

95 Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), p. 247.

96 The pre-advent battle is to be understood as beginning prior to the advent and culminating with the advent (see Rev. 17-19).

97 The unholy triumvirate of dragon, beast and false prophet oppose the Trinity (Rev. 16:12-16, 19:11-20).

98 Hans LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation, The Biblical Drama of Armageddon* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1987), pp. 67, 68.

99 T. Longman, "The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 44, (1982), pp. 290-307, see page 297.

100 These are the other three angels of Revelation 14. Their mission is to execute judgment on Babylon, whereas the three angel's messages (Rev. 14:6-13) are to gather people out of Babylon.

101 Revelation says all the world wonders after this beast (Rev. 13:3) and this includes the false prophet and dragon (Rev. 16:13, 19:20).

102 Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, vol 10, p. 252.

103 Compare Deut. 28:36-64, 29:25-28.

104 Ellen G. White, , vol 5, p. 472.

105 The "angel of the Lord" (Zech.) 3:1-3 is Michael of Daniel 12:1, or Jesus Christ (cf Jude 9, Rev 12:7-11).

106 Compare Ellen G. White's first vision in which she saw that only those who kept their eyes on Jesus made it up the path to heaven. Those taking their gaze away from Him fell to the world below (*Early Writings*, p. 14).

107 *Testimonies*, vol 5, p. 471.

108 All non-human created beings plus the few human representatives in heaven (of whom are Enoch, Elijah, Moses, and 24 elders of Revelation 4, 5) witness the pre-advent investigation, all the redeemed witness the millennial investigation and all the lost witness the post-millennial judgment. In this way all intelligent created beings participate in the evaluation of God's judgments, and find Him to be just (Rev. 15:3). The issue in the great controversy, calling in question the justice of God, is thus answered.

109 This involves clinging not only to Calvary but to the Crucified's continuing intercession, which is a result of the cross.

110 If the judgment is merely looking at what men have done, and the scriptural principle "by beholding we become changed" is applied (2 Cor. 3:18), then a millennium of pouring over bad works would be dangerous. I believe that the judgments have far more to do with observing how patiently Christ has worked for each person, where each turned Him down, and so is far more Christ-centered than man-centered. Such an investigation is uplifting—it tells us more about the character of Christ than about the characters of fallen humans. To behold Christ's working will change us for the better, whereas to wallow in the morass of human sin would have the opposite effect.

111 *Early Writings*, p. 14.

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THE HISTORICIST INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY: ITS PRESENT RELEVANCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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It is difficult for anyone today to avoid the truth of John's statement that, "The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America increasingly is being assailed from without and from within, from the left and from the right. What Paul said to the Apostolic church certainly is true today. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30).

As a church we have had our defectors, our accusers, and our prognosticators who claim to know from the prophecies exactly what will happen and when. In recent years we have had an increasing number of each of these, particularly in North America, who are undermining the pillars of our historic position on the

interpretation of prophecy. Although there is wide room for understanding the prophecies in the book of Daniel and the Revelation, nevertheless there are certain broad strokes of prophecy that are distinctive to Seventh-day Adventist teaching. When our historic prophetic interpretation of these broad strokes is undermined, the Adventist church will have lost its identity and mission. When dates like 457 B.C. (the beginning date for the 2300 days) are not only questioned but denied; when the three-and-a-half years of the Messiah are taken from the prophetic time line and disconnectedly placed in the immediate future; and when the two beasts of Revelation 13 are no longer the Papal system and the United States, but some other political entity and/or Satan himself, then our mission has lost its meaning.

For the honor of God and the sake of those of our members who are reaching out for light and guidance, it is time to be bold and not sit quietly by without speaking up. It is too late in the sequence of events in these last days of earth's history to sit quietly by without having the courage to defend what we have always believed on these issues, and still do.

A Brief Look at Methods of Interpretation

Most pastors and many laymen are already acquainted with the various misinterpretations of prophecy circulating among us and our historic Seventh-day Adventist interpretation. But a brief summary is appropriate.

Historicist Interpretation. Historicism, or the historical school, views the prophecies of Daniel as covering the entire historical time-span from the Babylonian empire to the second coming of Christ. Historicists recognize the little horn of Daniel 7 to be the historical papacy, the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 as extending from 457 B.C. to 1844 A.D., and the events in the book of Revelation as forming a historical continuum from the early church to the second coming of Christ.¹

It was the Historicist approach to Scripture that energized the Reformation and led Luther to recognize the pontiff of Rome as the Antichrist. In fact, the Reformers embodied their historicist interpretations concerning the Antichrist into their confessions of faith. It moved them forward to confront the pontiff of Rome and to resist

his claims even at the expense of their own blood.² This gives us a glimpse into the importance they placed on the historicist approach to Scripture.

