

Rome Establishes the Vision - Number One

A Private Interpretation

Jeff Pippenger

2024-06-28

And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. Daniel 11:14.

The word “doctrine” in the context of Christianity represents the established truths of the Bible. Various professedly Christian organizations possess different sets of what they define as biblical doctrines, but there is only one Truth. The distinction between “absolute truth” and “pluralism” is a subject outside our consideration at this juncture.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. John 18:37, 38.

Truth is God’s Word; it is His voice and it is Christ Himself.

“We should know for ourselves what constitutes Christianity, what is truth, what is the faith that we have received, what are the Bible rules—the rules given us from the highest authority. There are many who believe without a reason on which to base their faith, without sufficient evidence as to the truth of the matter. If an idea is presented that harmonizes with their own preconceived opinions, they are all ready to accept it. They do not reason from cause to effect, their faith has no genuine foundation, and in the time of trial they will find that they have built upon the sand.

“He who rests satisfied with his own present imperfect knowledge of the Scriptures, thinking this sufficient for his salvation, is resting in a fatal deception. There are many who are not thoroughly furnished with Scriptural arguments, that they may be able to discern error, and condemn all the tradition and superstition that has been palmed off as truth. Satan has introduced own ideas into the worship of God, that he might corrupt the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. A large number who claim to believe the present truth, know not what constitutes the faith that was once delivered to the saints—Christ in you the hope of glory. They think they are defending the old landmarks, but they are lukewarm and indifferent. They know not what it is to weave into their experience and to possess the real virtue of love and faith. They are not close Bible students, but are lazy and inattentive. When differences of opinion arise upon the passages of Scripture, these who have not studied to a purpose and are not decided as to what they believe, fall away from the truth. We ought to impress upon all the necessity of inquiring diligently into divine truth, that they may know that they do know what is truth. Some claim much knowledge, and feel satisfied with their condition, when they have no more zeal for the work, no more ardent love for God, and for souls for whom Christ died,

than if they had never known God. They do not read the Bible [in order] to appropriate the marrow and fatness to their own souls. They do not feel that it is the voice of God speaking to them. But, if we would understand the way of salvation, if we would see the beams of the Sun of righteousness, we must study the Scriptures for a purpose, for the promises and prophecies of the Bible shed clear beams of glory upon the divine plan of redemption, which grand truths are not clearly comprehended.” The 1888 Materials, 403.

We are required to know what those doctrines are, and how to present, establish and defend those truths.

“It does not seem possible to us now that any should have to stand alone; but if God has ever spoken by me, the time will come when we shall be brought before councils and before thousands for his name’s sake, and each one will have to give the reason of his faith. Then will come the severest criticism upon every position that has been taken for the truth. We need, then, to study the word of God, that we may know why we believe the doctrines we advocate. We must critically search the living oracles of Jehovah.” Review and Herald, December 18, 1888.

In order to be brought before “thousands” it is evident that some of the defenders of truth in the last days will be forced to defend the truth in a medium such as television or web broadcasts. How else could thousands watch the testimony given by the one hundred and forty-four thousand? The doctrines we advocate identify the basis of our faith.

“The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be forced to bear witness for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience which would have helped them in this emergency they have neglected to obtain, and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges.” Testimonies, volume 5, 463.

God’s Word never fails, and therefore if we are to be numbered with the one hundred and forty-four thousand, we must know what believe based upon what is written in God’s Word. Before the testing time arrives when God’s people are forced to explain the doctrines they believe, God allows errors to be introduced in order to force God’s people to critically study His Word.

“The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God’s people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what.

“I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are

many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth. Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God and a turning to men, putting human in place of divine wisdom.

“God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth. Their faith must be firmly founded upon the word of God so that when the testing time shall come and they are brought before councils to answer for their faith they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.

“Agitate, agitate, agitate. The subjects which we present to the world must be to us a living reality. It is important that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith we should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound. These may avail to silence an opposer, but they do not honor the truth. We should present sound arguments, that will not only silence our opponents, but will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny. With those who have educated themselves as debaters there is great danger that they will not handle the word of God with fairness. In meeting an opponent it should be our earnest effort to present subjects in such a manner as to awaken conviction in his mind, instead of seeking merely to give confidence to the believer.

“Whatever may be man’s intellectual advancement, let him not for a moment think that there is no need of thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. As a people we are called individually to be students of prophecy. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others.” Testimonies, volume 5, 708.

