

The Role of Typology in Old Testament Prophetic Interpretation

David P. Duffie

Introduction

The current challenge to our traditional understandings of such distinguishing pillars of Seventh-day Adventism as Dan 8:14 merely emphasizes a fundamental tension between diverse methods of prophetic interpretation which has been building up over several decades in relative obscurity. This growing tension now threatens the unity of the church. The manner of its resolution will largely determine the direction and the speed or slowness with which Adventism moves for years to come, in the area of prophetic understanding. We may choose to advance along any one of several diverse routes, only one of which I consider to be desirable. Or we may choose--either consciously or by default--to remain in the "safe" disarray in which we have long stagnated.

The 1974 North American Bible Conference set forth some excellent hermeneutical principles. Several sound guidelines were staked out and some safeguards established. Even with this foundation, however, there has thus far been little increase in our understanding of specific prophecies. One of the reasons for this lack of advance should become apparent as this study unfolds, together with suggestions regarding how the present impasse might be resolved and prophetic interpretation by Seventh-day Adventists be given a fresh impetus toward moving in rewarding directions.

Evangelical Approaches to Old Testament Prophecy

As is well known, the modern Evangelical perspective on Bible prophecy is to a large extent dominated by the theme of the return of Israel to Palestine. Hal Lindsey's immensely popular books illustrate this dominance.¹ Intimately mixed in with this popular view of prophecy are the various features of futurism and Darbyan dispensationalism, including such concepts as the wholesale conversion of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, the reign of antichrist, the "great tribulation", and so on.

These views are largely derived from two sources: The first is a literalistic misreading of the many restoration prophecies of the Old Testament, similar to the manner in which the earlier Fairbairn--and the bulk of Old World expositors, especially in Britain--had misread them.² And the second is the erroneous gap theory of the futurists, viz., that the seventieth week of the 490 years of Dan 9 was not to take place until just prior to the end of time. This scheme circumvents the historicist line of prophetic interpretation, which, based upon a consistent use of the day-for-a-year principle, correctly stresses the 1260 year prophecies as referring to the papacy. There is considerable variation among modern Evangelicals concerning details of what is expected to take place in the Middle East. Not all of them believe in a rebuilding of the temple, for example. But they are all agreed--in sharp contrast to what most Adventists have always

taught--that events which have recently transpired in the Middle East definitely represent a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

It should be noted here--and it is a matter of no small importance--that adherence to the characteristic features of futurism and belief in a prophetically delineated return of the Jews to Palestine do not necessarily go together. In modern times they have in fact generally gone together but in earlier times this was not the case. There were many respected expositors in the nineteenth century who firmly held to the historicist, rather than futurist, method of prophetic interpretation yet who nonetheless believed in a literal return of the Jews to Palestine. Most futurists are "literal returners"; but it is by no means historically true that most "literal returners" have been futurists. The distinction is an important one.

Seventh-day Adventist Approaches to Prophecies Other than Daniel

In this paper we shall focus on certain aspects of prophetic interpretation among Seventh-day Adventists.³ A strong anti-return-of-Israel stance in Adventism reaches back to the Millerite movement, and was one of the features which distinguished that movement from its Old World counterpart. The Twelfth Millerite Second Advent Conference, held in 1842 presented the following invitation:

"All persons who reject the doctrines of temporal millenium and the restoration of Jews to Palestine, either before or after the Second Advent, and who believe the Second Advent of Christ and the first resurrection to be the next great events of prophetic history, be invited to enroll their names as members of this conference."⁴

This position has been consistently maintained by Seventh-day Adventists. Even after the modern state of Israel was established in 1948--an event that it had been previously predicted would never occur!--it has been held that events in the Middle East have nothing directly to do with the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.⁵ This position can be seen as a reaction to, and a salubrious bulwark against, the grossly literalistic excesses of an earlier age, including the British-Israel myth, pertaining to the lost ten tribes. In large measure, in the conservative religious world, the many restoration prophecies of the Old Testament were usurped by, and put into the service of, those who were expecting all of the restoration prophecies to be fulfilled in terms of local and temporal geography and politics.

Such fanciful literalism was rightly to be shunned. Largely as a way of counteracting this deplorable situation by offering an alternate method of interpreting these many restoration prophecies, Seventh-day Adventists early began to develop and expand the concept of conditional prophecy. By the time that the SDA Bible Commentary volumes were published in the mid-twentieth century the conditional method of interpreting Old Testament prophecy had so expanded that it was applied to large portions of all of the prophetic books, until conditional prophecy came to be one of the principal themes of the entire fourth volume.

