Adventists. In his autobiography Will's Boy: A Memoir (1981) he details how his Adventist relatives sent him to a church educational establishment—Pacific Union College. For a young man who had set his eye on attending an Ivy League university it was a revealing and short experiment. His bemusement at the gymnasium floor continually waxed like new but forbidden for use in competitive sports was later used in his novel, The Fork River Space Project (1977). He was surprised by the fervent belief which faculty and students alike showed in the literal truth of Bible stories and a one week creation.

He tried to encourage debate about the age of the earth, about the implications of petrified trees and the bones of mastodons, but this together with his indulgently liberal lifestyle led to the college authorities abruptly expelling him. Morris's description of his brief stay at the Adventist college display a droll sense of both the humour and ludicrous nature of his situation.

A similar approach to the church and its doctrines are revealed in
two short, related novels in which Morris places his Seventh-day Adventist relatives in the hippie era of the 1960s. *Fire Sermon* (1971) introduces octogenarian Floyd Warner, an agnostic whose life-long ambition is to convert Viola, his believing sister to the theories of Darwin and Ingersoll. Though sorely tried, Viola remains committed to her religion and informs Floyd that God will even find enough good in him to allow his entrance to heaven. In *A Life* (1973) Warner appears again, his memories and recollections interfaced with events of his last two days. He remembers an Adventist baptism in the Platte River, his future bride emerging from the waters, gasping for air. Elsewhere he notes with humorous chagrin that his dislike of tobacco chewing and immorality were implanted in him by parental preaching. By contrast he enjoys profanity because it demonstrates contempt for his childhood religion. He remembers in youth how he "refused to observe the Adventist sabbath or any day as holy," preferring to study evolution and Ingersoll instead. At the end of the novel Morris highlights the hope of eternal life which is believed in and accepted by Viola, with the conscious acceptance by Warner of the end of his life as a "dead end." Beatrice Smith suggests that "on reflection this end seems curiously right for an old scoffer." 

The distinctive nature of Adventist beliefs and behaviour is captured by Morris in a technique which combines gentle nostalgia and meditative humour.

The recent Australian play *The Legend of King O'Malley* by Michael Boddy and Robert Ellis provides a contrast and foil to the American works parodying and caricaturing Adventists. It is eschatological drama, but the Australian vaudeville tradition which the play revives ensures it will also be a piece of popular entertainment.

There is nothing quite like *The Legend of King O'Malley* in any
other portrayal of Adventists in literature. This particularly Australian approach to the American religion results not only in high comedy mixed with the absurd, but is a natural purgative to flush away American high-minded seriousness towards the religion. Nevertheless, with all the parody, all the burlesque, there is also a constant yearning for things lost, things not attained. This mood of nostalgia for a world that might have been is almost certainly Robert Ellis's tribute to the Adventism of his childhood which provides him with so much of the inspiration for this unconventional, revivalistic theatre.

Although there are widely differing styles and presentations by those writers who treat Adventists in the caricature mode there is a consistent pattern to their message. Adventists are not however merely convenient targets. Apart from the travesties and lampoons perpetrated on the religion in the mid-nineteenth century by minor novelists Cannon, Lippard, and De Forest, (and even they had a serious moral purpose in doing so), the other authors do try to understand Adventist beliefs: some including Sinclair and Gardner, impressively so. The twentieth century writers all use Adventism for varying purposes to enhance their messages, and while there is no uniformity in their ridicule and parody of the religion and its adherents, the tone of burlesque is always present.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV


5. Scharnhorst, p.27.


8. Scharnhorst, p.28.

8. Letters and Journals of Cooper, 6:173.


10. Scharnhorst, p.29.


Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.


*Spectrum*, Volume 5, p.50.

15. *Another Pamela: or, Virtue Still Rewarded* (New York: Viking Press,  
1950), p.3. Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically.

16. Land, p.56.


references are indicated parenthetically.

19. *The Flight of Peter Fromm* (California, Los Altos: William Kaufmann,  


21. *The New Age: Notes of a Fringe-Watcher* (New York, Buffalo:  


29. *The Magic Numbers of Dr Matrix* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus  


32. Gardner, pp.50-51.


See also: Wright Morris, *Fire Sermon* (Lincoln, Ne.: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).