The “students of prophecy” that ultimately makeup the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be “individually tested and proved,” in advance of their confrontation with the earthly powers who bring about the soon-coming Sunday law crisis and persecution. The faithful will first be “aroused” by God. The sleeping virgins will be “aroused” from the slumber they have fallen into during the tarrying time. If they will not awaken by the message that God has presented through the articles that have been sent forth since July of 2023, then God will allow “heresies” to “come in among them” which will finish the separation of the wheat and tares through a sifting process. We are now in that sifting process.

There are three options available to those who have been following in the controversy of the correct identification of Modern Rome. One option is that the United States is Modern Rome, the other is that the papal power is Modern Rome and the third option is that both of the previous positions are incorrect and some other power is represented by the robbers of Daniel's people who exalt themselves, fall, and establish the vision in verse fourteen of Daniel chapter eleven.

I contend that the disagreement of whether Modern Rome is the papal power or the United States, has been allowed to be introduced into this movement for the purpose of forcing His people to study His prophetic word. God has brought about this controversy in a manifestation of His mercy. I contend the disagreement is more about preparing His people for the coming crisis than simply identifying who is right and who is wrong about Modern Rome. The disagreement was allowed and designed by God to demonstrate, for any who wish to see, that their own personal understanding of His prophetic word is incomplete or incorrect. The controversy is therefore evidence of God's mercy.

The controversy not only involves the identification of who is the power represented by the robbers of thy people, but also whether the methodology of line upon line that both sides of the controversy profess to uphold is being properly applied. The prophetic rules associated with the methodology of line upon line includes special prophetic principles which will be part of the sifting process of the wheat and tares. Three elements of the methodology of line upon line which I contend are being misunderstood in this current controversy are Christ as the Truth, and Christ as Alpha and Omega, and a triple application of prophecy.

Ultimately those who hold to an incorrect understanding of verse fourteen of Daniel eleven will be found to be basing their doctrinal position upon a private interpretation.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:19–21.

In the controversy over verse fourteen, an example of what I understand to be a “private interpretation” is found in The Great Controversy.

“As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness. The same argument many centuries ago was brought against Christ by the ‘rulers of the people.’ ‘It is expedient for us,’ said the wily Caiaphas, ‘that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.’ John 11:50. This argument will appear conclusive; and a decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, denouncing them as

deserving of the severest punishment and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death. Romanism in the Old World and apostate Protestantism in the New will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.” The Great Controversy, 615.

“Christendom” represents the worldwide community of Christians or the collective body of Christian-majority countries and cultures. The term is often used to denote the parts of the world where Christianity is the dominant religion and has significantly influenced the culture, laws, and social norms. Christendom encompasses the global expanse of Christianity in terms of its followers, cultural impact, and historical significance. Without removing the repetition that exists in the Ellen White CD-ROM, the word Christendom occurs one hundred and seventy-six times. Geographically Sister White identifies that Christendom in general represents Europe and the Americas. In the context of Sister White Europe is identified as the Old World and the Americas are the New world.

“But the beast with lamblike horns was seen ‘coming up out of the earth.’ Instead of overthrowing other powers to establish itself, the nation thus represented must arise in territory previously unoccupied and grow up gradually and peacefully. It could not, then, arise among the crowded and struggling nationalities of the Old World—that turbulent sea of ‘peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.’ It must be sought in the Western Continent.

“What nation of the New World was in 1798 rising into power, giving promise of strength and greatness, and attracting the attention of the world? The application of the symbol admits of no question. One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America.’ The Great Controversy, 441.

The last sentence in the paragraph we are considering has been employed to suggest that “Romanism in the Old World and apostate Protestantism in the New” is identifying “Romanism of the Old World” as the papacy during the Dark Ages, and the United States (apostate Protestantism) as Modern Rome, represented by the phrase “apostate Protestantism in the New.” The “Old” is defined as past history, and the “New” is defined as modern or current history. That application wrest Sister White’s established understanding of both Christendom and the Old and New world.

Those who apply the sentence in terms of past and future history, identify “a private interpretation” in direct contradiction to Sister White’s intended meaning. The claim is that the “Old World” represents past history and the “New” represents modern or current history (New).

The passage says, “will pursue.” Romanism and apostate Protestantism “will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.” The Old World in the passage is Europe and the New world is the Americas. Sister White is teaching that the entire world is to be confronted by the Sunday law test, and that Romanism will lead out in the persecutions in Europe and apostate Protestantism will lead out in persecutions in the Americas. The Americas and Europe are what is defined as “Christendom.” Both Romanism and apostate Protestantism “will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.”