Prophecy as a conditional statement

Many Adventist Bible students--who have tended to pay little attention to the prophetic books of the Old Testament other than Daniel--do not realize the extent to which the conditional prophecy motif had been developed into a philosophy for interpreting the great bulk of the prophecies of the Old Testament. This philosophy, or method of interpretation, is carefully set forth and defended in a chapter of the Bible Commentary entitled, "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy."⁶ The Section headings afford an outline of the chapter's contents:

- I. Introduction
- II. Israel as God's Chosen People
- III. The Ideal: How the Plan was to Operate
 - 1. Holiness of character
 - 2. The blessings of health
 - 3. Superior intellect
 - 4. Skill in agriculture and animal husbandry
 - 5. Superior craftsmanship
 - 6. Unparalleled prosperity
 - 7. National greatness
- IV. Israel's Failure to Carry Out God's Plan
- V. Why Israel Failed
- VI. The Nature and Purpose of Conditional Prophecy
- VII. Spiritual Israel Replaces Literal Israel
- VIII. Conclusion: Principles of Interpretation

Overview of some conditional interpretations. There can be no question that ancient Israel failed, miserably. Likewise there can be no question that today it is to spiritual Israel, rather than literal Israel, that the prophecies are to be applied. But a perusal of the above chapter will reveal, I believe, that according to the understanding of the author and the editors the primary purpose or meaning of most of the prophecies of the Old Testament pertaining to the latter days was to describe this Ideal State, which God had planned for ancient Israel, and how this plan was to have operated, had not Israel failed. The section describing this ideal (section 3) is the longest in the chapter. The Israelites were to develop superior intellect, piety, and material prosperity. "Feebleness and disease were to disappear entirely as the result of strict adherence to healthful principles." "As the people cooperated with the directions God gave them in regard to the culture of the soil, the land would gradually be restored to Edenic fertility and beauty (Isa 51:3)." "As the nations of antiquity should behold Israel's unprecedented progress, their attention and interest would be aroused. . . . Desiring the same blessings for themselves, they would make inquiry as to how they too might acquire these obvious material advantages."⁷

"This concept of the role of Israel is reiterated again and again throughout the Old Testament", the Bible Commentary declares. In the following paragraphs, as supporting evidence for this assertion, a whole host of Old Testament texts are placed into this framework of interpretation.⁸ Rather extensive quotation is here necessary in order to demonstrate clearly the ubiquity of this philosophy of interpretation:

The material advantages that Israel enjoyed were designed to arrest the attention and catch the interest of the heathen, for whom the less obvious spiritual advantages had no natural attraction. They would "gather themselves together" and "come from far" (Isa. 49:18, 12, 6, 8, 9, 22; Ps. 102:22), "from the ends of the earth" (Jer. 16:19), to the light of truth shining forth from the "mountain of the Lord" (Isa. 2:3; 60:3; 56:7; cf. ch. 11:9, 10). Nations that had known nothing of the true God would "run" to Jerusalem because of the manifest evidence of divine blessing that attended Israel (ch. 55:5). . . . For a graphic picture of how one nation would have

responded to the irresistible appeal radiating from an Israel faithful to God, see Isa. 19:18-22; cf. Ps. 68:31.

Returning to their homelands, the Gentile ambassadors would counsel their fellow countrymen, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord" (Zech. 8:21, 22; cf. I Kings 8:41-43). They would send messengers to Israel with the declaration, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). Nation after nation would "come over" (Isa. 45:14), that is, "be joined with" and "cleave to the house of Jacob" (Isa. 14:1) The house of God in Jerusalem would eventually "be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:7), and "many people and strong nations" would "come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before" Him "in that day" and be His people (Zech. 8:22; 2:11). The "sons of the stranger [or Gentile]" (I Kings 8:41; see on Ex. 19:43)" would "join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord" (Isa. 56:6; Zech. 2:11). The gates of Jerusalem would be "open continually" to receive the "wealth" contributed to Israel for the conversion of still other nations and peoples (Isa. 60:1-11, RSV; Ps. 72:10; Isa. 45:14; Haggai 2:7, RSV). Eventually, "all the nations" would "call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord" and "be gathered unto it," not to "walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer. 3:17). "All who . . . turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world." Thus Israel was to "blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6).⁹

This hypothetical, subjunctive-mood portrayal of "what might have been, if" is carried right on down through the Christian era and on to include (a representative touching upon) almost all of the prophecies that have been thought by many Adventists (me included) to refer to very real events to take place at the second and third comings, and postmillennially.