Preterist Interpretation. Rome's answer to the Protestant approach to Scripture was twofold and in one sense contradictory, nevertheless it was extremely effective. Through Alcazar, the Spanish Jesuit from Seville, Rome advanced the preterist interpretation of Scripture. This school of thought holds to a hermeneutic that places eschatology, particularly the apocalyptic events in the books of Daniel and Revelation, in the past and views them as either already having taken place in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes or being in the process of taking place at the time of John's writing. This school of thought tends to see most of the messages of Revelation fulfilled by the time of Constantine the Great in the 4th century A.D., or to see them as a reflection of conditions and events in John's own time.³

Futurist Interpretation. The other approach Rome used to counter the Reformer's historicist approach was put forth by Ribera, a Jesuit from Salamanca, Spain, and Bellarmine, a Jesuit from Rome. The futurist school interprets the apocalyptic events in the book of Revelation as being future, not merely future from John's day, but future from our day. This school of thought tends to place the book of Revelation, at least from chapter four on, in a narrow seven year period just before the coming of Christ. Leaping over the immense era of papal dominance, it crowds the Antichrist into a small period of time just before the end.⁴

Apotelesmatic Approach. Little comment needs to be made concerning this interpretation circulating among some Adventists in which there are multiple fulfillments of prophecy. In this view Daniel 7 not only speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes but also of Roman Catholicism and any other religious movement or political ideology that in the future might pull down the Sanctuary truth and tread it and/or human rights underfoot. Some in our church apply the same prophecy to the past, present, and future and leave no "final" events as signs of Christ's second coming.⁵

Re-application Theory. This approach to interpretation says that prophets never were called upon to predict the future but only were inspired to apply the events to their time as they saw

them being fulfilled. Therefore we need to look at the prophecies anew and apply them again in our day as we understand them to be fulfilling. This re-application approach takes away the certainty of the broad strokes of past Adventist prophetic interpretation and places the responsibility of reapplication of the general lines of prophecy in the hands of each new Adventist generation.⁶

Political Approach. This method of interpreting the prophecies has surfaced repeatedly in our church. One such interpretation occurred when Uriah Smith allowed the newspaper headlines of the 1870's to dictate his understanding of Daniel. A similar approach to prophecy occurred during World War I and again during World War II when some Adventists taught that these wars were the War of Armageddon. Some considered the State of Israel in 1948 to be a fulfillment of prophecy, others have seen Communism as the beast of Revelation 13. Still others saw in the recent Gulf War more than the prophecies indicate.⁷

Influence Theory. The last approach to prophecy that I wish to mention is the method that interprets the various prophecies in such a way as to make their secondary meanings primary. For example, the beast symbols in Revelation, traditionally referring to Satan's activities only in a secondary sense are made primary. As a result no tangible beast power is looked for, such as the papacy or the United States, and the demonic activities which we cannot see are made the focus of study. Any visions Ellen White had confirming our historicist interpretation, although inspired, are said to be incorrect because she was influenced by the false interpretations of Scripture taught by those around her.⁸

There are other methods of interpretation and approaches to prophecy that could be mentioned, but seven is a good Biblical number at which to stop. Sufficient sources are available to substantiate the historicist position that Seventh-day Adventists have taken.⁹

A Brief Look at the Historicist Method of Interpretation in the Light of Adventist Beginnings

The historicist position is not Biblically unsound in spite of what some scholars claim, yet there remains another dimension to consider. In too many instances the heart ultimately dictates to

reason, causing us to rationalize and sculpture Scripture to our aesthetic taste or mold it into our image. While sound Biblical scholarship is of utmost importance, we must not forget the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the focus of our faith, nor the power of the Holy Spirit to bring us conviction. We are told, "The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God".¹⁰ While the Biblical arguments have been presented ably in favor of the historicist method of interpretation, there always will be additional theological challenges to meet. Therefore, what is more urgently needed is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Part of the problem is that too many of our members are unacquainted with our Adventist past and how the Lord through the Holy Spirit has guided this church and are therefore disconnected from their spiritual roots. In fact, there is a general disinterest in the United States today concerning our country's past and the principles on which it was founded. Seventh-day Adventists are not immune from the influence of the culture around them. Consequently, we take less interest in our past—where we've come from, who we are, and what our mission is in the light of history. Christopher Lasch in his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, states insightfully that the devaluation of the past has become one of the most telling symptoms of our cultural crisis. He says that Americans have trivialized the past by equating it with outmoded styles and discarded fashions and attitudes. Today people resent anyone who draws seriously on the past in order to understand the present, or attempts to use the past as a standard by which to judge the present. But, he sees the past as a political and psychological treasury from which we draw the reserves that we need to cope with the future. He points out that our culture's indifference to the past, which at times easily shades over into active hostility and rejection, furnishes the most telling proof of our cultural bankruptcy.¹¹