“Will pursue” is identifying a future action by both powers, and it is grammatically impossible to suggest that Romanism of the Old World is the papal power of the Dark Ages. The persecution

carried out by both powers is future tense. The definition of the phrase is “will pursue” and it means to follow or chase after something with the intention of achieving or attaining it. It implies a future action where an individual or group is committed to actively seeking a goal or objective.

The phrase can be applied in various contexts: “She will pursue a career in medicine,” meaning she plans to work towards becoming a medical professional. “He will pursue a degree in engineering,” indicating he intends to study engineering at a higher educational institution. “The team will pursue the project until completion,” suggesting the team will continue working on the project until it is finished. “They will pursue legal action against the company,” meaning they intend to take legal steps to address a grievance or seek justice. Overall, “will pursue” implies determination, commitment, and a clear intention to achieve a specific goal or outcome in the future.

The private interpretation that is employed to teach that Romanism of the Old World is past history, is thereafter employed as a plank to uphold an incorrect application of a triple application of prophecy. It argues that the triple application of Rome represents pagan Rome, followed by papal Rome and then the United States as the third of the three Rome’s. A very similar flawed application was employed shortly after September 11, 2001, when a group separated from the movement over the book of Joel.

The controversy then began at a camp meeting in Canada where the triple application of the three woes was incorporated into the book of Joel to teach that Islam of the third woe was the nation that came against the land in verse six of chapter one. That nation is papal Rome, but a private interpretation was introduced claiming the nation was Islam. The triple application of three woes had established Islam as the power of September 11, 2001, and the new private interpretation insisted the papal power of Joel chapter one was actually Islam. A private interpretation that rejected the correct identification of papal power in the book of Joel was bolstered up by an incorrect application of the three woes. Now a private interpretation setting aside the papal power for the United States is being introduced.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10.

The controversies of the last days include the repetition of old controversies, and Daniel chapter eleven has the controversy of Uriah Smith placing his private interpretation upon the symbol of the king of the north. In so doing he manufactured an understanding of Daniel chapter eleven that only produced darkness. In these last days the controversies that are repeated are especially identifying the fruit of applying private interpretations to established truth. This is what Smith did in his book, Daniel and the Revelation. This is what was done in the controversy in the book of Joel, and it is the same dynamics that are being employed when one paragraph from The Great Controversy avoids the definition within the world and within the writings of Ellen White as to what “Christendom” represents, along with the rejection of the basic rules of grammar that identify the phrase “will pursue” identifies a future event. From that point of reference, the flawed concept that the “Old World” is the history of the papal power from 538 unto 1798, is then used to argue against

the established understanding of the definition of a triple application of prophecy.

“All that God has in prophetic history specified to be fulfilled in the past has been, and all that is yet to come in its order will be. Daniel, God’s prophet, stands in his place. John stands in his place. In the Revelation the Lion of the tribe of Judah has opened to the students of prophecy the book of Daniel, and thus is Daniel standing in his place. He bears his testimony, that which the Lord revealed to him in vision of the great and solemn events which we must know as we stand on the very threshold of their fulfillment.

“In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long continued conflict between truth and error. That conflict is yet in progress. Those things which have been, will be repeated. Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. But God’s people, who in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold. They are to stand firm as a rock, holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.” Selected Message, book 2, 109.

It can be easily demonstrated that Sister White identifies Paul’s “beginning of their confidence,” as the foundational truths of Adventism. The Millerites taught the robbers of thy people was the papal power, and from 1849 onward the movement of the one hundred and forty-four thousand has repeatedly identified the same understanding of the symbol as did the Millerites. There is now a “new theory” as to who the robbers of thy people are, and it has revived an old controversy in the sense that it uses an incorrect identification of an established prophetic symbol to build a prophetic model that is erected upon sand. Whether it was Smith’s private interpretation, or the false application of the nation in Joel chapter one, or the identification of the United States as Modern Rome; all three fallacies attack the correct understanding of papal Rome in the last days, and in so doing they attack the symbol that establishes the prophetic vision that identifies whether God’s people perish or live.

In the future Romanism in Europe and apostate Protestantism in the Americas “will pursue” persecution of Sabbath-keepers as has been done throughout sacred history.

“God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth.” Gospel Workers, 299.

We will continue these thoughts in the next article.