After the great final call to the world to acknowledge the true God, those who persisted in refusing allegiance to Him would unite together with the "evil thought" of laying siege to the city of Jerusalem and taking it by force of arms, in order to appropriate to themselves the material advantages with which God had blessed His people (Eze. 38:8-12; Jer. 25:32; Joel 3:1, 12; Zech. 12:2-9; 14:2; cf. Rev. 17:13, 14, 17). During the siege, reprobate Israelites would be slain by their foes (Zech. 13:1, 2; Zeph. 3:6-8; cf. Eze. 38:16, 18-23; 39:1-7). He has a controversy with them because they have rebelled against His authority (Jer 25:31-33), and He will judge (Joel 3:9-17) and destroy them there (Isa. 34:1-8; 63:1-6; 66:15-18). Any "nation and kingdom" that would "not serve" Israel was to "perish" (ch. 60:12). "Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God, were to be dispossessed" (COL 290), and Israel would "inherit the Gentiles" (ch. 54:3).

The earth would thus be rid of those who opposed God (Zech. 14:12, 13). He would be "king over all the earth" (vs. 3, 8, 9), and His dominion "from sea even to sea," even to "the ends of the earth" (ch. 9:9, 10). In that day "every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 14:16; cf. ch. 9:7; Isa. 66:23).¹⁰

Our review of the prevailing Adventist method of interpreting the extra-Danielic prophecies of the Old Testament has revealed two prominent and related features: (1) a strong anti-return-of-literal-Israel stance, and (2) a very widespread use of the concept of conditional prophecy. Up to now I have endeavored to be mainly descriptive, rather than evaluative, of this aspect of the art and science of hermeneutics within Adventism. I shall next hazard a critical judgment--or at least I shall raise some questions which have disturbed me for several decades

regarding the above demonstrated prominence that has been given to the concept of conditional prophecy. First I shall make some general observations upon the subject. Next, I shall briefly mention some functions of this concept of conditional prophecy. In what ways has it seemed to help the Adventist cause? Finally, I shall outline what I consider to be three serious objections to this whole philosophy of interpretation as it has come to be so greatly expanded.

First, some general considerations: (1) Let me state clearly that there certainly are bona fide conditional prophecies in the Bible. This is beyond question. The story of Jonah contains one such instance. And there are others, not always--but, I think, usually--so designated. (2) I am not suggesting that it can never be profitable to think about what would have happened, had circumstances been different. Ellen White has done this, on occasion. She even seems to have been given information regarding what God's original ideal for Israel was before He was forced to modify His plans on account of developments stemming out of the freewill with which He had gifted man.

Not only are there bona fide conditional prophecies in the Bible; there are also an abundance of conditional promises. Usually they are paired with corresponding conditional curses, characteristically so, in the book of Deuteronomy. But a promise is not the same thing as a prophecy, although they are similar. This is a distinction that I think has not been adequately grasped. Modern scholars, such as Zimmerli,¹¹ have no trouble accepting the idea of promise and fulfillment. The same scholars, however, show much reticence in accepting the idea of a definitely predictive prophecy, and its specific fulfillment in history. This readiness on the one hand and extreme reluctance on the other clearly indicates that a promise is something different from a predictive prophecy.

In secular life, when a parent tells his child, "If you behave yourself for the rest of this year, I'm going to get you a bicycle for Christmas," this is a promise. But it is not a prophecy--not in the supernatural Biblical sense of the term. (The un-supernaturalness of the concept of promise is probably what makes it so congenial to the modern mind.) The deuteronomic blessings and cursings are more appropriately termed promises, than conditional prophecies, as they are sometimes too loosely called. Although on a much grander scale, they are still quite analogous to the parent promising the child either a gift or a spanking, depending upon the latter's deportment. The particular area of concern in this study, however, is not so much the blessings and curses as it is the many restoration prophecies of the Old Testament.

Useful functions of the conditional method. We have already pointed out that one main function of the emphasis upon conditional prophecy among Adventists has been that it has served as a bulwark against fanciful, literalistic interpretations by supplying an alternate method of viewing the many restoration prophecies of the Old Testament, which the Evangelical world has misused in support of their futuristic notions. It has served well in this first-mentioned function. The great prominence given to conditional prophecy has served the church well in two other respects as well. It has helped to explain a few intellectually problematic Bible texts. And of greater and increasing importance, it has helped to account for the apparent delay in the second advent. This is not to say that the prophecies of the second advent were held to be purely conditional. But the timing of the advent came to be viewed as contingent upon the state of readiness or unreadiness of God's people. God was ready and willing; but His people were not. Had they been so, Christ would have come generations ago.¹²