CHAPTER V

Black Writers and Adventism

Since the nineteen forties a number of black American writers with a background in the Seventh-day Adventist church have published their experiences. Notwithstanding the Adventist doctrine of equality of colour the church has not provided these writers with a route by which they can join the American mainstream. They remain outsiders because of their colour. The highly charged resonances concerning marginality which appear in their writings is a result of the colour of their skin, not the minority interest of their former religion. The Adventist church does not provide them with the literary, social, and political values which they as black intelligentsia are still working out and legitimating.

It was to his black rather than his Adventist religious heritage to which Richard Wright appealed when in White Man, Listen! he wrote:

Negro life is all lifted to the heights of pain and pathos, drama and tragedy. The history of the Negro in America is the history of America written in vivid and bloody terms; it is the history of Western Man writ small... The Negro is America's metaphor.

The outsider status, the marginalisation is immediately apparent, but there is also an attempt to universalise the Black experience so that it becomes an image of Man's fate.

The Adventist experience seems to have been too alien for Wright, or the political activist Malcolm X, or the novelist Piri Thomas. Wright makes it clear in his autobiography Black Boy (1945) that the Adventist message could provide no inspiration to a young black endeavouring to overcome the twin evils of poverty and racial prejudice while growing up in the South during the 1920s and 1930s. The impression which Adventism
made on Wright seems to have been a loveless, unimaginative and legalistic one. The writer accordingly returns to his roots, to the sort of underground existence he describes in his story *The Man Who Lived Underground.*

Malcolm X (Malcolm Little) had considerable contact with Seventh-day Adventists as a child and young person. Like Wright he found the religion unattractive and unpersuasive. Although he concedes that Adventist people were "friendly enough," he remained deeply aware of marginality, of being outside the dominant culture. Piri Thomas similarly expresses admiration for Adventist people, particularly his mother, but finds the religion has no meaning for him as a part-black Puerto Rican brought up in New York, who suffered intensely from poverty, social oppression and racial prejudice.

Wright, Malcolm X and Thomas all see the need for radical change, and are so solemnly engrossed in bringing it about that their writing is almost invariably serious, at times grim and pessimistic. They appear to have learned something of this from the Adventist faith which continues to look for an "other world" solution to earthly woes through the coming parousia. The returning Christ will cure all problems both sacred and secular. The eschatological imagery has been taken over by the three black writers in their outline of the struggle by blacks for justice and equality. There is the theme of a longed-for racial battle, which will be a culmination of history and the revelatory moment of justice and retribution. The mood is revolutionary, the tone apocalyptic, and the imagery eschatological.

A dominating question throughout Richard Wright's life was the enigma of his emergence from the ugly racism and crushing poverty of his Mississippi childhood. "What was it," he wrote in *Black Boy,* "that made
me conscious of possibilities? From where in this southern darkness had I caught a sense of freedom?" This is the inquiry which Wright pursues in his autobiography. It is this seeking after freedom which "unifies his life and literature."

From 1919 to 1925 Wright lived with his maternal grandparents in Jackson, Mississippi. His grandmother was a strict Seventh-day Adventist who tried to forcibly introduce the boy to her church's doctrines and message, but instead Wright became increasingly isolated and alienated, from his family and the black community. While other neighborhood children were able to help reduce family poverty by working on Saturday, Wright was forbidden such employment because Saturday was the Sabbath for Seventh-day Adventists. *Black Boy* shows that Wright developed a fantasy world in an endeavour to escape his devastating environment:

Because I had no power to make things happen outside of me in the objective world, I made things happen within. Because my environment was bare and bleak, I endowed it with unlimited potentialities, redeemed it for the sake of my own hungry and cloudy yearning (64).

Irving Howe suggests that the religious fanaticism of Wright's grandmother proved "utterly suffocating" to the boy, and that as a result "he soon picked up a precocious knowledge of vice and a realistic awareness of social power." He learned to "wear the mask of a grinning" blackboy in order to survive. Nevertheless, while the adolescent refused the dogmas of his grandmother's religious faith, its images and symbolism remained engraved in his mind. Seventh-day Adventism became an explosive element in his art, distinguished by an adherence to the Protestant work ethic and a wealth of Biblical apocalyptic references. For example, Wright constantly reverts to Christian formulas in his political writings, using colourful religious metaphors to emphasise his points.

Thus, while the grandmother's house was grim "with the requirements
of the matriarch's devotional austerities," it did provide inspiration for Wright's literary endeavours. His knowledge of Adventist doctrine and beliefs was enhanced by his reluctant attendance at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Jackson. Wright loathed the institution but became excellently acquainted with scripture. Out of this bleak life, Wright suffered, struggled, and finally won a kind of freedom.

