An Evaluation of Duffie's Paper

Since returning to the office I have had some time to look over David Duffie's paper on the typological approach to extra-Danielic prophecies in the Old Testament. I would say that there are merits and demerits to the paper. Let me explain a bit.

In the first place David is reacting against a penchant on the west coast for going overboard on conditionalism. In this I think that he is correct. Some Seventh-day Adventist religion teachers I have talked to think that every prophecy in the Bible is conditional, and, as David points out so effectively, this saps the predictive element from them. As a matter of fact those I have talked to [who] emphasize Ellen G. White's statement, "the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional,"[1] have ignored the fact that this applies only to a covenant people in covenant relation to God. This principle is based upon the blessings and curses of the covenant enunciated in Deuteronomy. As a matter of fact, this is why the historical-critical scholar wants to date Deuteronomy so late, because it all really happened to Israel just the way the curses said it would. But if this comes from a 15/14th century B.C. covenant curse then it is prophetic by centuries, but the modern critical scholar cannot have that since there is not divine foreknowledge so he attempts to escape from the quandary by dating Deuteronomy late.

So in this regard, Duffie's reaction against the excessive conditionalist views held by a number of Adventist scholars is helpful.

I am not sure, however, that he goes in the right direction after this good start. There seems to me to be confusion about what is prophecy and what is typology. There is such a thing in the Old Testament as divine foreknowledge and predictive prophecy about those events which He foreknew. This is not typology. This is simply flat out predictive prophecy. Some of these did not work out, such as the restoration of Israel because they got the curses of the covenant a second time around.[2] So it seems to me that we must allow for at least some conditional prophecy, even though it does not apply to Daniel or Revelation or many other Old Testament prophecies besides the restoration. So a weakness of Duffie's paper is, to me, that he denies ultimately all conditional prophecy, or at least he is not willing to sort out some that are conditional, perhaps fearing that this will yield the point.

Now a type is, as I understand it, a divinely ordained prefiguration. That is not a prophecy in propositional content. For example, take the lamb at Passover. God, knowing that His Son would come 1400 years later and die, specifically chose the passover lamb to prefigure his coming and death and say something about it and what it would accomplish. This is not the same thing as Isa 53 where the predictive prophecy in propositional terms makes that type specific to a person, event, and its result. So in sum, I would say that there is confusion about what is a type and what is a prophecy. . . .

Thanks for sharing the paper with me, I hope that these few marginal comments may be of some use to you.

Note: William H. Shea, M.D., Ph.D., taught Old Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University from 1974 to 1986. I had the privilege of studying Daniel and other topics with him there in 1980/81. He is now coordinating the church's new study center at Jerusalem. The following comments are reproduced with Dr. Shea's permission.

[1][The quotation is from *Selected Messages* 1:67. In view of a distinction that Duffie makes in his paper (above) it is interesting that she does not say "prophecies and threatenings."] - FWH

[2]Here I am not just talking about the return from captivity, but the building up and glorification of Jerusalem to be the great world capital into which all the nations will flow to be taught the law of the Lord, and so on (see Isa 40-66, Zech 9-14, Ezek 40-48, and other similar passages).