Objections to the overuse of conditionalism. The first objection is that the conditional factor tends to take the definiteness out of prophecy and to move the whole matter over into the realm

of vagueness, uncertainty, and subjectivity. If the whole prophecy is dependent for its fulfillment upon some future action or decision on the part of man, what assurance is there that it will ever be fulfilled? Supposing that man never does perform the action, or make the decision, upon which the fulfillment is contingent, then what? We rightly do not believe in Calvinistic predestination, nor in strict determinism. Then how can we be sure that any prophecy will be fulfilled which depends in any degree upon the cooperation of man? Do we not believe that every man's eternal salvation is dependent in some degree upon his cooperation? If this is true for individuals, might it not also be true for the entire body of struggling would-be Christians? Supposing all of modern spiritual Israel failed to fulfill God's plan for them, just as ancient Israel failed to fulfill God's plan for them. Would not God have to modify His plan again or settle for an entirely different remnant church? Or if none could be found, perhaps He could induce the inhabitants of other worlds to take the place of the planet whose candlestick had to be removed. Granted, this is remote conjecture. But once one starts a wholesale use of the conditional prophecy concept, how does one know where to stop the process, and say, "No, this particular prophecy is not conditional"?

A second problem with the conditional approach is the implication that God has somehow been taken by surprise at man's failure, and that He now has to change His plans for the ideal He had originally envisioned to be realized. He must work out a new way in which all of the prophecies can still be fulfilled "in principle." The SDA Bible Commentary explains that the prophecies which were originally intended to apply to literal Israel are now to be applied to spiritual Israel. (The second part of this statement is true; it is the first part that is open to question.) Likewise, the prophecies that were originally intended to portray how the envious nations of earth would have laid siege to earthly Jerusalem before the end of time are to be shifted so as to find a corresponding application after the millenium.

The above procedure is very similar in principle to the reinterpretation theory, which is being advocated by liberal scholars today; and which is even thought by some scholarly Adventists to provide a key for resolving some of the questions being raised by Desmond Ford in relation to Dan 8:14. The similarity is that in both cases new situations give rise to new integrations, new modifications of original designs, and movement in new directions. The difference is that in one case it is inspired writers who do the reinterpreting (New Testament writers or Ellen G. White), while in the other case it is God Himself who is pictured as doing the reinterpreting. If God Himself does the reinterpreting, rather than only finite man, there is a question whether that strengthens the case for reinterpretation theory.

The above objections, which I consider to be serious drawbacks to the whole system, are by no means conclusive. Plausible answers to them can be given. The objections thus far considered, however, are relatively minor in comparison with the following one. The strongest argument against the degree of prominence that has been given to the conditional prophecy method of interpretation is that it has effectively usurped the place of the true method of interpretation--that advocated by Hengstenberg and the mature Fairbairn.¹³ And to the extent that we have not advanced along the hermeneutical pathway which these men of the early nineteenth century pointed out, I think the conditional prophecy idea has done the church a disservice, notwithstanding the practical functions it may have performed.

Above we have given an overview of the way in which the conditional prophecy method has been applied to the Old Testament prophecies by the SDA Bible Commentary, quoting several paragraphs from the key chapter in which the rationale of the method is expounded.¹⁴ The reader has not yet been given a comparable overview of the different (and, I think, superior) manner in which the same Old Testament prophecies would be interpreted along lines

comparable to those outlined by Hengstenberg and Fairbairn.¹⁵ To do justice to this alternate method would require an extensive treatment, which could easily fill a volume. A really adequate exposition would entail a virtual rewriting of vol. 4 of the Commentary because of the ubiquity of the conditional prophecy motif running through it. The following description can serve only as an introduction to a method the full significance of which can only be grasped by a thorough understanding of how the basic principles are applied to individual Old Testament prophecies. Such a treatment is beyond the scope of this paper. An introductory overview is all that can be essayed here.

Prophecy as a typological statement

The proposed method, which, for lack of a better term, we shall call the typological approach, is not a simple one, simply because of the inherent complexity of the nature of prophecy. When the student becomes familiar with the characteristic features of the method, however, there is a consistency and harmony throughout the prophetic books which renders interpretation surprisingly easy and surefooted. The persevering searcher is rewarded by a growing assurance that he is on the right track, and that more and more he is perceiving the original intent of the prophetic Spirit.

Probably the most fundamental way in which the typological approach differs from the conditional prophecy approach is that virtually all of the "ifiness," the "subjunctivemoodiness," of the latter is eliminated in the former. Gone is the recurring formula: If A had occurred, B would have resulted. This is the originally intended fulfillment (F_o). But A did not occur, so one must settle for a modified fulfillment (F_m) of the prophecy's original intent.