In its most essential terms, Black Boy shows a world with two key options: (1) human suffocation characterised in both the overpowering religion of his grandmother and the omnipotence of white supremacy, and (2) human possibility which is portrayed by images of persistent movement. From this comes the constant theme in Black Boy of escape, as Wright forever dreams of physical and mental liberation from both the bondage of the South, and the emotional and spiritual chains of his grandmother's dour faith.

Robert J. Butler suggest that the grandmother and her religion are always described in terms of a disastrous inertia:

Initially presented as immobilized in a sick bed, she is throughout the novel [sic] mentally and spiritually imprisoned by an absolute commitment to a fundamentalist religion which separates her from anything vital in life. Her house ... is always a dead centre of repression and [Wright] usually feels a sense of claustrophobia there. His deepest wish is simply to run away from such a "home" as soon as he grows old enough to do so. 

Still, the pull of a strong imagination found Wright swayed toward the Adventism of the sermons which he heard. He gives a vivid description of the impression these sermons made on him:

The elders of the church expounded a gospel clogged with images of vast lakes of eternal fire, of seas vanishing, of valleys of dry bones, of the sun burning to ashes, of the moon turning to blood, of stars falling to the earth, of a wooden staff being transformed into a serpent, of voices speaking out of clouds, of men walking upon water, of God riding whirlwinds, of water changing into wine, of the dead rising and living, of the blind seeing, of the lame walking; a salvation that teemed with fantastic beasts having multiple heads and horns and eyes and feet; sermons of statues possessing heads of gold, shoulders of silver, legs of brass, and feet of clay; a cosmic
tale that began before time and ended with the clouds of the sky rolling away at the Second Coming of Christ; chronicles that concluded with the Armageddon; dramas thronged with all the billions of human beings who had ever lived and died as God judged the quick and the dead (89).

Wright also saw a connection between the way of the church and the life he observed outside:

Many of the religious symbols appealed to my sensibilities and I responded to the dramatic vision of life held by the church, feeling that to live day by day with death as one's sole thought was to be so compassionately sensitive toward all life as to view all men as slowly dying, and the trembling sense of fate that welled up, sweet and melancholy, from the hymns blended with the sense of fate that I had already caught from life (123-124).

Nevertheless, as soon as he walked out of the church "and saw the bright sunshine and felt the throbbing life of the people in the streets I knew that none of it was true and that nothing would happen" (89).

It is obvious from Black Boy that the most profound impression Adventism made on Wright was through his grandmother, aunt, and the church school which he attended for a short time — all of which demonstrated to the boy a religion which was legalistic and unloving. His grandmother forced him to accept her Adventist dietary practices (although she did use beef fat), with the result that Richard often went hungry and much of the time suffered indigestion. Prayers were demanded at sunrise, meals, sundown, and before bed, as well as regular all-night prayer meetings which the boy had to attend. There were also "long rambling Bible readings" (68,123) every day. Fiction was "the Devil's work" and the grandmother rages furiously against Richard for showing an interest in it:

She bared her teeth and slapped me across my mouth with the back of her hand. "You shut your mouth," she hissed, "You don't know what you're talking about!" ... "That's the Devil's work!" she shouted ... "You're going to burn in hell," she said with such furious conviction that for a moment I believed her (35).

His grandmother would allow no one who lived under her roof to work
on the Sabbath, a rule which caused a great deal of distress to Richard, for when he broached the idea of working on Saturdays his grandmother merely quoted the fourth commandment forbidding all Sabbath activities but worship. "And that," says Wright, "was the final word" (110), resulting in the boy vowing that someday he would "end this hunger of mine, this apartness, this eternal difference" (111). He became an outsider to his family, his race, and his country, unable to identify with any of them.

The church school became a purgatory of suffering. Richard discovered that all competitive sport including baseball, marbles, boxing, and running were forbidden; but pop-the-whip was tolerated. The teacher (who was his aunt) "was determined that every student should know that he was a sinner of whom she did not approve, and that [he] was not to be granted consideration of any kind" (96). His fellow pupils were a weak-kneed lot:

lacking in that keen sense of rivalry which made the boys and girls who went to public school a crowd in which a boy was tested and weighed, in which he caught a glimpse of what the world was. These boys and girls were will-less, their speech flat, their gestures vague, their personalities devoid of anger, hope, laughter, enthusiasm, passion, or despair ... They were claimed wholly by their environment and could imagine no other (91).

