Title: Early Davidian Seventh-day Adventist apocalyptic eschatology between 1929-1955: a comparative, historical, and theological investigation

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Abstract:

This dissertation is a comparative, historical, and theological evaluation of early Davidian Seventh-day Adventist (DSDA) apocalypticism. The DSDAs, commonly known as the Shepherd’s Rod (SRod), splintered from the organized Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in 1929. The study explores the theological influences, methods of exegesis, and core eschatological doctrines of Victor T. Houteff (VTH), founder of the SRod. The research is in an area that is much needed in SDA scholarship and important for Adventist understanding.

The introductory chapter notes the lack of a comprehensive understanding of SRod apocalypticism. Thus the attempt of this investigation is to fill the information gap, and analyze the major eschatological views of VTH.

Chapter I begins with a biographical sketch of VTH followed by a brief historical survey of Davidianism. The millenarian influences on the SRod movement is discussed and background information lays the foundation within which the apocalypticism of VTH is evaluated.

Chapter II focuses on the foundational views of VTH. First, his theology, views of Scripture and EGW, and his hermeneutical approaches to inspired sources. Second, his ecclesiology and understanding of mission within Adventism. Third, his eschatology and
understanding of the 144,000 and the sealing of the remnant (Rev 7:1-4; cf. Ezek 9), the latter rain (Joel 2:23, 28-32), and the loud cry (Rev 18:1-4).

Three additional core views of VTH are analyzed in chapter III. First, the idea of a terrestrial kingdom based on VTH’s understanding of selected OT prophecies, such as Isa 2:1-4; Jer 30:3; Ezek 34:22-24; Dan 2:44; Hos 3:4,5; Mic 4; Zech 14:4,5, and others. Second, the sealing and slaughter of Ezek 9:1-11; and third, the harvest in the parable of Matt 13:24-30, 36-43.

Chapter IV concludes that while VTH had a high view of Scripture and EGW’s work, his core views are not in harmony with SDA understanding and beliefs. Hence the SRod is a fringe organization and should not be supported by SDAs. Several major contributions to the understanding of DSDAs are underscored in this chapter including pointers for further SDA reflection.