Perhaps a better term than "modified fulfillment (F_m)" would be the final or eternal fulfillment (F_e), in contrast to an earlier earthly and temporal fulfillment (F_t). Instead of this "if . . . would have . . . but didn't . . . then that" manner of perceiving prophecy, the method I am describing sees the focus and primary meaning of the original prophecy--continuously and from start to finish--to be the final, eternal fulfillment. There is then no need for a shift from what might have been, to what the modified result must be. The necessity for such a shift is inherent in the conditional prophecy method of interpretation.

A further essential characteristic of this hermeneutic is that the continuously focussed-upon final fulfillment is described by the prophet in terms of various geographical and political situations with which he is more or less familiar, and which often (but not necessarily) have some independent relevance for the people of his own time.

A third basic element rounds out the essential core of this manner of understanding Bible prophecy. The course of history itself--the destinies of nations and of important personages--is often directed and shaped by God so as to cause it to foreshadow the future more clearly, and to typify final events more closely than might otherwise be the case. Thus, it is not just that the prophets employ local scenes and persons and events, which happen to surround them, as a vehicle for describing final events, although it is evident that they do do this, whether consciously or not. It is that under the inspiration of the prophetic Spirit, the prophets bring out--in varying proportions of clarity and obscurity--those historical types of final events which God Himself has build into history through His guiding providence. Thus the prophets are interpreters of the sign language which God is using to reveal the future.

It should not be concluded that we are speaking of a rigid system in which there is a fixed one-to-one relationship between a given type or symbol and its antitype; for such is not the case. There is much variation in the symbolism. For instance, Satan is represented, not only by the king of Babylon in Isa 14, but also by the king of Tyre in Ezek 28; the king of Assyria in Isa 10, 14:24-28, 30:27-33, and in the book of Nahum; and by Pharaoh, king of Egypt in Ezek 30-32. The destruction of the wicked world at the second coming of Christ¹⁶ is typified by the destruction of Babylon in Isa 13 and Jer 50-51 (cf. Rev 18), or by the destruction of Ninevah in Nahum, or by the destruction of Idumea (the land of Edom, or Esau, who generically represents the damned, or all that are not the "Jacob" of God, i.e., the elect), as in Isa 34 and 63 and Ezek 35, and in the entire book of Obadiah; or by the first destruction of Jerusalem, as in the early chapters of Jeremiah. (In other places Jerusalem may obviously typify the New Jerusalem.) The millennial desolation of the earth is foreshadowed typically (and designedly) by the following: (1) the desolation of Jerusalem, as in Jer 4 (this is especially evident in vss. 23-27); (2) the desolation of Babylon, as in Isa 13:19-22, (3) the desolation of Edom in Ezek 35 and in Isa 34:8-17, which passage is appropriately preceded by an apocalyptic, universal destruction of "the world" (vs. 1) and "all their armies" (vs. 2), and followed by the blossoming forth of the new earth in chap. 35; (4) the desolation of Moab, as in Isa 15 and 16; and so on.

In the above paragraph we have spoken chiefly of Satan and of the wicked world and of their destruction. We have seen that they are typified by a variety of different nations, cities, and rulers. If we now consider how the elect (i.e., the righteous or saved) are represented in prophecy we naturally find less diversity of types. Here the younger son of Isaac, known both as Jacob and Israel, is uniformly employed to typify the righteous. By extension, the term Judah is sometimes used similarly. Christ in the role of delivering His captive people is typified by Cyrus in the book of Isaiah; whereas Christ in the role of pastoring His New Earth flock is typified by David in the book of Ezekiel (chap. 34).

The controversy between Jacob/Israel/Judah on the one hand and Esau/Edom/Idumea/Bozrah¹⁷ (Isa 34:6, 63:1) on the other is one of the principal typological themes of the Old Testament. It is a fascinating one to trace. It begins with the struggle in the womb of Rebecca (concerning which there is recorded the world's first obstetrical consultation), Gen 25:21-23. It is taken up by Balaam as he prophesies of what "this people shall do unto thy people in the latter days" (Num 24:14, 17-19). It is greatly amplified throughout the prophetic books, including all of the book of Obadiah; and it is concluded in the last book of the Old Testament where Esau/Edom is specifically defined as "the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever" (Mal 1:4).

Probably the most important methodological question in the entire field of Biblical typology is how we are to interpret the many prophecies of the restoration of a remnant of Israel in the last days. Before addressing this crucial problem more fully, it will prove helpful to consider one more basic element, which should then round out our understanding of the essentially three-fold nature of Bible prophecy.