Clearly the Adventism encountered by Wright was stultifying, narrow, intolerant, and bigoted. This is particularly noticeable in the relations between the boy, his aunt, and grandmother. After a quarrel with his aunt over his unfair punishment at school, she ignored him, although they "ate at the same table and slept under the same roof" (96). Richard was well aware that his grandmother thought his less than total commitment to the Adventist faith would reflect on her, would "cast doubt upon the staunchness of her faith, her capacity to convince and persuade, or merely upon her ability to apply the rod to my backside" (97). During
prayers he would "sit squirming on a bench, longing to grow up so I could run away, listening indifferently to the theme of cosmic annihilation, loving the hymns for their sensual caress, but at last casting furtive glances at Granny" (97), hoping she would go to sleep and release him from his purgatory."

Once the grandmother and aunt realise that the boy has no intention of becoming a Seventh-day Adventist they become deliberately and provocatively hostile, and give him up as lost:

They told me that they were dead to the world, and those of their blood who lived in that world were therefore dead to them. From urgent solicitude they dropped to coldness and hostility (107).

Similarly when Richard's mother joins the Methodist church her mother and sister are actively antagonistic, condemning such a move as uniting with the cohorts of the devil (166).

There are also some graphic descriptions of the hostility between the grandmother and aunt, both Adventists, but individuals who clearly can make no concessions to the golden rule of turning the other cheek. They quarrelled "with each other over minor points of religious doctrine, or over some imagined infraction of what they chose to call their moral code." Richard decides that whenever religion intrudes into his life he will find "strife, the attempt of one individual or group to rule another in the name of God. The naked will to power seemed always to walk in the wake of a hymn" (119). Wright uses satire and irony to illustrate his point:

There were more violent quarrels in our deeply religious home than in the home of a gangster, a burglar, or a prostitute, a fact which I used to hint gently to Granny and which did my cause no good. Granny bore the standard of God, but she was always fighting. The peace that passes understanding never dwelt with us (119).

He concludes: "God blessed our home with the love that binds" (98). Wright survived in this harsh environment by mentally and emotionally
withdrawing from it. It is the kind of underground existence he describes in his story "The Man Who Lived Underground."

Finally Wright drew from the Adventist experience of a long delayed apocalypse and applied it to the continuing Black ordeal in America. For both blacks and Adventists Judgment Day is always coming, but its arrival must be perpetually deferred, although one can always hear Adventists and persons such as Dan Taylor in Wright's "Fire and Cloud," repeat the familiar millennial prophecy:

The good Lawd's gonna clean up this ol worl some day! He's gonna make a new Heaven n a new Earth! N He's gonna do it is a eye-twinkle change; He's gotta do it! Things cant go on like this ferever! Gawd knows they cant!10

Gerian Moore suggest that Wright finally rejected black culture, and that a "pattern of self-deprecation, clearly discernible in Black Boy reached disastrous proportions,"11 in his later writings. While there is some truth in this, one is always aware in reading Wright of marginality, of being outside the dominant culture.

This is equally true of the experience of Malcolm X (Malcolm Little) described in his Autobiography (1965), but one discovers that Malcolm X is intent on discovering both value and purpose in affirming his identity and relationship to black culture. While the Autobiography "combines elements from the slave narrative, relying on the resources of oral culture, ... it specifically relates to a black social and political context and projects the image of the black man in his encounter and triumph over the restrictions of a racist society."12

In describing his boyhood Malcolm Little mentions how his mother joined the Seventh-day Adventist church. While he was not attracted to the religion he does concede that "they were the friendliest white people I had ever seen."13 His mother had began to attend Adventist meetings while the family was living in Lansing, Michigan. Her interest in the
religion had been encouraged by some Seventh-day Adventists who had moved into the same neighbourhood. They would "talk to her for hours at a time, and leave booklets and leaflets and magazines for her to read" (96). The major reason for the mother's interest appears to have been the Adventist dietary practices which were similar to her own:

Like us, they were against eating rabbit and pork; they followed the Mosaic dietary laws. They ate nothing of the flesh without a split hoof, or that didn't chew a cud (96).

The family started to observe other Adventist beliefs and customs, and would travel to church meetings in the surrounding countryside where the chief appeal for the children was the good food served. Nevertheless they also listened, particularly to the apocalyptic sermons which indicated to Malcolm that "the Adventists felt that we were living at the end of time, that the world soon was coming to an end" (96).