Although Lasch speaks from a secular point of view, his comments certainly are apropos to what I believe is happening among us. Some of us have lost our vision of what the Holy Spirit has done to make us a people, and what He has done to affirm us. As Ellen White has said, "Those who have a hold of the truth theoretically, with their finger tips as it were, who have not brought its principles

into the inner sanctuary of the soul, . . . will see nothing sacred in the past history of this people which has made them what they are."¹² It is this problem that I would like to address—the neglect or even rejection of what the Holy Spirit has done to help our forefathers understand the prophecies by directing them to use the historicist method of interpretation.

What the Holy Spirit Initiated

As early as 1768, Johann Petri, a German Calvinist pastor, provided those in the Advent Awakening with the key to dating the 2300 day/year prophecy, concluding that the period would end in 1847.

In the 1790's Manuel Lacunza's manuscript on *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, began circulating in Spain and Spanish South America. He took a stand on the premillennial literal advent of Christ in opposition to the popular Whitbyan position on the postmillennial coming of Christ.

Then in 1810, John A. Brown introduced the 2300 day/year prophecy into the discussion in *The Christian Observer* in Britain, dating the prophetic period from 457 B.C. to A. D. 1843.

In 1811 we have evidence that William Cunningham, from Scotland, a prolific writer on Biblical prophecy and chronology, believed that he was living in the time of the first angel of Revelation 14:6, 7 and that the messages of the second and third angels still were future.

In the 1820's Henry Drummond, a wealthy British banker, embraced the Advent message, renounced his political ambitions, and invited interested ministers and laymen to his Albury Park estate for an annual intensive study of the prophecies. Those participating agreed that the prophecies pointed to the last days. Many set the year of Christ's coming at 1847.

Some of this occurred before William Miller was born and all of it before he came to any solid conclusion concerning the 2300-day prophecy for himself.

Joseph Wolff, the son of a Jewish rabbi, gave his heart to Christ becoming so filled with the love of God that he longed to share the gospel with his Jewish brothers and sisters. He literally walked the soles off his shoes preaching the good news throughout the Middle

East and India. But one of the most amazing aspects of Wolff's mission occurred in 1837 when he preached to the American Congress. Wolff looked for Christ to come in 1847.

William Miller began to preach in 1831, but not until 1839 was he invited to preach in cities such as Boston. That was two years after Joseph Wolff had preached the imminent second coming to the American Congress.

There were others, such as William Davis of South Carolina. He also calculated that the 2300 days would end in 1847. Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Disciples of Christ, taught the cleansing of the sanctuary and the 2300 days in much the same way that Davis did.

Do we need to mention Australia, India, and the children in Scandinavia who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Advent message during 1842 and 1843?¹³

Although there were different understandings of what came to be known as the Sanctuary doctrine, this brief overview of our Adventist beginnings has something to tell us. It seems quite plain that this Advent movement of which you and I are a part came into being as a result of the direct working of the Holy Spirit—not merely the effort of William Miller or of James and Ellen White. The work the Holy Spirit did on the hearts of men and women everywhere at that particular time in earth's history ought to say something to us that we ought not to forget.

What the Holy Spirit Affirmed

The Prophetic Office. The Holy Spirit was poured out in fullness on the Apostolic Church at Pentecost and has been with the church ever since. Throughout the history of the church, as outlined in the first few chapters of Revelation, the Lord has admonished His people to listen to what the Spirit has to say to the church, with lengthy counsel given to those who would live during the Laodicean period of the church's history.¹⁴

There are those who admit that the prophetic office was given to the early church to help it grow into the full stature of Christ, but then in the same breath they say that the prophetic gift is not needed today. Has the Christian church outgrown the need that the apostolic church had? Has it grown into the full stature of Christ?

The answer is obvious. The church today needs the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the gifts as never before.