The Three-Fold Nature of Prophecy

So far we have spoken of up to two fulfillments relating to eschatological prophecies, one being the final or eternal fulfillment, and the other being an earthly and temporal fulfillment. In order to avoid confusion, and further clarify what is involved, the latter (i.e., the temporal) must be differentiated into the historical/typical fulfillment and the spiritual fulfillment. Both are

temporal (i.e., pre-second advent) and as such are to be clearly distinguished from the final-eternal fulfillment. Thus, there are up to three kinds of fulfillments to be looked for in considering any particular prophecy--and no more than three kinds, to my knowledge: (1) a historical/typical fulfillment, (2) a spiritual fulfillment for here and now, and (3) a final-eternal fulfillment. These could be designated, respectively, F_{typical} , $F_{\text{spiritual}}$, and $F_{\text{final and eternal}}$, or simply: F_t , F_s , and F_f .

In the book, Prophets and Kings, Ellen White gathers these three distinct elements into a single, magnificently sweeping sentence: "As the captive exiles heeded the message, 'Flee out of the midst of Babylon', and were restored to the land of promise [F_t], so those who fear God today are heeding the message to withdraw from spiritual Babylon [F_s], and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the heavenly Canaan [F_f]."18 This sentence contains all three of the characteristic elements to be looked for in a typological approach to prophecy. It is a paradigm of the three fulfillments we have been considering.

Whenever Old Testament prophecies apply to the Christian era, the term Israel or Jacob is to be applied to spiritual Israel and not to the literal Jews. This is a cardinal rule, which our Bible Commentary rightly upholds. Spiritual applications, when pertaining to Spiritual Israel, are of course closely related to final, eternal fulfillments, because the true children of God endure and pass beyond time into eternity. Thus, there is often a close blending of F_s and F_f . Certain prophecies can apply equally to God's people now and in eternity. For example, "I will be their God and they shall be my people,"19 finds fulfillment spiritually here and now, and also in the earth made new (there, literally). Rev 21:3. Again, Ellen G. White often quotes Isa 60:1 and 2 as applying to God's people in the last days of earth's history, in spite of the fact that the context of the entire chapter indicates clearly--as confirmed by John's usage (cf. Rev 20:23-27)--that it is a new earth scene that is being portrayed throughout the chapter. This is entirely consistent with the hermeneutic that we are suggesting. She merely indicates an F_s element in what is basically an F_f prophecy.20 Verse 60:2 can also be applied to Christ's first coming as He illuminates the "gross darkness" of the times in which he lived. Similar examples could be multiplied.

In New Testament times and beyond, as we have just indicated, "Israel" almost always refers to spiritual Israel. But in Old Testament times what happened to literal Israel was often a type of what would be fulfilled in reference to spiritual Israel, both in F_s and F_f phases, i.e., both before and after the second coming.

As clearly expounded by Fairbairn, in his chapter, "Type Combined with Prophecy,"21 historical types in the Old Testament may be in the past, the present or in the future as regards the time in which the prophet was living. Frequently, historical events from the past, such as the deliverance from Egypt, or from the Midianites under Gideon, are mingled in the type with those of the present or of the near future. An example of the latter would be Isa 13:1-18. The historical type is a soon-coming destruction of literal Babylon by the Medes. What the prophet is actually describing, under the Spirit's influence, is the second coming of Christ. In this "burden of Babylon," which extends on through the next chapter, the historical element is a mere vehicle. God, of course, was constantly directing these great historical movements, such as the Exodus and the deliverance from Babylonian captivity, so as to shape them into types.

When seen from this perspective, there can be no question about the existence of "multiple fulfillments." This has been recognized by most serious students of prophecy. For example, when Moses, in his prophetic song, declared: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to

dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Exod 15:17). When he thus prophesied he was not referring, either alone or principally, to their coming into the land of Canaan (F₁₁). Nor was he referring solely to their return from Babylonian captivity (F₁₂). He had in mind primarily the earth made new, the final and eternal fulfillment, in the mountain of the Lord's inheritance. This last was the real meaning and intent of the prophecy. The other movements were merely successive historical types of that final fulfillment. This pattern is found repeatedly throughout most of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

We should now be in a position to understand better just how the many Old Testament prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel to the promised land are to be interpreted. Such prophecies may severally refer (1) to one or more (usually just one) historical types of the final restoration, which would be fulfilled in Old Testament times; (2) to victories of spiritual Israel over forces of darkness in the here and now, i.e., in the Christian era generally; and/or (3) to the final victory of the saved in the earth made new. This is the basic three-fold nature of prophecy.²²

One or two or all three of the above elements may be present in any given prophecy. Although it is usually the historical type that the seer sees in his vision, and although it is often this which provides the local color and details of what he sees, it is almost without exception that the final eschatological fulfillment constitutes the primary meaning of the prophecy--that for which the prophet was given the vision in the first place. This primary focus and emphasis upon the final fulfillment, notwithstanding that that fulfillment is usually seen and described in the local trappings and names of the historical scenes that are presented before the eyes of the seers, is seen to be a basic characteristic of this kind of prophecy.