When the mother refused to accept the gift of "some butchered pork - a whole pig, maybe even two of them," the community called her crazy. Malcolm comments:

It meant nothing to them even when she explained that we had never eaten pork, that it was against her religion as a Seventh Day Adventist ... they were vicious as vultures (97). It was shortly after this incident that Malcolm's mother suffered a mental breakdown, leaving her permanently in care. The children were boarded out by the welfare authorities, Malcolm finding himself in the home of "sanctified Holy Roller" (99) Baptists. He was never to attend an Adventist meeting again.

Like Malcolm X, Piri Thomas in his autobiography Down These Mean Streets (1967) expresses admiration for the Seventh-day Adventism of his mother. Nevertheless Thomas like Little chose black rather than white America. The book shows clearly the child's desire to blend in with the American world, (in this case the black American world), and Thomas's
need for the love and attention of his "foreign" Adventist mother. He is a serious and interesting spokesman for second generation Puerto Ricans in New York. His father was black, his mother white, and while the book makes it very obvious that Thomas has far more sympathy and love for his mother than his father he nevertheless chose to follow the black culture of his father. This was because, unlike his brothers and sisters whose physical features were more like their mother, Piri had inherited the "bad" features: the dark skin and coarse hair of his father. 14 He learns to "distinguish between membership in a given racial group and bigotry, which has no racial boundaries." 15 His experience in prison teaches him:

No matter what a man's color or race he has a need of dignity and he'll go anywhere, become anything, or do anything to get it — anything (283).

Nevertheless Piri was strongly influenced by his mother's religious faith. She endeavoured to teach her children not to swear (11), to respect other people, and turn the other cheek:

"Just a little fight in school, Momma. You know how it is, Momma, I'm new in school an' ..." I made myself laugh ...
"Bendito, Piri, I raise this family in Christian way. Not to fight. Christ says to turn the other cheek." ... I sat down to dinner and listened to Momma talk about Christian living without really hearing her (27).

Adventist dietary customs and attitudes toward smoking and drinking make a strong impression on Thomas. While in prison he comes in contact with a Black Muslim group whose spokesman explains that a true Muslim does not smoke, drink intoxicating beverages, nor eat pork. Piri describes the ensuing conversation:

"Sounds like my Momma's religion."
"Oh, is she a true believer?"
"She was a Seventh-Day Adventist. She's dead now."
"Oh, that's not quite like being a Muslim ... " (290).

Piri thinks of Muslims and Adventists as "clean-living" people who
never curse, never eat pork, and do not get high on "pills or home-brew" (291). In a time of mental and spiritual crisis when he wrestles with the idea of becoming a Muslim, it is the Christian prayer of his mother which determines his decision to follow Christ instead of Allah. He utters the cry "Thank you, Mommie, gracias, God," and comments "Guess I've been a Christian too long" (301). However, he joins a Puerto Rican Pentecostal church rather than the Adventists because being a Pentecostal "binds much of us poor Puertorriqueños together," whereas the Seventh-day Adventist church had been preaching that Christ was coming soon and Piri could not believe such a message "cause ever since I was a little kid I'd heard he was coming" (44). Thus salvation for Thomas is neither some imminent apocalyptic consummation, or a vicarious atonement on a cross but the development of a sense of community amongst the underprivileged Puerto Ricans. Piri's assertive final statement on the subject is contained in his spiritual autobiography Savior, Savior, Hold My Hand (1982):

I know Christ is great, honey. I just wish he'd come down and walk with us nitty-gritty. Baby, I'm not putting God down. I'm just wondering why the hell we've allowed certain people to put us down. How the hell can I listen to the words of Christ and how He carried the cross? I can't carry no cross and be nailed to it at the same damned time. Wow, honey, don't you dig that to us people of the Barrio the ghetto is our church, and the only way we're gonna make a heaven out of this hell is by getting together. Jesus, honey, ain't I right? 17

It is a cogent and compelling repudiation of his mother's religion. Thomas makes it clear that one of his major problems with Adventists is that they "are supposed to spread the word, but God Almighty, I think they at least should try understanding the people they're spreading the word to."18

Yet Thomas cannot entirely divorce himself from his mother's faith. The Adventist influence in his writings is obvious enough, not only in
the use of eschatological language and colourful apocalyptic symbolism, but in the very themes of his three major works. *Down These Mean Streets* is about the degradation of sin, *Seven Long Times* (1978) is about penance, and *Savior, Savior, Hold My Hand*, a study of religious institutions, discusses varieties of personal salvation. However, these books do not preach the Seventh-day Adventism of his mother but a tolerance for ethnic and cultural diversity.19