Uriah Smith made this point clear in his challenging introduction to *Patriarchs and Prophets*. He ended his challenge by quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."¹⁵

Smith also uses this analogy to demonstrate our need of the prophetic office. He says:

One illustration may help to set this matter in a still clearer light. Suppose we are about to start upon a voyage. The owner of the vessel gives us a book of directions, telling us that it contains instructions sufficient for our whole journey, and that if we will heed them, we shall reach in safety our port of destination. Setting sail we open our book to learn its contents. We find that its author lays down general principles to govern us in our voyage, and instructs us as far as practicable, touching the various contingencies that may arise, till the end; but he also tells us that the latter part of the journey will be especially perilous; that the features of the coast are ever changing by reason of quicksands and tempests; "but for this part of the journey," says he, "I have provided you a pilot, who will meet you, and give you such directions as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require; and to him you must give heed." With these directions we reach the perilous time specified, and the pilot, according to promise, appears. But some of the crew, as he offers his services, rise up against him. "We have the original book of directions," say they, "and that is enough for us. We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you." Who now heed that original book of directions? those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them?¹⁶

The 2300 day/year Prophecy. What else has the Holy Spirit said to the church? In 1848, four years after the Disappointment, He spoke through the prophetic office, urging our forefathers to publish a paper.¹⁷ One year later, in 1849 James White published *The Present Truth* in which he emphasized the importance of the Sabbath and the keeping of all the commandments.¹⁸ In 1850, he published *The Advent Review* in which he reviewed the arguments used by the Millerites to establish the end date of the 2300 day/year prophetic period. He stated that it was his purpose to "quote largely from the writings of the leaders in the advent cause, and show that

they once boldly advocated, and published to the world, the same position, relative to the fulfillment of Prophecy in the great leading advent movements in our past experience, that we now occupy."¹⁹ The objective that James White had in mind for *The Advent Review* was to show that the small Advent band of which he was a part was not ashamed to hold to the "original faith" of the Millerites, that is, the Historicist interpretation of the 2300-day/year prophecy ending in 1844.²⁰

Approximately twenty years later in 1868, James White, in *Life Incidents, In Connection with the Great Advent Movement*, in speaking of those Adventists who left the original faith, stated:

But the position of those who discard the great movement which made them Adventists, and yet cherish some of the leading views of William Miller, and rejoice in the Advent name, is more inconsistent, and their course far more sinful in the sight of God, than that of those who made an entire surrender of both position and name. What a position in the sight of God, angels and men! They bless the Advent faith, hope and name, and curse the very means which has made them what they profess to be! . . .

And these men will speak proudly of their Advent faith, and bless the Advent name, while they curse the great Advent movement, which has brought the Advent doctrine before the present generation.²¹

He added:

But the true position is free from such absurdities and is harmonious in itself. It honors God, vindicates his word, and sustains Christian experience. It explains the past, definitely points out present duty, and lights up the glorious future. It presents a connected system of truth, the most beautiful in all its parts, that the mind of man ever contemplated.²²

He concluded this section by stating that the subject of the termination of the 2300 days and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary became one of the clearest points in the entire system of Second-Advent truth. Those who deny the work of the Spirit of God in the Advent movement and attribute the power which attended that work to human and satanic influences are in danger of committing the sin against the Holy Spirit, which Jesus said had no forgiveness.²³

Although the questions being raised today against the 2300-day prophecy are not identical to those raised against it in the mid-1800's, the firmness of James White and other pioneers on this subject plainly evidences that there would be no need for future modification and change on these "landmark" prophecies.

The United States in Prophecy. The first Adventist exposition of the two-horned beast in Revelation 13 was made by J. N. Andrews in the early 1850's. He identified it as being the United States.²⁴ This application was accepted by our pioneers and confirmed a few years later in 1858 when *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. I, was published.

The message of the Holy Spirit is clear. Ellen White, in reporting a vision states:

I saw a company who stood well guarded and firm, and would give no countenance to those who would unsettle the established faith of the body. God looked upon them with approbation. I was shown three steps—one, two and three—the first, second and third angels' messages. Said my accompanying angel, Woe to him who shall move a block, or stir a pin in these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received. . . . Step by step had GOD brought them along, until He had placed them upon a solid, immovable platform. Then I saw individuals as they approached the platform, before stepping upon it examine the foundation. Some with rejoicing immediately stepped upon it. Others commenced to find fault with the laying of the foundation of the platform. They wished improvements made, and then the platform would be more perfect, and the people much happier. Some stepped off the platform and examined it, then found fault with it, declaring it to be laid wrong. I saw that nearly all stood firm upon the platform and exhorted others who had stepped off to cease their complaints; for GOD was the master-builder, and they were fighting against him.²⁵

Although this confirmation by the Lord focuses on the first, second, and third angels' messages, it is evident that the warning against the mark of the beast in the third angel's message also encompasses the two-horned beast of Revelation 13. Our historical position has been that the two-horned beast of Revelation is the United States and not merely the indistinguishable force of Satan. Nearly thirty years later, in 1884, Ellen White still held to J. N.