In the proposed three-fold, typological approach to understanding prophecy there is little place for, and virtually no need of, the conditional method of interpretation. It is no longer necessary to invoke the subjunctive mood. There is no "ifiness" about any of the three elements discussed. Hence, there is no need for any shift from what was originally planned to a later modification of it.

Giving the typological approach a central role in interpreting Old Testament prophecy serves two important functions. First, it puts an end to the gross over-expansion of the conditional prophecy method, as discussed above. Restoring the one ushers out the other. And second, it effectively does what the other method aimed to do, viz., provide an alternative to the literalistic interpretations of modern Evangelical futurists. This seems to have been an overriding concern of the authors of the Bible Commentary. This second factor was, as we have indicated, one of the main factors which accounted for the expansion of the conditional prophecy concept in the first place. Seventh-day Adventist scholars have been right in opposing the deplorable penchant of the Evangelical world, and some Adventists as well, to literalize the many restoration prophecies of the Old Testament, so as to apply them to the return of literal Jews to the land of Palestine in our own day. Such literalists find a happy hunting ground in such chapters as Ezek 38 and 39, looking for what Russia (Rosh!) is going to do to the state of Israel, and for just how this will lead into Armageddon, etc.--all in the face of the clear indication of John the Revelator in Rev 20:7-10 that the prophecy about Gog and Magog applies after the millennium. It refers very little to historic times at all. Nor do the immediately preceding chapters.

The discussion of Isa 2:1-5 in the SDA Bible Commentary affords a concrete example of the matter that we have been considering. The passage is first quoted.

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isa 2:1-5)

The Bible Commentary lists three interpretations which have been proposed for this passage. One is literal (Jews returning to the literal Jerusalem during the millenium); one is spiritual (a counterfeit religious revival in the last days); and one is conditional. The latter, of course, is the one favored by the Commentary. Five or six pages are expended in outlining all of what might have been fulfilled, but never was, on account of Israel's failure.²³ The Commentary rightly rejects the second interpretation as well as the first. The F_f fulfillment, discussed here, is not so much as mentioned.²⁴ That would be, simply, that the passage is portraying a New Earth state of affairs, although it is couched in local, historical/typical terms such as "Judah," "Jerusalem," "Mount Zion," and "House of Jacob."²⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated concerning the non-Danielic, last-day²⁶ prophecies of the Old Testament that in the typological method of interpretation there are virtually no prophecies that pertain to the literal Jews or to their return to the land of Palestine, nor are any references found there to modern geographical areas, or to political entities. The many last day prophecies are to be interpreted in accord with the three-fold nature of prophecy. The primary intent of the prophecies is to portray final events, i.e., those immediately associated with the second coming and beyond (F_f). And this is characteristically done through historical types, i.e., events and personages past, present, or future to the prophet--but all in Old Testament times and having varying relevance to the prophet's own day (F_i). Because the term "Israel" refers exclusively to spiritual Israel from New Testament times onward, spiritual fulfillments and applications can legitimately be found which pertain to the Christian era, such as prophecies of the spread of the gospel, and so on (F_s). It is my conviction that virtually all of the last day prophecies of the Old Testament can be adequately and properly interpreted within this framework.

Note: David P. Duffie received his M.D. degree from Loma Linda University in 1945. He spent five years at Clinica Americana on Lake Titicaca, Peru and ten years at Bella Vista hospital in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. From 1971 to 1978 he taught in the School of Health (now the School of Public Health) at Loma Linda University. He now works as a psychiatrist for the Riverside County Department of Mental Health. All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the King James Version. I would like to thank my mother, Margaret V. Hardy, for typing the present manuscript.

¹See, for example, The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon (New York: Bantam, 1980).

²See Patrick Fairbairn, The Prophetic Prospect of the Jews or Fairbairn vs. Fairbairn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930).

³A section of eleven pages, dealing with modern secular exegetes, is omitted in this condensed version of the paper. ⁴Signs of the Times, June 1, 1842. Quoted in Donald F. Neufeld, "Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement", one of the papers appearing in Gordon M. Hyde, A Symposium of Biblical Hermeneutics (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), p. 115.

⁵The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 4:25-38 (subsequently Bible Commentary); Review and Herald, October 28, November 4, 11, 18, 25, 1976; Herbert E. Douglass, The End (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979), pp 44-48; Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, teachers' edition, for March 15, 1980.

⁶Bible Commentary 4:25-38.