All three of the black writers discussed felt emotionally pulled to Adventism but for differing reasons rejected the faith. Wright was finally repelled by the religion of his grandmother and aunt because he saw it as imprisoning his body, mind, and soul and because his relatives' behaviour did not measure up to the standards they so often preached. Malcolm X was impressed by the friendliness of Adventists, but his family disintegrated before he could be expected to make any decision about a commitment to this "white man" religion. Piri Thomas, because of the emotional ties with his mother, was for a time, clearly attracted to the church, but made a conscious choice not to belong. An interesting question relating to all three writers is whether an early exposure to Adventism affected their later conversions to other totalistic faiths—Communism for Wright, Islam for Malcolm X, Pentecostalism for Thomas.

The most important factor for the three men was race. They were members of a minority culture, while Seventh-day Adventism was in their eyes part of the overbearing, dominant white majority. Their awareness of their marginality, of being outsiders in the Adventist community was sufficient to make them turn to their black heritage and culture.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER V


9. The reference to the "sensual caress" of the hymns reminds one of the effective way Robert Ellis uses Adventist hymns in *The Legend of King O'Malley*.


17. Thomas, p.360.

18. Thomas.

CONCLUSION

This study has traced the varying attitudes of writers to the Millerite movement and Seventh-day Adventist church. The earliest literary commentators on this millennial faith emphasised the charismatic revivalism and moral virtues of the adherents, whose enthusiasm for the coming End of the Age influenced so many Americans in the 1840s. With the passing of the Great Disappointment in 1844 it became necessary to enshrine and reinterpret the faith into a more traditional and legalistic order and hence the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The result of this routinization of belief as the Adventist movement changed from sect to church led writers to highlight the legalism as well as the apocalyptic nature of the faith. The Millerites had been metamorphosised from "a form of religious protest expressing itself in secession"¹ to a church which has, over the past hundred and fifty years, become increasingly concerned to be part of the "respectable majority." This concern to accommodate Adventist ethics to "the world" has not yet been reflected or studied in literature, and the ironic feature is that much of Adventist doctrine is in fact part of mainstream American Protestantism.

The question of time and setting is important. Those literary depictions of Adventists which describe the people as facing an imminent Second Coming show a movement imbued with a spirit of faith and commitment whereas Adventists far from the apocalypse display a legalism indicating the spirit of God is remote. It is clear, however, that so long as Adventists remain wed to the idea of the millennium they will continue to be attractive subjects to writers. American hopes for the future have, and continue to be, "repeatedly symbolised in Biblical
millennial language." Hence the continuing use of Adventists as a means to express this hope.

From the beginning of the Millerite movement there were a number of different approaches to Adventism adopted by writers. The first applauded the movement as exposing the materialism, the moral and social blindness and the spiritual corruption of American society. A second celebrated the "come-outer" tradition of Adventists and their enthusiasm for apocalyptic speculation, while a third made sport of the believers, satirising them, and accusing them of being a menace to religion and society. This latter approach depicts Adventists as stereotypes rather than fully rounded characters, and as figures of historical controversy who are anomalies in American society.

Few if any of these writers deal with their subject with any neutrality. They are much more interested in having Adventists confirm their a priori assumptions about the religion and its people. The Adventist teaching of the coming apocalypse, which will lead mankind to shed its troubles and start a fresh and happy millennial life, is discussed in a serious moral way, satirised in a comic mode of apocalypticism, or trivialised in caricature and parody. What is characteristic of all three approaches is the interest displayed by all writers in the millennial hope of the religion - a reflection of continuing American fascination with the topic.

Distinct from all these attitudes to Adventists, but displaying some of the same characteristics, are a series of works mentioning the religion and its followers by Black authors. This literature rejects the church and its teachings as a means of Black salvation. Adventism is seen to be part of White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, and as such cannot provide a way of escape from the physical, mental, and spiritual Black
A common denominator is the vision of a people who wish to remain apart from the American mainstream, who want to survive outside the American Dream, but who nevertheless cannot help but be part of North American life. It describes Adventists as voices in opposition to leisured, self-satisfied American orthodoxy; as revisionists who must continually scrutinise and test "beliefs that society as a whole would usually prefer not to have tested." Clearly, as Gary Scharnhorst affirms, the Adventist phenomenon has been "a touchstone for reflection by American authors upon a variety of themes." In the process one gains a valuable insight into the image of Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists.
NOTES FOR CONCLUSION


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