Andrews' exposition by stating in volume four of *The Spirit of Prophecy* that the greatest and most favored nation upon the earth is the United States. Yet it will be this country that will take the lead in making void the law of God by a national act that will give vigor to the faith of Rome.²⁶

Four years before her death in 1915, she still held to the exposition that the two-horned beast of Revelation 13 is the United States.²⁷

Our interpretation of the 2300 day/year prophecy and our understanding of Revelation 13 is not "dead wrong," as some have said and are saying. These kinds of accusations against the church brought by those who try to affirm the Adventist faith in reality deny the very truth they claim to believe.

Conclusion

It is incumbent on all of us, especially on those of us who have felt the hands of ordination, to hold to the faith delivered by God to this people. In these days, when every wind of doctrine is blowing, when seemingly every interpretation of Revelation finds fertile soil, when many go through the prophetic books like a cafeteria and make up any dish they wish; we ought to be grateful to our heavenly Father for the confirmation we have of our major points of doctrine and historicist interpretations given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit through the prophetic office. The battle is not between rival churches contending for supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religion of demonic falsehood and non-Biblical tradition.²⁸

The Holy Spirit has spoken through visions and dreams, and confirmed the main lines of prophecy that our forefathers derived from Scripture. Notice this letter of Ellen White to her son W. C. White written in 1904 after sixty years in this message:

If ever there was a period of time when we needed the Holy Spirit's power in our discourses, in our prayers, in every action proposed, it is now. We are not to stop at the first experience, but while we bear the same message to the people, this message is to be strengthened and enlarged. We are to see and realize the importance of the message made certain by its divine origin. . . . Our souls need the quickening from the Source of all power. We may be strengthened and confirmed

in the past experience that holds us to the essential points of truth which have made us what we are—Seventh-day Adventists.

The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of time. The languishing souls are to be confirmed and quickened according to His Word. . . . Not a word is changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. [The] pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are.²⁹

Today it is not so much additional Biblical verification that we need, as essential as that is, but the power of the Holy Spirit to melt hearts and make these truths penetrate our innermost being. Speaking of the movement of 1844, Ellen White says: "Like a tidal wave the movement swept over the land. From city to city, from village to village, and into remote country places it went, until the waiting people of God were fully aroused. Fanaticism disappeared before this proclamation, like early frost before the rising sun. Believers saw their doubt and perplexity removed, and hope and courage animated their hearts."³⁰

The Biblical evidence for the rightness of the historicist interpretation of Scripture is readily available, the basic research has been done, as long as time lasts there will always be theological questions to answer, but this alone is not our greatest need. We need to listen to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to the church all these years, and if we approach Scripture any other way than the way the Holy Spirit has led, we are rejecting His authority. Let us not add sin to sin and sin against the Holy Spirit. We need to bow in humble submission to the third Person of the Godhead and acknowledge His sovereignty within and above the Scriptures.

If we ever needed the convicting power of the Spirit to help us speak His word with confidence and boldness, it is now. If we want the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to be where the Holy Spirit is, that is, we need to be supportive of what He has done, and so much the more as we see the day of the Lord approaching.

It is time for us to intellectually stand where the Holy Spirit stands. It is time for our hearts to be in tune with His heart. It is

time for us to ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We need His presence as we never needed it before. It is incumbent upon us to ask for the Holy Spirit, for if we ask not, we receive not.

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ADVENTIST IDENTITY AND EVANGELICAL CRITICISM

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A recent article in a popular evangelical journal states that "Seventh-day Adventism is experiencing an identity crisis. Ironically the present confusion is in direct contrast to the confidence of Adventism's pioneers."¹ The author, Kenneth R. Samples, associates that identity crisis with a "doctrinal controversy" which "can be traced to their interaction with evangelicals in the 1950's."

The interaction he identifies as "extensive meetings" between Walter Martin, author of *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*,² Donald Grey Barnhouse, editor of *Eternity* magazine (both now deceased), and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. Those meetings, the journal writer says, "established an unprecedented openness between Adventists and evangelicals."

Evangelical Criticism of Adventist Beliefs

Samples is of the opinion that, due to the influence of Martin and Barnhouse, a current he calls "evangelical Adventism" can be identified within the SDA church. A major factor characterizing this current is the belief that righteousness by faith consists of justification only, with sanctification as its fruit. The implication is that such a view was not held within Adventism prior to the influence of Martin and Barnhouse.

Samples suggests that the "crisis" in Adventism surfaced in