⁷Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁸Ibid., pp. 28-30.

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹See Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, Claus Westermann, ed. (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 89-122.

¹²There is a close affinity between this subjunctive-mood kind of thinking about the delayed advent and the subjunctive-mood that runs through the entire subject of conditional prophecy. In both, there is a strong tendency for the searcher to become caught up in seemingly endless philosophical speculations involving foreknowledge and foreordination: "Why could Christ not have come in the apostolic age, as many expected, if His people had only been ready then?" "He could have. But No, what would then become of the time prophecies?" Such pseudoproblems--hardly fathomable to our finite minds--would be no problem at all to the reinterpretationists! Once one leaves the indicative mood in prophecy, one is on shaky ground. I am not saying that the concept of a delayed advent and conditional prophecy are one and the same thing, for they are not. They do share, however, some common problems.

¹³E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), see especially appendix 6, "The Nature of Prophecy," 4:350-394; Patrick Fairbairn, The Typology of Scripture, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 1:106-39.

¹⁴Vol. 4, pp. 14-17.

¹⁵See n. 13 above.

¹⁶This could also refer to the third coming. The second and third comings of Christ are often blended in prophecy, partially in consequence of the visual nature of prophecy and the loss of the third dimension in distant vistas, as explained by Hengstenberg (Christology, 4:366-81). The wide valleys that may separate distant mountain ranges are simply not perceived by observation from a great distance.

¹⁷Bozrah was the capital of Edom or Mount Seir, the land of Edom (Ezek 35).

¹⁸The Story of Prophets and Kings as Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1943), p. 715.

¹⁹This is a promise as well as a prophecy!

²⁰There also seems to be a past historical/typical element implicit in Isaiah 60. It is that of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon. This is only suggestive, however. The latter may or may not have been a part of God's design.

²¹Typology of Scripture, pp. 137-74.*

²²Essentially the same three-fold understanding is set forth in Hans K. LaRondelle's paper, "Interpretation of Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology" (Hyde, Symposium, p. 228).

²³In the Bible Commentary it is rightly concluded that "the prediction of Isa 2:2-4 was never fulfilled to literal Israel" (4:104). It could be inferred from this statement that it would be fulfilled someday to spiritual Israel in the earth made new, but there is no explicit mention of this in the six pages of discussion on vss. 2-4. Nor is a new earth fulfillment included in the three possible interpretations which the Commentary lists.

²⁴The typological approach is appropriately acknowledged in the last part of the chapter, which so obviously refers to scenes of the second coming.

"The day of the Lord" is the day of God's wrath upon individual nations and upon the world. When a nation goes so far in iniquity that its doom is sealed and final judgment is pronounced against it by the Lord, this is 'the day of the Lord' for that particular people. These localized, individual days of the Lord upon Israel (Amos 5:18), Judah and Jerusalem (Lam. 2:22; Eze. 13:5; Zeph. 1:7, 14, 18; 2:2, 3; Zech. 14:1), Babylon (Isa. 13:6, 9), Egypt (Jer. 46:10; Eze. 30:3), and Edom and the heathen in general (Obadiah 15) were types of the greater day of the Lord's judgment yet to come upon the entire world (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). See also Isa. 34:8; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5. Prophecies of a local "day of the Lord" are often descriptive also of the universal "day of the Lord" at the end of the world. Similarly, Jesus blended predictions of the fall of Jerusalem with those of His second coming. (Bible Commentary 4:110)

It is unfortunate that it was not realized that the same typological method that is described in the above quotation could better have been extended to include the first verses in the chapter. Such an extension would have left no need for invoking the conditional prophecy interpretation at all in Isa 2:2-4. The same could be said of most of the eschatological prophecies of the Old Testament. The Bible Commentary, which in other respects has made an outstanding contribution to our church, should contain this seriously flawed method of interpreting the non-Danielic prophecies of the Old Testament is sad.

²⁵This passage is strictly parallel to Isa 4:2-6; 27:6 and many other passages. The "Jerusalem" in these passages refers to the New Jerusalem, whereas in chap. 3, it is to the Old Jerusalem and to "fallen Judah" (3:8), where the "daughters of Zion" receive their deserts, like the harlot queen in Rev 18.

That the latter part of chap. 2 better fits the second coming (which is immediately premillennial in timing, rather than postmillennial, as in vss. 2-5) should present no problem to the interpreter who has become familiar with the characteristic manner in which earlier and later phases of final events (those occurring at and after the second coming) are mixed, in the visions of the prophets: now is presented one scene, then another, and back again, like a television coverage.

²⁶The many prophecies of Christ's first coming, and their often intimate connection with those of the second coming, is too large a topic to discuss in the present paper.